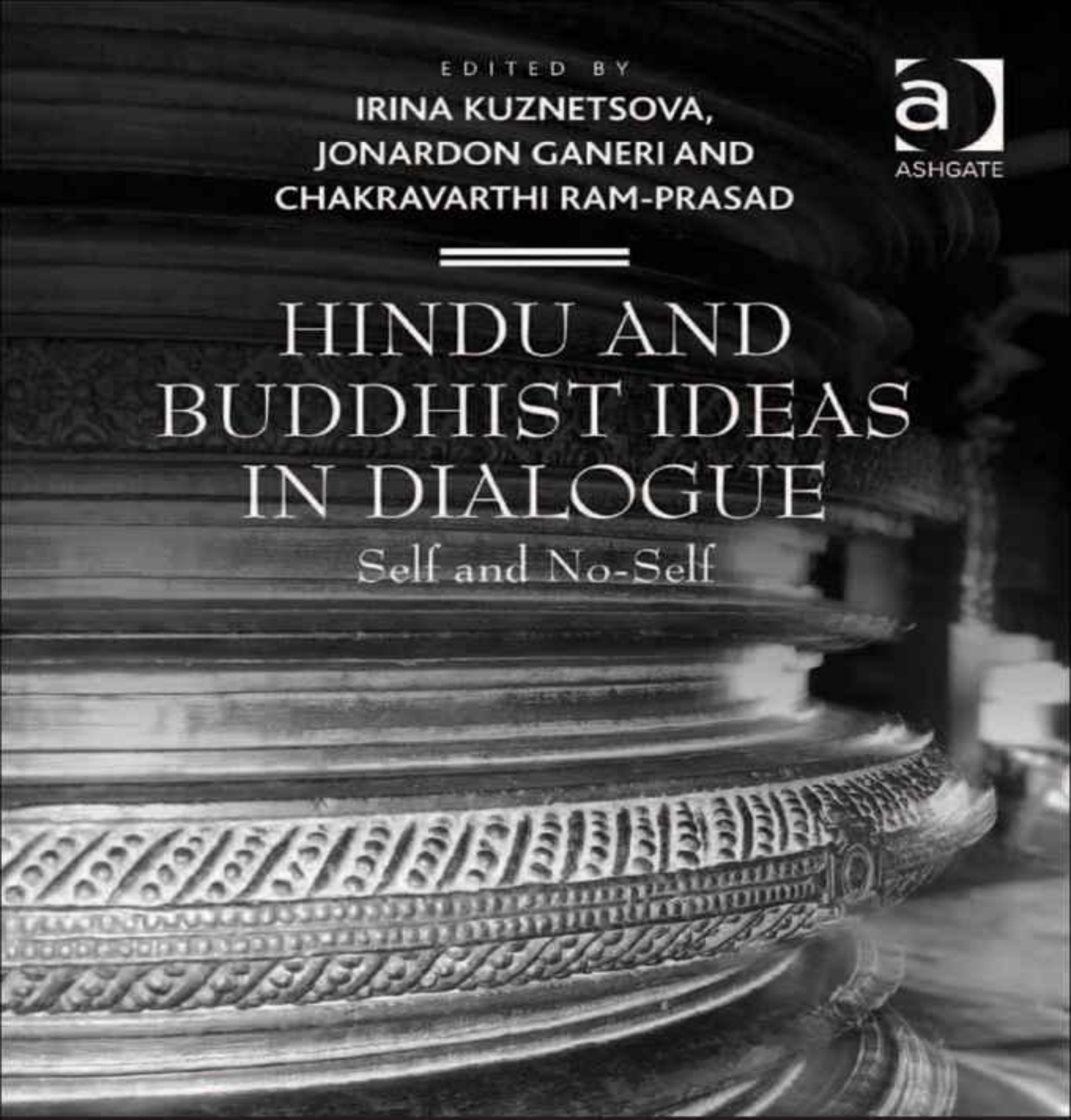
EDITED BY

IRINA KUZNETSOVA,
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CHAKRAVARTHI RAM-PRASAD

ASHGATE

HINDU AND BUDDHIST IDEAS IN DIALOGUE

Self and No-Self



DIALOGUES IN SOUTH ASIAN TRADITIONS

RELIGION
PHILOSOPHY
LITERATURE
AND HISTORY

HINDU AND BUDDHIST IDEAS IN DIALOGUE

The debates between various Buddhist and Hindu philosophical systems about the existence, definition and nature of self, occupy a central place in the history of Indian philosophy and religion. These debates concern various issues: what ‘self’ means, whether the self can be said to exist at all, arguments that can substantiate any position on this question, how the ordinary reality of individual persons can be explained, and the consequences of each position. At a time when comparable issues are at the forefront of contemporary Western philosophy, in both analytic and continental traditions (as well as in their interaction), these classical and medieval Indian debates widen and globalize such discussions. This book brings to a wider audience the sophisticated range of positions held by various systems of thought in classical India.

DIALOGUES IN SOUTH ASIAN TRADITIONS:

RELIGION, PHILOSOPHY, LITERATURE AND HISTORY

Series Editors
Laurie Patton, Duke University, USA
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Face-to-face conversation and dialogue are defining features of South Asian traditional texts, rituals and practices. Not only has the region of South Asia always consisted of a multiplicity of peoples and cultures in communication with each other, but also performed and written dialogues have been indelible features within the religions of South Asia; Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, and Islam are all multi-vocal religions. Their doctrines, practices, and institutions have never had only one voice of authority, and dialogue has been a shared tactic for negotiating contesting interpretations within each tradition.

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Hindu and Buddhist Ideas in Dialogue

Self and No-Self

Edited by

IRINA KUZNETSOVA
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The project conference was marked by a great deal of intense discussion as well as more relaxed and informal exchange of views. We would like to thank all the contributors for their participation, and more especially, for their prompt submission of manuscripts, which is always a cause for celebration amongst editors! Laurie Patton and Brian Black were quick to offer their ‘Dialogues in South Asian Traditions: Religion, Philosophy, Literature, and History’ series as a home for this volume, and we are very happy to have found such an appropriate place for it. Sarah Lloyd has shown her now legendary skills as Commissioning Editor in shepherding this book through Ashgate. We would like to thank all the staff involved at Ashgate for taking this book to publication in a helpful and timely manner.

Introduction

Chakravarthi Ram-Prasad

In the light of the recent surge in debate on the nature of self in Western philosophy and a growing interest in Asian philosophies' contribution to this debate, the present volume aims to provide an accurate reconstruction of the centuries-long dialogue between Hindu and Buddhist schools of thought on the existence and nature of self and to incorporate it into contemporary discussions of self and consciousness. A small number of recent comparative publications on self have been oriented to Buddhism (Siderits 2003), and rarer still to both Buddhism and Hinduism (Siderits et al. 2011; Ganeri 2007). The present volume contributes to this emerging trend of developing cross-cultural philosophical dialogue on questions of self and consciousness by covering most of the major Hindu positions in debate with the Buddhists, while also engaging with contemporary Western debates. This edited volume is based on the contributions to the international conference 'Self: Hindu Responses to Buddhist Critiques', from a research project funded during 2008–11 by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), United Kingdom. It is, of course, to be welcomed that discussions in contemporary Western philosophy have started engaging with the classical Indian material by way of some interpretations of Buddhism. But it is worth pointing out that the nuanced range of positions held, and arguments given, by various Hindu schools has not been sufficiently appreciated in these, still early, days of cross-cultural discussions. Buddhist positions have been of interest to non-Indological philosophers for two intimately connected reasons: Buddhists officially deny the existence of self (the common translation of *ātman*) and therefore seem to fit contemporary suspicions about non-physical substances like older (or some contemporary Christian) notions of the soul; and Buddhist arguments about the related topics of consciousness, cognition, phenomenology and mind are often based on first-person reasoning, which

seem prescient in the history of thought, since such reasoning has only relatively recently become important in Western philosophy. Since virtually all Hindu systems of thought are officially committed to the doctrine of self (*ātmavāda*), it is supposed that they mostly rely on a metaphysical defence of a non-physical, substantialist self of the sort held to be outdated in contemporary philosophy.

In fact, the picture is considerably more subtle and complex. Four points can be made in this regard. For one thing, even those systems, like Nyāya and Mīmāṃsā (with their internal variations) that adhere in principle to a non-physical self as an element in their ontology have many interesting things to say about the ethics, psychology, agency, bodily existence, narrative and relationality of the self. Secondly, various strands of Advaita Vedānta interpret the notion of *ātman* in ways that do not involve anything like an individual non-physical substance, opening up the whole question of what 'self' means, and blurring the ideologically constructed boundaries between homogenous 'Buddhist' and 'Hindu' beliefs. Thirdly, even apparently substantialist theories of *ātman* do not map on in any easy way to traditional Western theories of the soul, instead presenting intricate and carefully thought out ideas about formal individuality and its relationship to personal identity; such theories can illuminate familiar Western debates about the use of the 'I', agency, embodiment, memory and the like. Finally, these Hindu schools make considerable use of phenomenological strategies for understanding self and consciousness – strategies that translate clearly into the idioms of contemporary Western philosophy.

In this volume, authors explore various Hindu positions, going back to the early Upaniṣad texts, which influenced and were challenged by the Buddha. Among the many Hindu schools, those explored here are Sāṃkhya, Nyāya, Kashmiri Shaiva, Mīmāṃsā and Advaita; but of course, these developed and changed, and some also separated into sub-schools over time. Sāṃkhya is committed to the principle of conscious being (*puruṣa*), apparently both as a cosmological feature of reality and as the conscious individual. Nyāya and its sister-school, Vaiśeṣika, include the self (*ātman*) as a non-physical entity in their ontological lists, an entity which possesses the quality of consciousness and of which there is an infinite plurality of individuals. Mīmāṃsā too is committed to selves as individual non-physical entities like in Nyāya, but individuates them with a greater degree of psychological character (and in this, comes closest to the

medieval Christian notion of a soul). Advaita analyses consciousness at different metaphysical levels, and takes *ātman* to be the generic name for the reflexive presence of any locus of consciousness. Kashmiri Shaivism offers a dynamic theory of self-consciousness within an idealist theology. These descriptions raise more questions than they answer; but they cannot be given in any greater detail because to do so would be to plunge into particular interpretations, with all their ramifying consequences. Our aim in this collection is only to give the reader an initial sense of the complexity and sophistication of the Hindu traditions.

The chapters in this volume only occasionally touch on metaphysical arguments for self (however it is conceived). A great many analyse phenomenological issues, especially pertaining to the ways in which Hindu schools defend their theory of self. Broadly speaking, whatever the precise ontology to which they are officially committed, many of the Hindu philosophers focus on the role they think a self plays in explaining the nature of our experience, especially of ourselves. The unity of consciousness – both synchronic and diachronic – was often the focus of Hindu phenomenological arguments for self, even if the thinkers realised that this was not in itself sufficient for the establishment of further, more ontological claims. (In the case of Advaita, which rejected the self as an individuated entity, whether substantialist or not, this was not a concern.) In ordinary experience, it seems that the unity of consciousness is undeniable. It is expressed in a variety of ways: the idiosyncratic use of the first-person 'I', memory, phenomenal consubjectivity, emotion, desire and agency. Arguably, *ātmavādin*s explain these phenomenological features better than Buddhists who deny self. At the same time, such issues as narrative and the construction of personhood, the problematic sense of the body as itself the whole self, meditative deconstruction of ego, and so on, which are well known in the contemporary understanding of Buddhism, are equally dealt with in detail by several Hindu schools. The tension between psychological or narrative construction of the person and the subjective unity of consciousness (for example, read as a tension between personhood and selfhood), the slipperiness of the referential 'I', the tricky relationship between memory and personal identity, the large challenge of naturalising phenomenological accounts of selfhood – all these are as amenable to Hindu responses as they are to Buddhist ones. Most, although not all, of these themes are dealt with in these chapters.

While the AHRC project itself was originally concerned with Hindu responses to Buddhist critiques because of our sense that far more attention had been paid in the comparative literature to Buddhism, we in no way intend to enter into a sterile contest in which each imagined side attacks a straw man on the other. For this reason, the chapters here look even-handedly at the relationship between Hindu and Buddhist views, carefully present particular Buddhist accounts of the no-self theory, explore the boundaries between specific Hindu and Buddhist positions, or even on occasion defend particular Buddhist positions. Where Buddhist views are studied only as a Hindu thinker presents them, this is made clear. All in all, we take the categories of 'Hindu' and 'Buddhist' in a largely heuristic sense; we hope that exploration in these chapters of the cross-cutting nature of the debates shows that we emphatically reject any ideological polarisation of Hinduism and Buddhism. Instead, the philosophical richness of these classical arguments and views are presented in a way that engages with contemporary discussions, thereby offering to the interested reader a balanced view of what cross-cultural philosophy can be like.

In Chapter 1, Brian Black points out that many of the contrasting conceptions about consciousness, personal identity and the psycho-physical components of a human being, which were articulated by Hindus and Buddhists during the classical period in Indian philosophy, were prefigured by speculations in the Vedic Upaniṣads and the Buddhist Nikāyas. While Brahminical composers of the Upaniṣads tend to posit a self that is essential, stable and eternal, the early Buddhists deny the notion of an abiding self, instead discussing human beings in a way that emphasises change and multiplicity. Black reviews some of the key ideas regarding these issues in the early sources as a way of providing a context for some of the subsequent philosophical debates about the self that are discussed in the other chapters of the volume. In the process he also brings attention to how the Upaniṣads and Nikāyas articulate their arguments and positions, arguing that the literary dimension of their philosophical stances has important implications for how we understand ancient Hindu and Buddhist senses of the self, as well as how we understand the relationship between the two traditions. In some cases the Upaniṣads and Nikāyas employ similar rhetorical strategies, or draw from a shared set of analogies and metaphors, indicating that the boundaries between the two traditions can sometimes be pliable and fluid. In other cases, however, their views are put forth in

opposition to those of their rivals, thus reifying the differences between contrasting traditions and viewpoints, and using the philosophy of self as a mark of identity for their traditions. In Chapter 2, Marzenna Jakubczak continues exploring the potential continuities and areas of affinity between Hindu and Buddhist thought, challenging the conventional opposition between Buddhism and Sāṃkhya and their respective views of the self. The chapter starts with a reconstruction of the Buddha's perspective on Sāṃkhya-Yoga in the light of the Buddha's life-story and passages selected from the Pāli sources, focusing on why the Buddha was initially attracted to, but subsequently rejected, the philosophical teachings of the Sāṃkhya preceptor Ārāḍa Kālāma. Jakubczak offers a possible defence of the Sāṃkhyan self (*puruṣa*) reinterpreted in Buddhist terms. This reinterpretation is to some degree inspired by the position of Swāmi Hariharānanda Āraṇya (1869–1947), a contemporary reviver of the Sāṃkhya-Yoga tradition and founder of the Kāpil Maṭh, who holds Sāṃkhya to be in a much closer proximity to Buddhism than is conventionally assumed. Continuing the examination of Sāṃkhya, in Chapter 3 Mikel Burley explores the relation between the concepts of self, consciousness and liberation in classical Sāṃkhya philosophy. After an initial overview of Sāṃkhya's historical connections with Buddhism, he offers an account of how the two co-ultimate principles in Sāṃkhya's ontology, *puruṣa* ('self' or 'consciousness') and *prakṛti* ('nature' or 'matter'), are differentiated in the classical text known as the *Sāṃkhyakārikā*. This provides a basis from which two apparent tensions within the text are discussed. One of these concerns the question whether *puruṣa* is singular or multiple, and the other concerns who, or what, is deemed to be liberated in Sāṃkhya's soteriological system. In addressing these issues, analogies are highlighted between the treatments of selfhood in Sāṃkhya and in other philosophical viewpoints (notably the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl), and an interpretation of Sāṃkhya's conception of liberation proposed by David Burke is critically engaged with.

While the majority of contributors to this volume do approach the issue of self through various Hindu systems, it should already be clear that the book as a whole seeks to engage properly with all sides to the debate over self/no-self. In Chapter 4, Jonardon Ganeri presents a philosophical

interpretation of a Buddhist view, in this case Vasubandhu's, that indicates the types of issues with which defenders of Hindu senses of self must engage. But the self/no-self debate can itself be located within larger, contemporary philosophical programmes, so that we can develop contemporary philosophical positions through (re-)interpretations of classical views. For Ganeri, the reconciliation of naturalism with the existence of a first-person perspective is the first work of a concept of self. The views of ourselves as corporeal beings and as subjective presences 'of self to self' seem to pull in different directions. Ganeri aims to retrieve a conception of self in play within Vasubandhu's Buddhist theory, and to identify the exact grounds on which it is rejected. He argues that the Buddhist rejection presupposes what is in fact a most insightful conception of self. For Vasubandhu's aim is not merely to reject some given theory of self in the Indian debate, but to diagnose what he takes to be a deep mistake in our primitive conceptual scheme, and for that it is incumbent upon him to provide an accurate descriptive metaphysics of self. Ganeri separates this conception from the error-theory, and argues that bracketing the error-theory leaves a viable conception of self, one which is uncluttered by extraneous theoretical commitment.

Continuing the programmatic commitment to reading the classical Indian material for contemporary philosophical purposes, in Chapter 5 Irina Kuznetsova looks at the role of emotion in debates over the self. Contemporary philosophical debates on the self tend to overlook emotion, even though in the past forty years the study of emotion has emerged as a research area in its own right in philosophy, as well as in psychology, developmental psychology, psychiatry and neurobiology. She brings contemporary philosophical theories of emotions, such as the leading theory of emotions as judgements, and the findings of the latest neurophysiological research on emotion to bear on some of the core questions of the debate on the self. Emotions did play a part in debates between *ātmavādin*s and *anātmavādin*s, as demonstrated in Kuznetsova's analysis of one of the central Vaiśeṣika texts, Praśastapāda's *Padārthadharmasaṃgraha*. In her view, *ātmavādin*s' arguments for a continuous unified self from emotions find support in and can be strengthened by neurophysiological research on emotions which demonstrates that in a very basic sense, mineness is ineliminable, as there is continuous integration centred on the self on subpersonal and even preconscious levels. This marks an intriguing parallel

with Ganeri's finding that in his very perceptive analysis of first-person phenomenology Vasubandhu traces it to subconscious activity of *manas*, which is responsible for mental life presenting itself to me, in a primitive and pre-attentive way, as mine.

There then follows a cluster of three chapters devoted to perhaps the paradigmatic Hindu defenders of a theory of self, the Nyāya school. In Chapter 6, John Taber outlines the defence of the existence of a self against Buddhist counter-arguments by the sixth-century Nyāya philosopher Uddyotakara. Taber emphasises three core themes of Uddyotkara's discussion:

1. It is impossible, according to Uddyotakara, to prove that a self does not exist, because any such proof would necessarily presuppose the existence of a self as the subject of the proof. In general, one cannot prove negative existential claims.
2. The original Buddhist denial of a self, according to Uddyotakara, was intended only as a singular negative proposition, or a series of them (of the form, 'X is not a self', 'Y is not a self', and so on), not as a negative existential proposition ('There is no self').
3. The main Buddhist argument against a self that Uddyotakara considers appears to be what is called an *argumentum ex silentio*, namely: 'There is no self, because it is not apprehended.'

Building on the discussion of Nyāya critiques of Buddhist accounts of memory (the subject of memory being a principal battlefield between *ātmavādin*s and *anātmavādin*s) opened in the previous chapter, in Chapter 7 Douglas L. Berger focuses on the debates between classical Buddhist schools and Nyāya on the relationship between memory and self. Berger argues that Buddhist accounts of memory found in the very different Buddhist perspectives of Vasubandhu, the Sautrāntika thinkers, and Ratnakīrti, which all insist that its conditions and influence on experience can be described without recourse to an enduring and unitary self-consciousness, are insufficient as explanatory models of memory. Classical Nyāya theories of recognition and recollection provide us with a much more convincing model of how both epistemic recognition and what is referred to in modern psychology as 'autobiographical memory' are made possible, and present phenomenological arguments that are philosophically the

strongest of Nyāya defences of *ātman* against both the Buddhist critiques and their rival depictions. While this finding will not secure the entire fund of classical Nyāya ontological commitments regarding *ātman*, it will buttress the notion that a continuity and unity of self-consciousness, whatever its nature and tale of emergence, makes better sense in describing our experience than a Buddhist theory that analytically denies the reality of any such self-consciousness.

As Chakravarthi Ram-Prasad points out in Chapter 8, the argument from memory has been used to construct an account of personal identity in modern Western philosophy, against criticism that memory presupposes personal identity. In the Hindu systems, memory is used to argue in support of *ātman*. The connection between personal identity and *ātman* is complex in the Hindu schools, and this has an impact on their argument from memory. Where, as in Mīmāṃsā, the two run together, the failure of causal connections between memories – which bring about disjunctions in personal identity – has a negative impact on arguments for *ātman*. But in Nyāya, where the category of person is sharply distinguished from that of self, the use of memory is not to secure personal identity, but something more abstract – namely, the phenomenal unity of consciousness. Ram-Prasad continues the analysis of the Nyāya argument from memory to unity of consciousness found in the previous two chapters, examining its most developed form as presented by Udayana, and finds it to be effective philosophically against the denial of a diachronic self, either in Buddhism or contemporary Western contexts.

Elisa Freschi's Chapter 9 is devoted to the Mīmāṃsā concept of self (briefly introduced in the previous chapter), which is richer and closer to the Western notion of personhood than any of the other understandings of *ātman*. Mīmāṃsā's *ātman* is distinguished from rival conceptions of *ātman* in so far as it includes a great deal of the psychological features of personhood – most importantly for the present discussion – agency and desire. (These two features are also included in the Kashmir Shaiva conception of *ātman* discussed by Arindam Chakrabarti in Chapter 12.) Ritual being Mīmāṃsā's central concern, it foregrounds the notion of *ātman* as the agent of sacrifice. In Freschi's analysis, the Prābhākara Mīmāṃsā conception of self did not emerge out of an ontological discussion, but rather out of hermeneutic concerns, and is most amenable to a phenomenological reading. The chapter reconstructs the Prābhākara

Mīmāṃsā account of how the personhood of a subject develops through hearing Vedic injunctions and recognising oneself as the one enjoined by them and therefore responsible for undertaking action by virtue of desiring the result stated in the enjoining prescription. The Prābhākara approach does not focus on a transcendental self, but rather on a person who becomes aware of herself when a text (the *Veda*) enjoins her to do something, thus connecting her from the outset with action, with a social scenario (the sacrifice), with other agents, and above all, with an order.

In contrast to the rich Mīmāṃsā conception of self examined in the previous chapter, in Chapter 10 Wolfgang Fasching turns to Advaita Vedānta's austere and formal conception of ātman and considers how it can inform Western philosophical discourse on the self. In current debates on the nature of the identity of the experiencing subject throughout the course of its experiences, there is a broad consensus on the relationist/reductionist view that (1) there is not really a self-identical ego-substance that could be the bearer or owner of its experiences, and (2) the unity of one subject is constituted by relations between the experiences instead of a common relation they all share to one and the same subject. On the other hand, it is hard to deny that experiences only exist in being subjectively experienced – that is, as first-personally present to a respective subject – and the question is: what is this 'first person'? Fasching discusses the viability of the view of Advaita Vedānta which equates the experiencing self with this first-person presence (the experiencing) itself – that is, with consciousness. In this view, the unity of the self is not to be sought on the side of the experiences that are successively present to us, but on the side of presence as such which is the element that does not change. Fasching argues that this view indeed makes sense and might prove useful to us in gaining a better understanding of the essence of subjectivity and its unity.

In Chapter 11, Matthew MacKenzie examines the similarities and differences between the Advaitin notion of *ātman* as pure consciousness, or sheer reflexive subjectivity, and the Buddhist notion – found in some Yogācāra, Yogācāra-Madhyamaka, and *tathāgatagarbha* texts and well developed in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition – that the deep nature of consciousness is non-dual reflexive awareness. Both traditions recognise the empirical and the transcendental aspects of consciousness, and both link the inherent reflexivity or luminosity of consciousness to its transcendental aspect. So, have the Buddhists smuggled in the *ātman* through the back

door? Or have the Advaitins so separated the *ātman* (as pure consciousness) from the first-person perspective of the individual self that they have become *anātmavadin*s in all but name? To try to get a better grip on the distinction between these two views, MacKenzie discusses Śaṅkara's critique of Buddhist theories of mind, paying special attention to his argument that recognition (*pratyabhijñā*) requires a robust notion of the diachronic unity of consciousness and to his argument for witness-consciousness. Finally, drawing on Śāntarakṣita's account of luminous consciousness and Husserl's discussion of the complex temporality of consciousness, MacKenzie argues that a Buddhist view, properly modified, has the resources to respond to the Advaita critique. The view of consciousness as ever-present self-luminous awareness does not require a commitment to even the Advaitin's attenuated notion of *ātman*. In Chapter 12, Arindam Chakrabarti revisits the phenomena of recognition and memory which, as discussed by Berger and Ram-Prasad, have been invoked by Nyāya philosophers in support of a diachronic self in the face of the most trenchant arguments of the Buddhist No-selfist. This chapter focuses on the distinctiveness of the Kashmir Śaiva conception of *ātman* and of the arguments made in its defence on the basis of recognition by Utpaladeva and his commentator Abhinavagupta, the two greatest Kashmir Śaiva philosophers of the Trika school of 'Recognition'. Abhinavagupta's dialogic strategy is to first concede some central Yogācāra Buddhist epistemological tenets, such as reflexivity of awareness (which Nyāya do not accept) and then show that without a synthesising self to connect, compare and contrast distinct episodes of reflexive awareness across different times, even inference, non-apprehension, mistaken apprehension, or correction of cognitive mistakes would not be possible. While following through the consequences of a Buddhist epistemology of a series of successive self-insulated momentary cognitions, Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta stage a set of transcendental arguments to prove that not only do we need to hold together a single person's history of consciousness with a same-staying self, we actually need to synthesise all interpersonally communicating episodes of consciousness under a single universal centre of subjectivity. Such a cosmic Subject is then re-discovered to be none other than Śiva (God), who is creatively free with His triple powers of illumination, differentiation and remembering. The chapter speculates that such a world-self would meet head-on Āryadeva's dialectical sceptical

challenge that a real first person would have been first person for all, by embracing the consequence that God really is the ‘I think’ of all.

Implicitly looking back on the historical disputes covered in the previous chapters, in Chapter 13 Ankur Barua reflects on the issues raised in the present volume and also discusses the academic status of Indian philosophy, arguing that the focal position of the self in the Indian intellectual traditions can be a useful point of departure into a comparative study of the presence or absence of ‘philosophy’ in India. In contrast to the view sometimes put forward that the preoccupation of Indian thought with the question of liberation leads to a deficiency in methodic analysis, soteriological concerns have, in fact, acted as a catalyst for a profound and multi-faceted enquiry into the self, which in its turn helped create well-rounded philosophical systems with highly developed metaphysics, epistemology and ethics. In a sense, the chapters in this volume are meant to demonstrate this general claim by Barua.

* * *

This volume will be of interest not only to scholars and students of Hinduism, Buddhism, South Asian Studies and Religious Studies, but also to philosophers as a source of different perspectives that can enrich and even reshape contemporary debates on the self, which until recently have been dominated by Western thought. We hope that it will contribute both to a greater understanding of one of the most significant dialogues in Indian philosophical thought and to establishing a fruitful engagement between South Asian and Western philosophical traditions.

Chapter 1
Senses of Self and Not-self in the Upaniṣads and Nikāyas

Brian Black

Introduction

As is widely recognised, many of the contrasting conceptions about consciousness, personal identity, and the psycho-physical components of a human being, which were articulated by Hindus and Buddhists during the classical period in Indian philosophy (*c.* 200–400 CE), were prefigured by speculations in the Vedic Upaniṣads and the Buddhist Nikāyas. While Brahmin composers of the Upaniṣads tend to posit a self that is essential, stable, and eternal, the early Buddhists deny the notion of an abiding self, instead discussing human beings in a way that emphasises change and multiplicity. One of my aims in this chapter is to review some of the key ideas regarding these issues in the early sources as a way of providing a context for some of the subsequent philosophical debates about the self that are discussed in the other chapters of this book. In the process, however, I also want to bring attention to how the Upaniṣads and Nikāyas articulate their arguments and positions. Unlike most later sources of Indian philosophy, both the Upaniṣads and Nikāyas present their philosophical views within the context of narratives about teachers, students, and rival philosophers. As I will argue, the literary dimension of their philosophical stances has important implications for how we understand brahmanical and Buddhist senses of the self, as well as how we understand the relationship between the two traditions.

The Self in the Upaniṣads

The self (*ātman*) is the primary focus of philosophical speculation in the Upaniṣads.[1] The word *ātman* is a reflexive pronoun, likely derived from *an* (to breathe). Even in the *Ṛg Veda* (*c.* 1200 BCE), the earliest textual source from ancient India, *ātman* already had a wide range of lexical meanings, including 'breath', 'spirit', and 'body' (Elizarenkova 2005: 126). By the time of the Upaniṣads, the meaning of the word had further evolved to include life-force, consciousness, essence, nature, or even ultimate reality. Indeed, in some passages in the Upaniṣads, *ātman* is linked to male orgasmic bliss (Olivelle 1997).

This diversity of meanings can be better understood when we consider the fact that different Upaniṣads were composed within the context of separate and often competing scholarly traditions or schools (*śākhā*s). Accordingly, *ātman* does not have one consistent meaning across all of its textual appearances, yet there can be considerable uniformity within a particular text or within a group of texts aligned to the same school, and even more so according to the lessons ascribed to any particular teacher. Moreover, not only do different Upaniṣads often have discernibly distinct philosophical agendas, but on many occasions it is suggested that philosophers offered their teachings about the self in the context of a competitive marketplace of ideas, in which Brahmins were pitted against each other to recruit students, secure patronage, and win public debating competitions.

One of the best-known teachings of the self appears in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (6.1–16), when the Brahmin Uddālaka Āruṇi teaches his son Śvetaketu. Uddālaka uses analogies with natural phenomena to explain that the self is the essence of all living beings. He first uses the example of nectar, which is collected by bees from different sources, but becomes an undifferentiated whole when gathered together. Similarly, he explains that water flowing from different rivers merges without distinction when reaching the ocean. After each analogy Uddālaka brings attention back to Śvetaketu, emphasising that the self operates the same way in him as it does in all living beings: 'The subtle essence here is what the self is of this whole world. It is the truth. This is *ātman*. That is what you are (*tat tvam asi*),

Śvetaketu' (CU 6.8.7). The thrust of Uddālaka's teaching is that the self is both the essence that connects parts with the whole and the constant that remains the same even while taking on different forms. Uddālaka reinforces his message through repetition: by the end of his teaching he has repeated the above quotation nine times, as he reiterates the same point with each analogy. This notion that someone can know the self by means of verbal proclamations also appears in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (6.13):

> In just two ways can he be perceived:
> by saying that 'He is',
> by affirming he's the real.
> To one who perceives him as 'He is'
> it becomes clear that he is real.[2]

Moreover, in Uddālaka's teaching the relationship between the same refrain and the many analogies he uses illustrates what he is trying to convey to Śvetaketu: the refrain, which is the essence of the teaching, remains the same although he explains it in different ways.

Yājñavalkya, the most prominent teacher in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, also uses analogies throughout his teachings, but he tends to characterise *ātman* more explicitly in terms of consciousness than in terms of natural philosophy, discussing the self in relation to cognitive faculties on several occasions.[3] In a debate that pits him against Uddālaka – his senior colleague and, by some accounts, his former teacher (BU 6.3.7; 6.5.3) – Yājñavalkya explains that the self is the inner controller (*antaryāmin*), present within all sensing and cognising, yet at the same time distinct: 'He is the seer that cannot be seen, the hearer that cannot be heard, the thinker that cannot be thought, the knower that cannot be known' (BU 3.7.23). Here, Yājñavalkya characterises the self as that which has mastery over the otherwise distinct psycho-physical capacities. He goes on to explain that we know the existence of the self through actions of the self, through what the self does, not through our senses – that the self, as consciousness, cannot be an object of consciousness. As Yājñavalkya rhetorically asks his wife Maitreyī later in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*: 'By what means can one know him, by means of whom one knows this whole world?' (4.5.15).

Throughout his teachings Yājñavalkya describes the self as being hidden or behind that which is immediately perceptible. When teaching King Janaka, for example, he explains that the self is 'the breathing behind the breathing, the sight behind the sight' (4.4.18). Here, Yājñavalkya suggests that the self cannot be known by rational thought or described in conventional language because it can never be the object of thought or knowledge. As Jonardon Ganeri explains: 'If we cannot catch the self as an object among others in the world, we can catch it in the very act of thinking' (2007: 35).

One recurring theme in Yājñavalkya's discussion with Janaka is that the self is described as consisting of various parts, but not reducible to any (for example, BU 4.4.5; see also TU 2.2.1). In a creation myth at the beginning of the *Āitareya Upaniṣad*, the *ātman* is cast as a creator god, who creates the various elements and bodily functions from himself. After completing his creation he asks himself:

> If speaking is done through speech; if breathing-out is done through the out-breath; if seeing is done through sight; if hearing is done through hearing; if touching is done through the skin; if thinking is done through the mind; if breathing is done through the in-breath; and if ejaculating is done through the penis – then who am I? (ĀU 1.3.11)

Similar to Yājñavalkya's teaching, the functions of the body and cognitive capacities are seen to be components of the self and even evidence of the self, but the self cannot be reduced to any particular part. Such examples emphasise that an understanding of the self cannot be attained through observing how the self operates in just one faculty, but by means of regarding the self in relation to a number of psycho-physical faculties, some understanding of the self is conveyed. Thus, in addition to being portrayed as the agent or inner controller (*antaryāmin*) of sensing and cognising, the self is characterised as an underlying base or foundation (*pratiṣṭha*) of all the sense and cognitive faculties.

Another important aspect of Yājñavalkya's teaching is that he draws attention to the limitations of language, suggesting that because the self cannot be an object of knowledge it cannot have attributes, and therefore can only be described by using negative propositions. When speaking to King Janaka, Yājñavalkya famously says:

> About this self (*ātman*), one can only say “not, not” (*neti*, *neti*). He is ungraspable, as he cannot be grasped. He is indestructible, as he cannot be destroyed. He cannot be clung to, as he does not cling. He is unbound, not trembling, not able to be harmed. (BU 4.4.22)

Moreover, it is relevant that this description of the self *via negativa* is repeated on three different occasions in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*: in his exchange with Śākalya in the debate in Janaka’s court (3.9.26), in his private instruction to Janaka (4.2.4), and again in his conversation with his wife Maitreyī (4.4.22). While these passages may once have been part of separate texts, when they appear together in Books 3–4 of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, they gain a rhetorical force through repetition, thus reiterating the notion of an abiding self beyond language and conceptual thought. The multiple appearances of Uddālaka’s *tat tvam asi* and Yājñavalkya’s *neti neti* undoubtedly contribute to these statements playing a key role in the work of later commentators such as Śaṅkara (*c.* 700 CE).[4]

Perhaps the most famous teaching of the self, the linking of *ātman* and *brahman*, is delivered by Śāṇḍilya in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*. Śāṇḍilya begins his teaching by stating that *brahman* is the entire world. He then explains that what happens to people at the time of death is in accordance with their resolve in this world. After describing *ātman* in various ways, Śāṇḍilya equates *ātman* with *brahman*: ‘This self (*ātman*) of mine within the heart is *brahman*. On departing from here, I will enter into him’ (CU 3.14.4). Thus, if one understands *brahman* as the entire world, and one understands that the self is *brahman*, then one becomes the entire world at the time of death. Advaita Vedānta philosophers, such as Śaṅkara, would later interpret the equation of *ātman* and *brahman* in terms of an absolute identity and would regard this as the central teaching of all the Upaniṣads. As we have seen, however, the diversity of teachings of the self in the Upaniṣads cannot easily be reduced to one interpretation. Moreover, it is important to note that Śaṅkara’s interpretation of the Upaniṣads was not the only one accepted by later Hindu philosophers. Rāmānuja (*c.* 1000 CE), the main proponent of a form of Vedānta known as Viśiṣṭādvaita, or qualified non-dualism, used the Upaniṣads to argue that *ātman* is not identical with *brahman*, but an aspect of *brahman*. Two centuries later, Madhva (*c.* 1200 CE), who used the Upaniṣads as a source for a dualist branch of the school known as Dvaita Vedānta, would interpret *brahman* as an infinite and

independent God, while the self would be regarded as finite and dependent. According to Madhva, then, *ātman* is dependent upon *brahman*, but they are not exactly the same.

Keeping in mind later Hindu philosophical developments, it is also worth noting that the Upaniṣads often present *ātman* in ways that contrast with the changeless and inactive senses of the self as articulated by traditions such as Sāṃkhya, Yoga, and Advaita Vedānta. As we have seen, the self can be characterised as both active and dynamic: as the inner controller (*antaryāmin*), the self is depicted as the agent or actor behind all sensing and cognising (for example, BU 3.7.23), while as a creator god, *ātman* is cast as a personal deity – closely resembling Prajāpati – from whom all creation emanates (BU 1.4.1; 1.4.17; TU 2.1; AU 1.1).

One feature of the self that is quite consistent throughout the Upaniṣads and continues to be shared by a number of subsequent schools of Hindu philosophy is that knowledge of *ātman* can lead to some sort of liberation or ultimate freedom. While the Sāṃkhya and Yoga schools would conceptualise such emancipation as *kaivalya* and Advaita Vedāntins as *mokṣa*, in the Upaniṣads the ultimate goal achieved through knowledge of the self is primarily freedom from death.[5] The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, for example, offers the instructions that if one is asked about what remains when a person dies, then one should respond: ‘That is the self free from evils – free from old age and death, free from sorrow, free from hunger and thirst; the self whose desires and intentions become real’ (CU 8.1.5). Similarly, Prajāpati has the following teaching:

> The self (*ātman*) that is free from evils, free from old age and death, free from sorrow, free from hunger and thirst; the self whose desires and intentions are real – that is the self that you should try to discover, that is the self you should seek to perceive. When someone discovers that self and perceives it, he obtains all the worlds, and all his desires are fulfilled. (CU 8.7.1)

Throughout such passages is the assumption that *ātman* is the immortal essence of a living being. Some philosophers, such as Yājñavalkya, explicitly connect their teachings about the self with ideas of karma and rebirth – though it is important to note that not all discussions about *ātman* are in the context of explaining transmigration and moral retribution and, moreover, it is not clear that all teachers in the Upaniṣads even assume this

doctrine.[6] None the less, a prominent philosophical strand in the Upaniṣads, particularly in the teachings of Yājñavalkya, is that *ātman* dwells within the body when it is alive, that *ātman*, in one way or another, is responsible for the body being alive, and that *ātman* does not die when the body dies, but rather finds a dwelling place in another body. In a dialogue with King Janaka, Yājñavalkya compares the self to a caterpillar, inching its way across the grass:

> Just as a caterpillar, having reached the end of a blade of grass, as it takes another step, draws itself together. So the self (*ātman*), having thrown down the body and having dispelled ignorance, in taking another step, draws itself together. (4.4.3)

Another teaching about the process of transmigration appears in an episode that features in both the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (5.4–10) and the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (6.2.9–16). In this scene, King Pravāhaṇa Jaivali teaches Uddālaka Āruṇi the 'knowledge of the five fires' (*pañcāgnividyā*), which describes human life as part of a cycle of regeneration, whereby the essence of life takes on different forms as it passes through different levels of existence: when humans die, they are cremated and travel in the form of smoke to the other world (the first fire), where they become soma; as soma they enter a rain cloud (the second fire) and become rain; as rain they return to earth (the third fire), where they become food; as food they enter man (the fourth fire), where they become semen; as semen they enter a woman (the fifth fire) and become an embryo. In both the *Chāndogya* and *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*s, Pravāhaṇa combines his teaching of the five fires with the discourse of the two paths of the dead – a discourse which also appears in slightly different variations in other Upaniṣads: for example, *Muṇḍaka* (1.2.10–11), *Kaṭha* (1.3), and *Praśna* (1.9–10). According to Pravāhaṇa, those who know the teaching of the five fires follow the path of the gods and enter the world of *brahman*, but those who do not know this teaching will follow the path of the ancestors and continue to be reborn.

Pravāhaṇa does not use the word *ātman*, yet as with some of Yājñavalkya's teachings, this is one of the earliest discussions of the process of rebirth. Also, like Yājñavalkya, Pravāhaṇa articulates an understanding of rebirth that suggests an essence or core is being reborn. This is made clear in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* version, where the king, whilst talking about the fifth fire, says when a man reaches the end of the

his lifespan ‘they take him to the very fire from which he came, from which he sprang’ (CU 5.9.2).

Not-self in the Nikāyas

Buddhist views regarding the self are notoriously controversial. One of the terms to appear frequently in the Pāli sources is *anattā (anātman* in Sanskrit), the negative form of *ātman*, which, as we have seen, is a central topic of philosophy in the Upaniṣads. The overlapping terminology used by Brahmins and Buddhists has provoked a wide variety of interpretations. While some scholars take *anattā* as an explicit denial of any sense of self, others suggest that a notion of self continues to lurk behind all negations.[7] A related controversy regards the extent to which Buddhist ideas of not-self were influenced by brahmanical ideas about *ātman*, as articulated in the Upaniṣads. Thomas Kasulis, presenting widespread opinion, writes: ‘The Buddha himself made *anātman*, the negation of *ātman*, an emblem of his break from the Hindu tradition around him’ (1997: 400).[8] A number of scholars, however, have questioned the degree of brahmanical influence on Buddhism. Bodhi (1997: 293), for example, rejects the suggestion that *anattā* is a negation of the Upaniṣadic *ātman*:

> While it is true that the *anattā* doctrine excludes Upanishadic ideas about the self, the purpose for which the Buddha expounded it was not to negate any specific theory of the self but to correct the universal human proclivity to seek a substantial basis of personal identity amidst the five aggregates. If this were not the case, the teaching of *anattā*, like the Buddha’s rejection of sacrifice, would hardly have any relevance outside the narrow context of ancient Brahminism.

In this section I will address these issues by looking at how the Buddhist Nikāyas[9] express their teachings of *anattā*, as well as at the audiences they seem to address. As we will see, while much of the rhetoric points to a direct engagement with the brahmanical tradition, the narrative context indicates that Buddhist teachings of not-self might be addressing other opponents, implying that Brahmins may not have been their main rivals in their debates about the self.

As with the philosophers in the Upaniṣads, the Buddha and other teachers in the Nikāyas use analogies to convey their teachings about the

self.[10] In the *Aggivacchagotta Sutta* the Buddha uses the imagery of fire to explain to Vacchagotta that any notion of self disappears after death (MN 72.19–20). The Buddha asks where a fire goes after it has been extinguished, with Vacchagotta responding that such a question does not apply because when the fuel of the fire has been put out, there is no more fire and therefore no place for fire to go. The Buddha concludes that, like asking where fire is without fuel, the question of where someone goes after death is not appropriate.

In the *Nandakovāda Sutta* (MN 146) the monk Nandaka also uses several analogies in his teaching to the *bhikkhunīs*. This *sutta* begins with Mahāpajāpatī approaching the Buddha to ask him to deliver a teaching to the *bhikkhunī*s. It turns out that Nandaka was supposed to teach the nuns, but he had been avoiding his turn. He agrees to teach, however, when the Buddha addresses him: 'Give the Bhikkhunīs a talk on the Dhamma, brahmin' (MN 146.4). Nandaka begins his talk by explaining that he will deliver his teaching in the form of questions and answers, instructing the nuns what to say to indicate when they understand, when they do not understand, and when they are doubtful or perplexed. After beginning his talk with a discussion of the 18 *dhatu*s, Nandaka describes *anattā* through the analogy of an oil lamp, which consists of oil, a wick, a flame, and the radiance of its light. All of these aspects of the oil lamp, Nandaka explains, are impermanent and subject to change. Nandaka asks the *bhikkhunī*s if it would be possible for radiance to be permanent and eternal, when the other aspects of the oil lamp on which it is dependent are impermanent and subject to change. Unsurprisingly, the *bhikkhunī*s respond with a resounding 'no'. Similarly, Nandaka explains, the six internal bases (*āyatana*s) are impermanent and subject to change, so the feelings of pleasant, painful, or neither-painful-nor-pleasant must also be impermanent and subject to change. Nandaka extends his point by comparing the external bases (*āyatana*s) to a great tree, with roots, a trunk, branches, and foliage. He then compares the inner bases to the inner flesh of a cow, the external bases to its hide, and the inner tendons, sinews, and ligaments to lust and desire. He concludes by comparing the sharp butcher's knife to noble wisdom that 'cuts, severs, and carves away the inner defilements, fetters, and bonds' (MN 146. 12). Here Nandaka uses three different analogies which build upon each other to convey the point that the various components of a human being are mutually dependent, without an essence or base.

Perhaps the most well known presentation of *anattā* is in the Buddha's second sermon, which appears in both the *Anattālakkhaṇa Sutta* of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* (SN 22.59) and in the *Mahāvagga* section of the *Vinaya*. In this teaching the Buddha addresses five ascetics who had just recently become his first followers. Here, the Buddha presents *anattā* as one of the three marks (*tilakkhaṇa*) of phenomenal existence. The full list of three marks is as follows:

1. impermanence (*anicca*);
2. suffering (*dukkha*);
3. non-self (*anattā*).

These three marks emphasise that change, degeneration, and non-essentialism are fundamental features of everything, except for *nibbāna*. Crucially, the three marks are used to describe the five psycho-physical factors that, when combined, give us a false sense of an abiding self. This doctrine, called the five aggregates (*khandha* in Pāli, *skandha* in Sanskrit) deconstructs the sense of a unified self by breaking it down into five separate factors.[11] The Buddha lists the five *khandha*s as follows:

1. form/body (*rūpa*);
2. feeling (*vedanā*);
3. recognition/perception (*saññ*a in Pāli, *saṃjñā* in Sanskrit);
4. constructing activities, volitional formations (*sankhāra* in Pāli, *saṃskāra* in Sanskrit);
5. consciousness/conscious awareness (*viññāṇa* in Pāli, *vijñāna* in Sanskrit).

When the Buddha discusses each of the five aggregates, he rhetorically asks the five ascetics: 'And that which is impermanent, subject to decay, and not-self, is it possible to regard that in this way: "This is mine, this am I, this is my self?"' Each of the five times the Buddha asks this question, the ascetics answer emphatically: 'That is impossible, Lord.' Here, the Buddha is illustrating to the ascetics that to identify any of the five *khandha*s as self, as *ātman*, would be a mistake. At the end of his discourse, the Buddha then concludes:

> Therefore, bhikkus, any kind of form ... feeling ... perception ... volitional formations ... consciousness whatsoever, whether past, future, or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near, all ... should be seen as it really is with correct wisdom thus: 'This is not mine, I am not this, this is not my self. (SN 22.59)

Similar exchanges, in which the Buddha applies the teaching of not-self to each of the five *khandha*s, appear in both the *Mahāpuṛṇṇama Sutta* (MN 109) and the *Alagaddūpama Sutta* (MN 22.26–7).[12]

In addition, the refrain of not-self is recited within the context of the 18 *dhatu*s. In the *Nandakovāda Sutta* (MN 146), discussed above, Nandaka begins his teaching to the *bhikkhunī*s with the following question: 'Is what is impermanent, suffering, and subject to change fit to be regarded thus: this I am, this is myself?' After the *bhikkhunī*s correctly respond 'no', Nandaka asks the same question about the ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind, before asking about forms, sounds, odours, flavours, tangibles, and mind objects. He then asks about the consciousness of each organ: eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, nose-consciousness, tongueconsciousness, body-consciousness, and mind-consciousness. Together, these three groups of six constitute all the 18 *dhatu*s. The same question – 'Is what is impermanent, suffering, and subject to change fit to be regarded thus: this is mine, this I am, this is myself?' – is repeated 18 times and applied to each component. Similarly, in the *Channovāda Sutta* (MN 144), Sāriputta asks the gravely ill Channa if he regards any of the 18 *dhatu*s as 'this is mine, this I am, this is my self' (MN 144.9–10); in each case Channa replies: 'This is not mine, this I am not, this is not myself' (MN 144.9–10). The *anattā* refrain is applied to other lists as well: in the *Rāhulasaṃyutta* (SN 7.18), for example, the refrain is applied to 59 categories; while in the *Mahārāhulovāda Sutta* (MN 62), a similar exchange – but with a different list of categories – appears in a discussion between the Buddha and Ānanda.

Crucially, in none of these exchanges does the Buddha explicitly claim that there is no such thing as a self; indeed, nowhere in the Nikāyas is he depicted as making explicitly negative claims, such as 'there is no self' or 'no things exist'. The Buddha's avoidance of such negative assertions is clear in the *Saḷāyatanavagga* section of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*. In a conversation with the wanderer (*paribbājaka*) Vacchagotta, who is the most prominent non-Buddhist interlocutor about the self, the Buddha remains silent when asked 'is there a self' and when asked 'is there no self' (SN 4.10). Similarly, the Buddha refuses to make the negative claim 'there is no

self’ in the *Poṭṭhapada Sutta*, when the wanderer Poṭṭhapāda asks him the ten indeterminate (*avyākatāni*) questions (DN 9.28).[13]

In most of the examples above, *anattā* is discussed within the context of the three marks. In other words, *anattā* is often presented as one component of a larger teaching. Moreover, on these occasions the three marks of existence itself is not put forth as an independent teaching, but is applied programmatically to doctrinal lists, such as the five *khandha*s and the 18 *dhatu*s. Throughout these teachings, one of the main concerns is to explain how personal continuity operates and how one can ultimately attain liberation. By applying the teaching of not-self to the five *khandha*s and 18 *dhatu*s, the Buddha argues that what we might consider to be the self is actually composed of smaller, distinct operations, each of which is subject to change, decay, and a lack of essence. The teachings of the five *khandha*s and 18 *dhatu*s do not deny that there is a continuity of character throughout one’s life and from one lifetime to the next. However, according to the Buddha, this can be attributed to the repeated occurrence of similar conditions.

As we can see, both the Upaniṣads and Nikāyas discuss the topic of self in the context of enumerating a number of psycho-physical components. But whereas the Upaniṣads discuss these components as a way of pointing to an essence or foundation they have in common, the Buddhist sources use such enumerations to emphasise the lack of any intrinsic quality or base. As an integral part of the teachings of the five *khandha*s and the 18 *dhatu*s, the three marks serve as a crucial reminder that no component of these doctrinal lists can operate as a base or foundation for the other components. As Steven Collins explains:

> things are regularly said to be not-self because there is ‘no exercising of mastery’ over them. The five constituents of phenomenal personality, the *khandhā*, are not-self because they have no ‘leader’, no ‘guide’, no ‘inner controller’ as the *Upaniṣads* had put it. (Collins 1982: 97)

When it is applied to the five *khandhā*s and other teachings, then, we might suggest that *anattā* is not so much a doctrine as it is a method for reinforcing the principles of impermanence and non-essentialism or, as Collins (1982: 12) suggests, not-self operates as a ‘soteriological strategy’.

Indeed, an understanding of *anattā* is on several occasions directly linked to achieving enlightenment, thus characterising the teaching of not-self as 'liberating knowledge' (Bronkhorst 2009: 134). During the Buddha's second sermon, for example, the five ascetics achieved enlightenment.[14] Similarly, in the *Chachakka Sutta* sixty *bhikkhu*s become enlightened while the Buddha was teaching about not-self (MN 148.41); while at the end of the *Poṭṭhapāda Sutta*, Citta, the son of an elephant trainer, is declared an *arahant* after hearing the teaching of not-self (DN 9.56). In comparison with philosophers in the Upaniṣads, who declare that knowledge of *ātman* leads to immortality and freedom from death, the Buddhist sources present the teaching of *anattā* as leading directly to the ultimate Buddhist soteriological goal of *nibbāna*.[15]

Indications of Upaniṣadic Influence on the Nikāyas

A number of scholars have highlighted examples where the Buddhist sources use terminology, narrative situations, and imagery that are reminiscent of discussions about the self in the Upaniṣads. Bronkhorst (2009: 26) notes, for example, that a specific characterisation challenged by Buddhist sources is of the self as 'joyful' (*ānanda*), a description that is prominent in the Upaniṣads (for example, TU 2.5; 2.7; KsU 3.8). Indeed, according to Bronkhorst (2009: 25), this is part of a wider conceptualisation of the self that is rejected by the Buddhists: 'the self that is permanent, joyful, and not subject to change'. The similarities between what the Buddhists challenge and what the Upaniṣads put forth as the self, lead Bronkhorst (2009: 20, 25) to speculate that the Buddha may 'have been familiar with the contents of some Upaniṣads or of parts of them'.

A similar example appears in the *Kosalasaṃyutta* of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*. Here there is a short dialogue between King Pasenadi and his wife Queen Mallikā, in which the king discusses the self as that which is 'dear' (*piya*): 'Is there, Mallikā, anyone more dear to you than yourself?' (SN 3.8) The terminology, along with the use of a similar narrative situation, recalls a conversation in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, in which Yājñavalkya characterises the self as 'dear' (*priyā*)[16] when talking to his wife Maitreyī

(BU 2.4; 4.5). As Bodhi (2000: 401–2, n. 212) comments: ‘The conversation between King Pasenadi and Mallikā is strikingly reminiscent of the discussion between the sage Yājñavalkya and his wife Maitreyī .... It is conceivable that the Buddhist conversation is modeled after the Upaniṣad but with a different message.’ As I have explored elsewhere, other narrative scenarios in the Nikāyas that are reminiscent of scenes in the Upaniṣads include the *Ambaṭṭha Sutta* and *Sāmaññaphala Sutta*.[17]

An engagement with the brahmanical tradition is also apparent in the shared use of fire imagery in the teachings of about the self. As we have seen, in both the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (5.4–10) and *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (6.2.9–16) Pravāhaṇa Jaivali discloses the knowledge of the five fires (*pañcāgnividyā*), a doctrine which links karma to the process of rebirth.[18] We have also seen the Buddha use fire imagery to convey his teaching that form does not continue to exist after its causes have disappeared. As Vacchagotta replies to the Buddha: ‘The fire burned in dependence on its fuel of grass and sticks. When that is used up, if it does not get any more fuel, being without fuel, it is reckoned as extinguished’ (MN 72.19). Such fire imagery extends to teachings of the five *khandha*s, which, as Gombrich (1996: 68–9) has suggested, on some occasions refers specifically to a bundle of fire sticks, as each *khandha* is compared to the fuel for fire, with the Buddha teaching that the way towards enlightenment is to run out of fuel. As King (1999: 80) elaborates:

> The five ‘bundles’ are no doubt an allusion to the bundles of fire-sticks used by the brahmanical priests in the administering of their five ritual fire sacrifices. The allegorisation of the fire sacrifice had already taken place within the early Upaniṣadic material.

Thus, whereas Pravāhaṇa in the Upaniṣads uses fire as a metaphor to explain continuity from one lifetime to the next, the Buddha draws upon the same imagery to emphasise non-essentialism and impermanence.

Another similarity between the Upaniṣads and Nikāyas is the use of repetition. As we have seen, the Upaniṣads suggest that one can learn about the self through repeated affirmations. Most famously, Uddālaka Āruṇi repeats the phrase ‘This is the self, that is what you are’ when teaching his son Śvetaketu. Gethin (1998: 137) has suggested that the Buddha’s words in the teaching of not-self are an inversion of the positive affirmations of self that are declared in the Upaniṣads: ‘in the phrase “this is not mine, I am not

this, this is not my self" there appears to be a deliberate echo and rebuttal of the Chāndogya Upaniṣad's "this is the self, this is what you are"'. While the repetition in the Upaniṣads encourages followers to identify with the teaching of *ātman*, the repetition in the Buddhist sources operates as a persistent and emphatic reminder that one should not identify oneself with any notion of stability or permanence. Such repetition is particularly important when we consider that both the Upaniṣads and Nikāyas were part of oral traditions, indicating a link to mnemonic practices such as recitation and chanting. In other words, besides the arguments put forth for their philosophical positions, both the Brahmins and Buddhists reinforce their stances through practices of repeated rehearsal.

Self and Not-self in Dialogue

Perhaps the most significant shared literary feature of the Upaniṣads and Nikāyas is the use of dialogical narratives: both traditions articulate their views about the self in the context of conversations, teachings, and debates. In this final section I would like to explore some of the ways dialogue serves to characterise the teachings about the self, as well as how it situates such teachings within a social context.

A recurring theme in the Upaniṣads is that teachings of the self are often presented in contradistinction to the older, more orthodox knowledge that is primarily based on ritual. In the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, for example, Śvetaketu returns to his father after twelve years of formal Vedic education, but does not know 'the rules of substitution' (CU 6.1.1). This initial episode exposing Śvetaketu's lack of true knowledge serves as a striking contrast to his father's subsequent teaching – as discussed above – that focuses on the self and contains the well-known refrain: this self, this is what you are. This episode, as well as others (for example, *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 7.1.1–3; *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* 1.4), indicates that there is something lacking in the traditional Vedic education, that despite its importance it does not cover what the Upaniṣads consider to be most crucial to know. As such, knowledge of *ātman* consistently represents the new Upaniṣadic knowledge that is defined in contradistinction to the traditional Vedic knowledge about the ritual.

On some occasions, discourses about the self are presented within the context of competitive verbal debates, where cows, gold, prestige, patronage, and even lives are at stake. In a discussion that appears in both the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* (2.1) and *Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad*s (4), the brahmin Gārgya's discourse based on Vedic homologies is replaced by King Ajātaśatru's teaching about the vital functions (*prāṇā*) and the self (*ātman*). While the Brahmin's teaching consists of a series of rehearsed statements all following the same formula, the king's discourse is an attempt to explain processes of the body and mind. Here, the Upaniṣads juxtapose two styles of discourse, clearly privileging a new type of teaching which focuses on the self. Similarly, in the well known debate (*brahmodya*) in King Janaka's court (BU 3), Yājñavalkya's arguments about the self are contrasted with his opponents' views, many of which are similar to the scripted statements we find in the Vedic ritual texts. Although our Upaniṣadic philosophers do not all agree on what *ātman* is, there is a shared rhetorical thrust in which teachings about the self are directed towards particular audiences and social situations.

As we have seen in the previous section, the Buddhist texts make a number of rhetorical moves to position their teachings in opposition to the more permanent notion of selfhood discussed in the Upaniṣads. But while such examples seem to point to an anti-brahmanical dimension of the teaching of not-self, it is noteworthy that the teachings of not-self are directed at non-brahmanical rivals as much as they are directed at Brahmins. In the *Brahmajāla Sutta*, for example, the Buddha teaches his monks about the 62 kinds of wrong views, many of which are presented as wrong views regarding the self. As the Buddha explains, some 'ascetics and Brahmins' (*samaṇa-brāhmaṇā*) are eternalists 'who proclaim the eternity of the self and the world' (1.30), some are non-eternalists who proclaim the 'partial eternity and the partial non-eternity of the self and the world' (2.1); some are partly eternalists and partly non-eternalists (2.14); some are chanceoriginationists (2.30); some proclaim the doctrine of consciousness after death (2.38); some proclaim the doctrine of unconsciousness after death (3.1); some are annihilationists (3.9).

While some of these views, such as eternalism and the doctrine of consciousness after death might be attributed to philosophers in the Upaniṣads, other views are clearly not associated with the brahmanical tradition. As Walshe points out, the view that a material self exists after

death is associated with the Ājīvikas (1995: 542, n. 66), while the view that an immaterial self exists after death is associated with the Jains (1995: 542, n. 67). The Buddha mentions the views of other rival groups as well, including: logicians (2.20); 'eel wrigglers' (*amarā-vikheppikā*) (2.23) – those who resort to evasive views – who, as Peter Harvey (2004: 2) suggests, were 'a group of Skeptics who felt that human beings were incapable of having knowledge of such matters as Self and rebirth', and Annihilationists, who 'were materialists who held that a person was completely destroyed at death'. Although the views of many of the Buddha's opponents remain unclear, we do know that some notion of self was central to both the Ājīvika and Jain philosophies. In the context of the *Brahmajāla Sutta*, the brahmanical views of self, although challenged, are just a few of the many positions about the self that the Buddha criticises.

Furthermore, Brahmins are not represented in the narratives as the Buddha's interlocutors when he presents his teaching of not-self, despite the fact that Brahmins are depicted as the main rival group in narrative scenes about debate more generally.[19] As Manné points out, 18 of the 34 *sutta*s in the *Dīgha Nikāya* are about debate, with half of these featuring a debate between the Buddha and a prominent Brahmin (1992: 117).[20] Similarly, the entire *Brāhmaṇavagga* section of the *Majjhima Nikāya* features debates between Buddhists and Brahmins. Arguments from silence are always risky, but considering the centrality of the teaching of notself along with the frequency that Brahmins appear as interlocutors, it is striking that Buddhist narratives do not depict conversations or debates between Buddhists and Brahmins about the self.

Within the context of the narratives, the most likely audience members for the Buddha's teaching of not-self are Buddhist monks. As we have seen, the most well-known teaching of not-self is delivered in his second sermon to his first group of followers. Other discussions of not-self also tend to be between members of the Buddhist community: in the *Brahmajāla Sutta* (DN 1), *Alagaddūpama Sutta* (MN 22), *Mahāpuṛṇṇama Sutta* (MN 109), and the *Chabbisodhana Sutta* (MN 112) the Buddha teaches not-self to the Bhikkhus;[21] in the *Channovāda Sutta* (MN 144) both Sāriputta and Channa are already members of the *saṅgha*;[22] a similar exchange appears in the *Mahārāhulovāda Sutta* (MN 62) in a discussion between the Buddha and Ānanda; and the Buddha also discusses not-self with Ānanda in the *Mahānidāna Sutta* (DN 15).[23] On these occasions, not-self is discussed in a

non-competitive, pedagogic exchange between members of the Buddhist community.

Yet, even when addressing his own followers, the Buddha often presents his views in contradistinction to those of his rivals. As we have seen, a common feature of the Buddha's teaching of not-self is its juxtaposition with the views of some 'ascetics and Brahmins' (*samaṇa-brāhmaṇā*). Moreover, on some occasions the Buddha's views are put forth as responses one should say to a hypothetical opponent. In his conversation with Poṭṭhapāda, for example, the Buddha instructs his interlocutor:

> Poṭṭhapāda, if others ask us 'What, friend, is this gross acquired self whose abandonment you preach ...?' Being so asked, we should reply: 'This is that gross acquired self for getting rid of which we teach a doctrine for getting rid of the gross acquired self.' (DN 9.43)

The Buddha continues his anticipation of the questions of rivals, instructing Poṭṭhapāda what to say if asked about the mind-made acquired self and the formless acquired self (DN 9.44–5). When Citta enters the conversation, the Buddha prefaces his teachings in a similarly anticipatory manner: 'Citta, suppose they were to ask you ... how would you answer?' (DN 9.49). Here we see that the Buddha delivers his teaching as if it were a rehearsal for future debates. This rhetorical strategy of delivering a teaching as a response to potential rivals appears on several occasions in the Nikāyas.

Despite the anticipation of potential Brahmin interlocutors, however, rarely in the Nikāyas do we find Brahmins in discussions about *anattā*. The only occasion I could find in which a Brahmin participates in a discussion about not-self is in the *Nandakovāda Sutta* (MN 146), in which the monk Nandaka, who is referred to as a Brahmin, instructs the *bhikkhunī*s. While this passes without comment in the text, it is perhaps significant that a Brahmin serves as a mouthpiece for the Buddhist teaching of not-self. On a few occasions the teaching of not-self is put forth in a debate with a non-Buddhist, but none of these interlocutors is explicitly a Brahmin. In the *Poṭṭhapāda Sutta* (DN 9), for example, Poṭṭhapāda and his follower Citta are both described as 'wanderers' (*paribbājaka*). Similarly, in the *Aggivacchagotta Sutta* (MN 72), the Buddha teaches *anattā* to the *paribbājaka* Vacchagotta. On another occasion, in the *Cūḷasaccaka Sutta* (MN 35), the Buddha debates about views of the self with Saccaka, who is described as the son of Jain parents ('the Nigaṇṭha's son'; MN 35.2). When

we look at the Buddha's interlocutors in discussions about not-self, alongside the various views of not-self that he describes, we might conclude that, although some views of not-self seem to be directed at Brahmins, other traditions may have been their more significant rivals on these issues.

Conclusion

As Samuel (2008: 100) observes, the characterisation of Buddhism as a protest movement against Brahmanism has been widely rejected. None the less, it is still common to present Buddhist notions of not-self as a response to or rejection of brahmanical ideas of the self. While this may partially be true, the Buddhist sources suggest that the situation was far more complicated. As we have seen, the Nikāyas do indicate that some of their views about selfhood are in response to brahmanical ideas. Moreover, the shared modes of expression and rhetorical strategies used to convey teachings of self indicate that Buddhist composers may have had some degree of familiarity with brahmanical literature, such as the Upaniṣads. However, while the Buddhists do not accept brahmanical notions of self, it is also the case that they resist explicitly denying the existence of a self. In this light, it is perhaps more accurate to portray the Buddhist response to brahmanical ideas as one of questioning basic assumptions, rather than outright rejection. Indeed, in the *Brahmajāla Sutta* (DN 1), the Buddha acknowledges that other views can lead to their stated goals, telling the monks that such views as eternalism (DN 1.36), part eternalism (2.15), finitude (2.22), and infinitude (2.22) can lead to destinations in another world. Such views, then, are not completely false or ineffective in achieving certain results. In other words, the Buddha does not reject these views on the grounds that they are not efficacious, but rather because the results they achieve are not desirable and that they are incapable of bringing about the goals set forth by the Buddha. Even more revealing is the fact that the Buddhist sources seem more concerned with other, non-brahmanical potential opponents when articulating their idea of not-self. This is particularly striking when considering how much textual attention is devoted to debates with Brahmins. Thus, while the Buddhists were entrenched in debates about selfhood with rival traditions, the narratives suggest that Brahmins were not their main opponents on this issue;

conversely, while Brahmins are often depicted as the Buddhists' main rival group, the narrative accounts of debates with Brahmins are not about the self.

[1] All references to the Upaniṣads are to the edition and translation of Olivelle (1998).

[2] A similar affirmation appears in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, with the declaration 'I am he' (4.4.12).

[3] See Brereton (1990: 129) for a discussion of the different paradigms used by Uddālaka and Yājñavalkya to describe the self.

[4] For a discussion of Śaṅkara's treatment of these phrases, see Hirst (2005: 141–5).

[5] For a discussion of the topic of death in the debate in King Janaka's court, see Lindquist (in press).

[6] While Bronkhorst (2007: 120) perhaps goes too far in characterising karma and rebirth as completely alien to the Vedic worldview, he raises the important point that these ideas are not nearly as prevalent in the Upaniṣads as they often are assumed to be.

[7] See Collins (1982: 4–12) and Watson (2006: 51–5) for discussions about contrasting interpretations of *anattā*.

[8] See also Hamilton (2000: 22–3).

[9] All references to the *Dīgha Nikāya* are from Walshe (1995), to the *Majjhima Nikāya* from Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi (1995), and to the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* from Bodhi (2000).

[10] As Gombrich comments: 'Summaries of the Buddha's teaching rarely convey how much use he made of simile and metaphor' (1996: 63).

[11] While the doctrine has generally been understood as an explanation of the psychophysical aspects of a person, Gethin has argued that the five *khandha*s are 'not so much the presentation of an analysis of man as object, but rather the understanding of the nature of conditioned existence from the point of view of the experiencing subject' (1986: 49). For other detailed discussions of the five *skandha*s, see Hamilton (2000: 18–31, *passim*), Collins (1982: *passim*), and Siderits (2007: 32–68).

[12] In the *Chabbisodhana Sutta* (MN 112) the Buddha does not use the same refrain, but he similarly discusses each of the six elements – (1) earth, (2) water, (3) fire, (4) air, (5) space, and (6) consciousness – in terms of *anattā*, treating each element as 'not self, with no self based' on that element (MN 112.7–8). See Gethin (1986: 43–4).

[13] While the Buddha's refusal to answer such questions directly has contributed to the contrasting interpretations, mentioned above, about the implications of *anattā*, it is worth noting that the lack of explicit denials of the self in the Nikāyas contrasts with more overt statements of 'no-self' that are expressed in later Buddhist philosophy.

[14] See also SN 3.22.59.

[15] It is worth noting, however, that whereas the Nikāyas are quite explicit about the effect of Buddhist teachings on those who learn them, the Upaniṣadic narratives tend to end more inconclusively, without specifying whether the students who hear teachings about the self achieve the promised results (see Black (2011b: 109–10).

[16] Yājñavalkya also uses this term in a conversation with King Janaka (BU 4.1.3).

[17] For a discussion on the similarities between the *Ambaṭṭha Sutta* and the Upaniṣads, see Black (2011a). For comments on the similarities between the *Sāmaññaphala Sutta* and the Upaniṣads, see Deussen (2004: 475), Goto (2005: 72, n. 4), and Black (2007: 70–74).

[18] See Killingley (1997) for an excellent discussion of this teaching.

[19] Jayarava has made a similar point on his blog, but has suggested a different explanation; see <http://jayarava.blogspot.com/2010/09/early-buddhists-and-atmanbrahman.html>.

[20] See Black (2009) for a discussion and modification of Manné's classification of encounters between Buddhists and Brahmins as debates.

[21] See also the following discussions between the Buddha and Bhikkhus about notself in the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* 3.22.7–8, 3.22.11, 3.22.59, 3.22.81, 3.22.118, 3.22.119, and 3.22.143–5. It is noteworthy that all these examples are from the *Khandhavagga* of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*, a section that is almost entirely devoted to the five *khandha*s.

[22] Sāriputta also appears in a discussion about not-self with the monk Yamaka (SN 3.22.85) and with the householder Nakulapitā (SN 3.22.1). Channa also appears as a listener to the teaching of not-self, with the Bhikkhus as his teachers (SN 3.22.90).

[23] Other individual monks with whom the Buddha discusses not-self include Rāhula (SN 2.18.22, 3.22.91, and 3.22.92), a certain Bhikkhu (SN 3.22.68–9), Rādha (SN 3.22.71), and Surādha (SN 3.22.72).

Chapter 2
Why Didn’t Siddhārtha Gautama Become a Sāṃkhya Philosopher, After All?

Marzenna Jakubczak

The chapter is divided into five sections. First, I shall briefly describe the phenomenon of Kāpil Maṭh, a Sāṃkhya-Yoga *āśrama* founded in the early twentieth century by a charismatic Bengali scholar-monk Swāmi Hariharānanda Āraṇya (1869–1947); while referring to Hariharānanda’s writings I will also consider the idea of the re-establishment of an extinct philosophical school. Secondly, I shall specify the method of analysis I apply while addressing the question raised in the title of my chapter and discuss some relevant Sanskrit and Pāli sources. Thirdly, I intend to focus on Aśvaghoṣa’s record in reconstructing the Buddha’s argument against the self. Then I shall offer a possible defence of the self reinterpreted in Buddhist terms and formulated, so to say, ‘on behalf’ of the revived Sāṃkhya-Yoga school. Finally, I will conclude by explaining why and on what assumptions Sāṃkhya can benefit from Buddhist critiques.

Kāpil Maṭh and the ‘Reincarnation’ of Sāṃkhya-Yoga

The current guru of Kāpil Maṭh, Bhāskar Āraṇya, who like his two predecessors lives permanently in an artificial cave constructed inside the building of the Maṭh,[1] in his public talks calls the Buddha Śākyamuni ‘the greatest of all Kāpila’s disciples and the most accomplished philosopher within the whole Sāṃkhya tradition’. Along with this striking statement, there are images of the Buddha in a seated meditative posture painted on the

doors of the Kāpil Mandir in Madhupur, emphasising a close connection between the Buddhist and the Sāṃkhya-Yoga ideals. In interviews devotees describe their two late Swāmijīs' personalities as 'Buddhist-like'. A visitor to the *āśrama* may find it somewhat astonishing that a contemporary non-Buddhist monastic community, which regards itself to be a reestablished lineage of the Sāṃkhya-Yoga that had been thought to be broken and extinct for several centuries, expresses such deep respect for the authority of the Buddha, none less so than for Pañcaśikha, Patañjali or īśvarakṛṣṇa. Apparently, the Buddha not only *did* become a Sāṃkhya philosopher, in a sense, but is recognised by modern Sāṃkhya-Yoga proponents as the most prominent figure within this tradition after Kāpila.

These observations based on fieldwork in Kāpil Maṭh and a study of the publications of the ā*śrama* in English and Sanskrit encourage the present author to set her enquiry within a contemporary interpretative context, and apart from focusing on the Sāṃkhya-Yoga response to the Buddha's critique, briefly reconsider the relation in Indian philosophy between traditional and innovative readings, or inheritance and originality, through the example of this unique monastic community.

The life story of Hariharānanda Āraṇya, the founder of Kāpil Maṭh, is worth recalling, though we know little about it as he forbade his disciples from writing any form of biography whatsoever.[2] So we can only mention a handful of basic facts. He was born to a well-to-do Bengali family and started his intellectual and spiritual quest at an early age. He joined the famous Presidency College in Kolkata, but, progressively losing interest in formal education, decided to leave it before graduation. Soon after, he was to adopt an ascetic lifestyle and dedicated himself entirely to a pursuit of liberating knowledge. Patañjali's *Yogasūtra* was to be a huge inspiration on his spiritual path. Around about 1890 he was initiated into Sāṃkhya-Yoga by Swāmi Trilokī Āraṇya, who was at that time returning from pilgrimage to Gaṅgāsāgar and was maintaining a vow of silence. Instead of a verbal instruction, the *muni* handed to Hariharānanda a locked wooden box with the key deposited inside it. The young monk grasped the message and needed his teacher no more. Shortly afterwards he spent some time in complete renouncement, in the solitary caves of Barābar hills near Gaya, in Bihar. He then continued his meditative practice and studies of the ancient Hindu and Buddhist philosophical texts independently, spending some years at a small hermitage on the bank of the Ganges before moving to

Madhupur, in Jharkhand, where he decided to reside for good isolating himself within an expanded artificial cave. While leading a hermit's life, Swāmiji wrote numerous philosophical commentaries and essays, including *Sāṃkhyatattvāloka*, an interpretation of the Sāṃkhya texts, and *Bhāsvatī*, a masterly annotation to Patañjali's *Yogasūtra* and Vyāsa's *Bhāṣya*. Most of his contributions, marked with erudition and philosophical insight of a practising *yogin* with a non-sectarian outlook, were written in Sanskrit and Bengali. He was able to read Pāli, Sinhalese and Burmese, and prepared the first rendering of *Dhammapada* from Pāli to Sanskrit, while publishing the first Bengali translation of Śāntideva's *Bodhicaryāvatāra*.

The writings he left are original, thorough and consistent. Although he uses philosophical Sanskrit vocabulary quite freely citing from a variety of Indian sources, Āraṇya's interpretations are coherent, based on profound scholarship and formulated clearly from the classical Sāṃkhya-Yoga perspective which is, as he says, 'logical and systematic right through' (Āraṇya 2005: v). Nevertheless, his argument, inspired by a sort of pan-Indian universalism, is not devoid of syncretism. Moreover, in his *Karmatattva*, a comprehensive elucidation of the Sāṃkhya-Yoga theory of action, the Bengali ascetic tries to apply a comparative perspective, referring frequently to Western philosophical thought, both ancient and modern, and also making numerous remarks on the findings of the science of the nineteenth century right up to the 1930s (Āraṇya 2008: 1–58). Yet in his comparative studies the main focus is on intra-Indian discourse. Firstly, he believes that the philosophical positions of Sāṃkhya-Yoga and early Buddhism have much more in common than was conventionally acknowledged, arguing that 'they are the branches of the same tree, nourished by the same roots'. Like *āstika darśana*s, Buddhism belongs to the tradition of the *ṛṣi*s called *ārṣa dharma*, or '*ārṣaism*', inaccurately termed Brahmanism (Āraṇya 2003: 22). As Hariharānanda puts it, *ārṣa dharma* was broadly divided into two schools or sections: one, called *pravṛtti dharma* (the creed of worldliness), preached and practised the performance of religious rites leading to worldly happiness, while the other, called *nivṛtti dharma* (the creed of renunciation), propounded the path of liberation from all worldly conditioning. The latter creed, of which Paramaṛṣi Kāpila was known to be the greatest exponent, owed its origin to those *ṛṣi*s who had discovered the way to selfrealisation and developed

from their own spiritual experience a complete system of theory and practice for guiding others along that path (Āraṇya 2000: xxi–xxv). Attainment of the ultimate aim of *pravṛtti dharma* involves the worship of God or saints, the practice of virtues along with the performance of good deeds (*puṇya*) and proper rituals. *Nivṛtti dharma*, on the other hand, points out that the ultimate aim of freedom from the cycle of rebirth can be achieved only through a perfect knowledge of one's true self.

In his introduction to a rendering of the *Dhammapada*, Hariharānanda claims that the majority of mankind can only follow *pravṛtti dharma* by practising *puṇya*, which he calls 'the lower rungs of the great ladder, which goes to *nirvāṇa*' (Āraṇya 2003: 22). He emphasises that in this matter there is no difference between the Buddhists and the *ārṣa*s, as both may promote either *pravṛtti* or *nivṛtti dharma* aspirations. Āraṇya admits that the Buddha spoke of *yajña*s as possessing little merit, although he never put them altogether beyond the pale of meritorious actions. And, as we can easily see in the further development of Mahāyāna Buddhism, especially in Tibet, cult and ritualism expanded and eventually, paradoxically, became an essential aspect of Buddhist life. The *Mahābhārata*, on the other hand, appreciates the value of knowledge and even prizes it beyond ritual by saying that a single truth is of greater merit than a thousand *aśvamedha* sacrifices (Āraṇya 2003: 22).

Thus the author of *Bhāsvatī* argues for a special kind of pan-Indian universalism which challenges such entrenched categories as *āstika/nāstika*, *ātman/anātman* or *seśvaravāda/nirīśvaravāda*. The only essential distinction one should never overlook when describing a particular school or philosopher is the one between *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti* positions. What Āraṇya tries to emphasise above all is the uniqueness of human endeavour focused on self-knowledge-through-renunciation and presents it as a very narrow current within the multiple and disparate Indian philosophical tradition. He generalises that 'unlike *pravṛtti dharma* which has been prevalent in all parts of the world, *nivṛtti dharma* originated in, and belonged exclusively to, India' (Āraṇya 2000: xxii). However, what must be stressed here is that this historical claim serves no cultural or sectarian usurpation because, as Āraṇya sarcastically or just realistically observes, every genuine spiritual tradition centred on renunciation cannot continue unbroken for a long time; each philosophical school or yogic monastery of

this kind can function properly and stick closely to its founder's recommendations for a generation or two, after which irregularities creep in and various sects and fractions arise (Āraṇya 2003: 21). Interestingly, despite the fact that he considers the stability and durability of transmission of *nivṛtti dharma* to be extremely fragile, Hariharānanda has no doubt about its eternal, universal accessibility to highly motivated and persistent seekers, no matter what time or place, religious tradition or philosophical school they come from. According to his successor's account, Swāmiji maintained that yogic lore conducive to self-knowledge, unlike any physical science and other branches of knowledge, has not evolved over time or, in other words, undergoes no historical development:

> Every yogic practitioner who has attained liberation has comprehensive knowledge of the principles of reality and is fully enlightened. From this perspective there is no such thing as *originality* among the enlightened yogic practitioners and preceptors. They have only organised the yogic principles in new ways to suit their own times so that their contemporaries may comprehend them properly. There may be *originality in the presentation* but not in the ultimate knowledge of yoga. (Dharmāmegha 2003: 148; my italics)

Now let us consider the questions that arise when we try to characterise and appraise such a phenomenon as Kāpil Maṭh. Is it possible to re-establish a philosophical tradition which had once broken down and had disappeared for centuries? Is it likely to revitalise *the same* line of thinking, viewing, philosophy making and practice in accordance with the theoretical exposition of the right insight into the self achieved by an accomplished teacher, a master, the founder of a school? And to revive a school, is it sufficient if a contemporary philosopher, being an outstanding *yogin* and a knowledgeable, brilliant commentator of the canonical *sūtra*s, proclaims the texts of a particular ancient tradition, like Sāṃkhya-Yoga, to be the best articulation of his own insights and therefore an authoritative source for the followers of the 'new', re-established school identified with the 'old' or generic one? Or in other words, should we regard the revival of Sāṃkhya-Yoga carried out by the Kāpil Maṭh founder to be the opening of another period of development in the long lasting tradition started some seven centuries BCE? If our answer to the above questions is to be a negative one, we should also query the continuity of the same tradition between Kāpila and Pañcaśikha, and between the later and Vārṣagaṇya and then īśvarakṛṣṇa, since we lack evidence that there were no similar gaps within

the long period that covered proto- and classical Sāṃkhya development. Perhaps it was the case that the subsequent Sāṃkhya philosophers, whose names have been luckily recorded, were forced to recover and re-establish this school numerous times, again and again, by updating the old issues with their own exegetical insights, and thus were contributing to the 'tradition text', as Eliot Deutsch might say (Deutsch 1989: 165–73).

Reconstructing as Reinterpreting

Putting aside the doubts and considerations evoked by Kāpil Maṭh, I would like to briefly define the perspective I am going to take when discussing the issue in question, namely: 'Why didn't Siddhārtha Gautama become a Sāṃkhya philosopher?' I am primarily interested in revisiting and reinterpreting the doctrinal reasons or obstacles which prevented the Buddha from following his alleged Sāṃkhya teacher Ārāḍa Kālāma and contributing to this presumably the most ancient and, in his time, the most influential indigenous philosophical tradition. Although I shall start with some textual references, I am sceptical about the possible results of any textual or historical research as far as the above question is concerned. What I shall try to stick to is philosophical and doctrinal, or purely conceptual, analysis which seems as promising and likely to lead to a conclusion as it is disputable and open to counter-argument. The reason for adopting such a 'non-orthodox' Indological perspective which allows me to reinterpret the record in hope for a meaningful answer is the fact that my question is meant as a philosophical dilemma rather than a biographical or historical problem.

When posing such an enquiry, one comes across some obvious historical hindrances, first and foremost:

1. Can Ārāḍa Kālāma, believed to be a historical figure, be legitimately identified with the Sāṃkhya, or rather proto-Sāṃkhya, school?
2. Is Siddhārtha's rejection of Ārāḍa's views equivalent to criticism of the classical, fully developed, doctrine of the Sāṃkhya *darśana* provided by the later Buddhist tradition in the texts of Vasubandhu or Dignāga?

To answer the first question I refer to one Sanskrit and three fragments of Pāli sources. Although they cannot determine the historical fact of Ārāḍa's existence, I shall argue for a positive answer to the first question. While discussing the second issue, I focus on the critical arguments against the Sāṃkhya metaphysics ascribed to the Buddha himself and I try to trace and reinterpret some points which allow us to see Gautama's way as akin to Kālāma's, or at least somewhat closer to it than Vasubandhu or Dignāga would like to believe.

An obvious inspiration for the question in the title of this chapter is an episode of the Buddha's life recorded by Aśvaghoṣa in his famous Sanskrit poem *Buddhacarita* (*c.* first or second century CE), in which he was initially inspired but then disappointed with the philosophical teachings of a popular spiritual seer named Ārāḍa Kālāma. Apart from Book 12 (*Ārāḍadarśana*), which is wholly devoted to the meeting of Gautama with Ārāḍa, Aśvaghoṣa also mentions his name on some other occasions. In 7.54–5 a certain *yogin* recommends to Gautama *muni* Ārāḍa as the famous teacher living in Viṃdhyakoṣṭha who gained insight into absolute bliss, although the same Brahmin ascetic, 'lying in the ashes and clothing in the bark of trees', foresees that being strong and free of passion, Gautama will go further after having rejected his teacher's theory. In 11.69 Siddhārtha expresses his own wish to meet the sage Ārāḍa who proclaims liberation (Olivelle 2008: 322–3).[3]

Book 12, most informative for our topic, starts with a warm welcome of the Bodhisattva by the renowned guru. Impelled by the noble nature of the prince, Kālāma sets about presenting his 'firmly settled' doctrine in a concise form. He promises to tell him 'how mortal existence arises and how it evolves' (12.15–16). In three subsequent sections of verses Aśvaghoṣa briefly outlines the philosophical position of the guru by presenting both his metaphysical theory (12.17–42) and his way of meditation, which completes philosophical argument as a practical means to liberation (12.43–63), and then presents the Bodhisattva's rejection of Ārāḍa's teaching (12.69–82). The theory reconstructed by Aśvaghoṣa can be recognised as the doctrine of Sāṃkhya due to some of the statements being very much in line with its early formulation, known from the epics (that is, the *Mokṣadharmaparvan* and the *Bhagavadgītā*),[4] the Upaniṣads (for example, *Katha* and *Śvetāśvatara*), and in some points with its later classical

codification given by īśvarakṛṣṇa (*c.* fifth century CE). Among the crucial points capturing the ‘spirit’ of this school we find:

1. categorisation of nature into 25 *tattva*s and distinction between the evolvent and the evolute (*prakṛti–vikāra*; *Buddhacarita* 12.18);
2. dualism between the objective and subjective realm (*kṣetra–kṣetrajña*; 12.20);
3. a distinction between the manifest and unmanifest nature (*vyakta–avyata*; 12.22);
4. acceptance of the authority of Kāpila, the founder of the Sāṃkhya tradition (12.21), and reference to three other Sāṃkhya teachers: Jaigīṣava and Janaka, both mentioned in the *Mahābhārata*, and Elder Parāśara, probably the same as Pañcaśikha (12.67);
5. statement of the three causes of continual rebirth (*saṃsāra*; 12.23): ignorance, or wrong knowledge (*ajñāna*), the results of former actions (*karman*) and desire (*tṛṣṇā*);[5]
6. emphasis on egotism, or misattribution of the self (*ahaṃkāra*),[6] as the basic manifestation of ignorance and the source of suffering (12.32) together with misunderstanding (*vipratyaya*; 12.25), confusion of thought, or doubt (*saṃdeha*; 12.27), wrong conjunction (*abhisaṃplava*; 12.28), and indiscrimination between the conscious and unconscious (*pratibuddhāprabuddhayoḥ*; 12.29);
7. rejection of sacrifices and rites as false, inefficient means to liberation (12.30; cf. SK 2);
8. recognising fivefold ignorance as the root of suffering (12.33);[7]
9. considering discrimination between the following four categories as crucial and effective for liberation: the conscious versus the unconscious, the manifest versus the unmanifest (12.40).[8]

The above characteristics make it clear that the author of the *Buddhacarita* was fairly familiar with the doctrine of early Sāṃkhya in a form preceding the classical formulation of īśvarakṛṣṇa. What is lacking when compared with the *Sāṃkhyakārikā* is that this theory does not include the doctrine of the three constituents of nature (*guṇa*s), so crucial for the classical Sāṃkhya discourse,[9] and secondly, that it does not use the term ‘*puruṣa*’, which in Aśvaghoṣa’s description is replaced with ‘*kṣetrajña*’ or ‘*ātman*’,[10]

and neither does it mention the plurality of *puruṣa*s. Moreover, one may also notice that metaphysical dualism, a distinctive feature of the Sāṃkhya *darśana*, is not in the foreground, though it is definitely not absent from Ārāḍa's discourse either.

In the following section of the twelfth canto (12.47–66) Siddhārtha's teacher inducts him into a graded meditative practice. He suggests that he start practice with cultivating absolute contentment, indifference to all feelings, meditating on the authoritative texts, then observing one's mental fluctuations, like fear or passion, and calming them by restraining the senses until one attains complete tranquillity of mind. Then Ārāḍa explains four stages of contemplation (*dhyāna*) including:

1. discrimination that still involves reasoning (*vitarka*), this being the result of separation from desires, evil intentions and the like;
2. contemplation being the result of separation from that 'which has its own pleasure and ecstasy';
3. ecstatic contemplation devoid of pleasure;
4. contemplation which is separate from all pleasure or pain.

The one who rises beyond this fourth stage of contemplation, having seen the imperfections of all embodied selves (*śarīrinām*), is called 'the wise' by the Sāṃkhya teacher, as he can ascend to an even higher wisdom that would rid him of his body, upon which he culminates either by exerting his will to experience a feeling of void space or nothingness (*ākāśa*).[11]

Aśvaghoṣa's record reminds us of both the stages of the spiritual path described in the first *pāda* of the *Yogasūtra* as well as the Buddhist doctrine of the four *jhāna*s. This similarity may have different explanations: either the *sannyāsin*s of the early Sāṃkhya-Yoga tradition had developed a meditative technique which was used and further modified both within the Buddhist and the Yoga *darśana* circles, or this description does not actually refer to a supposed Kālāma's Sāṃkhya school but was simply projected by Aśvaghoṣa, who only knew the Buddha's conception of the *jhāna*s and wrongly ascribed its simplified version to Ārāḍa. We can speculate as to which of these two options is more likely, or better substantiated historically, but as careful and trustful readers of the *Buddhacarita* all we can say is that the Sāṃkhya teacher, having presented his metaphysical theory, recommends complementing it with a practical method necessary to

verify his teachings. Here, Sāṃkhya is apparently not contrasted with Yoga, unlike in the epic record where Sāṃkhya is often reduced to the theoretical aspect and Yoga to the practical one. Thus it should rather be translated as a ‘theory of practice’ or ‘practised theory’. This attitude makes Ārāḍa a true philosophy teacher, provided that by ‘philosophy’ we mean what classical Indian *darśana*s attempted to realise – an enquiry which involves a complete elevation of the moral life and the attainment of an unruffled peace of mind, or what ancient Greek philosophers were also interested in, namely to *practise* philosophy as a spiritual exercise, or a way of life to be suggested, illuminated, verified and justified by a philosophical discourse.[12]

Whatever the resemblance between Ārāḍa’s and proto- or classical Sāṃkhya is, one may doubt whether this single record is sufficient to confirm the existence of Ārāḍa Kālāma as a historical figure, the exponent of the Sāṃkhya tradition and Siddhārtha’s teacher at the same time. Therefore, apart from the above arguments based on the *Buddhacarita*, we should also refer to some other passages from earlier Pāli sources. Although the Pāli texts nowhere portray such a comprehensive account of Ārāḍa’s (in Pāli, Āḷāra) or Sāṃkhya views in general as Aśvaghoṣa does, one can assume that Sāṃkhya was a very ancient, pre-Buddhist system of thought, and most probably the major one within the broad brahmanical tradition at that time.[13]

In the *sutta* on *The Noble Search* (*Ariyapariyesana Sutta*, *Majjhima Nikāya* 26) the Buddha makes a passing remark upon Āḷāra Kālāma. The latter strongly recommends the Bodhisattva realise *dhamma* for himself with direct knowledge rather than mere faith alone. When asked by the Buddha as to what extent he himself had entered and realised the doctrine, Āḷāra states that he has reached up to the dimension of nothingness (*ākiñcaññāyatanain pavedesi*).[14] As soon as the disciple attains the same level, Āḷāra without hesitation accepts Siddhārtha as his equal, offering him joint leadership of his ascetic community. But Siddhārtha, instead of enjoying this high honour, decides to abandon his teacher, having realised that Āḷāra’s knowledge leads only halfway because it does not assure enlightenment, but only a reappearance in the base of nothingness (Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi 1995: 257–8).

In another *sutta* on *The Root of All Things (Mūlapariyāya Sutta*, MN 1) the Buddha makes a reference to Sāṃkhya metaphysics, though without mentioning Kālāma at all. He teaches that clinging to views is one of the four forms of clinging that tie the mind to the processes of suffering. Therefore, what he prescribes is that his followers relinquish their clinging, not only to views in their full-blown form as specific metaphysical judgments, but also in their rudimentary form as the categories and relationships that the mind reads into experience. It seems clear that he makes this point in response to the Sāṃkhya position. Although this *sutta* says nothing about the background of the monks listening to the Buddha, the commentary (MN *Aṭṭhakathā*) states that before their ordination they were Brahmins, well versed in the Vedic literature and probably conceited with their philosophical erudition and intellectual mastery, and that even after their ordination they continued to interpret the Buddha's teachings in the light of their previous training, which may well had been early Sāṃkhya. In the very beginning the Buddha declares that he wants to discuss 'the root of all things' and continues his speech listing the topics in a manner typical of the Sāṃkhya school. Starting with earth, water, air, he discusses beings, gods and all phenomena and so on to culminate with the ultimate Buddhist concept, *nibbāna*. If we stick with the pattern of Sāṃkhya thought, the Buddha seems to suggest, *nibbāna* would be the ultimate 'root' or ground of being immanent in all things, out of which they all come into being and become manifest. But then by the end of his discourse, instead of fitting Buddhist teachings into a Sāṃkhyan mould, he attacks the whole pattern of thinking and theorising as ignorant, ill-informed and harmful. He rejects the notion of a principle in the abstract sense, both as the inherent nature and as the source of creation or manifestation of the world. In contrast, the Buddha recommends to his slightly disappointed audience[15] that while training they look for a different kind of 'root' – the root of suffering experienced in the present – and find it in the act of delight. All objects of perception tend to generate craving, conceit and futile conceptualisation as long as they are cognised in terms of 'mine', 'I' and 'self' by one who 'has not fully understood' (cf. Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi 1995: 83–90). Developing dispassion for delight, which is the result of perceiving objects as 'mine', the trainee can then comprehend the process of coming-into-being for what it is, drop all participation in it and thus achieve true and ultimate liberation.

And referring to the Pāli sources once more, let us recall the *Kālāma Sutta (Aṅguttara Nikāya* 3.65), a famous discourse of the Buddha addressed to the inhabitants of the village of Kesaputta in Bihar, the residence of the Kālāma *kṣatriya*s, perhaps the home village of Siddhārtha's late guru, Ārāḍa.[16] The village dwellers inform the Buddha about many wandering holy men and ascetics passing through and expounding their teachings while criticising the teachings of others, and they ask Śākyamuni how to choose the right teaching worthy of acceptance. In response, the Buddha offers a sermon discouraging the Kālāmas from following any religious teachings just because they are claimed to be true and recommends that they constantly question and test the alleged truths to ascertain that are *actually* efficient in reducing their own suffering and misery. The Buddha criticises passive acceptance of traditional knowledge, either oral or derived from authoritative scriptures, but also news sources, common sense, and futile reasoning, either inferential, based on abstract philosophical concepts, and the experts' knowledge, whether widely recognised or self-appointed ones, and even one's own teacher's knowledge. What he advises instead is that the words of the wise should be heeded and taken into account for further personal verification. Only direct knowledge grounded in one's *own* experience can be called upon and accepted as a certain teaching, only if, however, one is able to demonstrate to oneself that it is skilful, blameless, praiseworthy and conductive to liberation (cf. Nyanaponika and Bodhi 1999: 64–7).

If we read the above *sutta* in the light of its connotation with Ārāḍa of Kālāmas, the reinterpreted message behind it may be put as follows: addressing his discourse devoted to the issue of transmissibility of liberating knowledge to the Kālāmas, the Buddha symbolically offers an explanation, or justification, of the key reason for the necessary rejection of every teacher at a certain point. Now we can clearly see why the Bodhisattva had to dismiss his guru's views and why he would have done it even if he had been trained by a non-Sāṃkhya or more pro-Buddhist *ṛṣi*. We can also understand why he did not mind taking into account 'for further personal verification' some of his teacher's teaching, especially on the meditative practice.

Why Does the Buddha Reject the Eternal Self?

It seems symptomatic that Gautama's critical argument against Sāṃkhya teachings in *Buddhacarita* 12.69–88 concentrates on his rejection of the concept of the self or the field knower (*kṣetrajña*). He thinks that the self declared to be wholly pure and eternal is a seed, the causal root for the continued existence and rebirth. So the very concept of the self is recognised as an obstacle on the way to ultimate freedom from all suffering. Therefore, he attacks this concept by discrediting its definition according to Sāṃkhya, which goes as follows: the true self, being pure and eternal, by no means can be objectified, even by or for itself. First, Siddhārtha undermines the permanence of the self, noting that as long as there is a knower, there is something for him to know, and since there is something for him to know, he can never be released (12.80). An early Sāṃkhya philosopher could easily reject such criticism by saying that to capture the meaning of 'self' one must distinguish between the upper or true self – being pure, eternal, transcendent to nature (*prakṛti*), but also absolutely passive, not involved in the process of doing or knowing – and, on the other hand, the lower self, or empirical 'I' – the psychophysical organism fully engaged in all bodily and mental activities. In the next passage of the *Buddhicarita* Śakyāmuni seems to react to this possible Sāṃkhya defence by asking sarcastically: if the 'field knower' (*kṣetrajña*) can also refer to the one who is actually *not* a knower, as a non-engaged upper or transcendent self, then why should we call this not-knowing self 'the self' or a subject, after all? This strong concept of the self (*ātman*) sounds to him illogical and simply invented, so he mocks it by saying that we can do without the self, since absence of knowing exists in a log or a wall (12.81). Bodhisattva refuses to accept a distinction between the lower and the upper self for one more reason. He claims that getting rid of the imperfections of the self by abandoning action, ignorance and desire cannot be successfully realised as long as one keeps identifying oneself with the self (no matter whether lower or upper!) and upholds its permanent existence (12.73). While Ārāḍa assumes eradication of the wrong I-sense (*ahaṃkāra*), together with the egotism it causes, to be the essential prerequisite for achieving the highest meditative absorption and liberation, Siddhārtha doubts whether the ego may really be abandoned unless belief in the eternal self has been completely given up (12.76).

In later Buddhist tradition there are more arguments against Sāṃkhya metaphysics given in the Abhidharma texts (cf. Bronkhorst 1997: 393–400), but to mention only the key ones hitting at the very heart of classical Sāṃkhya, we should highlight those which refute:

1. the conception of self-existent nature (*svabhāva*, *prakṛti*)[17] evolving spontaneously by itself (*pariṇāmavāda*);
2. the doctrine of the inner dynamics of nature caused by its three constituents (*guṇa*s), or the strands of *prakṛti*, which explains the plurality and diversity of phenomena but also implies a deeper unmanifest source of the world, namely primal nature (*pradhāna*, *mūlaprakṛti*);
3. the theory of causation according to which the effect pre-exists in its cause in an unmanifest condition prior to its manifest production (*satkāryavāda*).

Why Can’t Sāṃkhya Do Without the Absolute Self?

Now it is time to consider what actually makes *puruṣa* inevitable for the Sāṃkhya and Yoga conception of the self, since, as a Buddhist opponent may argue, every psycho-physical function may be accounted for by the empirical self called *antaḥkaraṇa* in īśvarakṛṣṇa’s *Sāṃkhyakārikā* or *citta* in Patañjali’s *Yogasūtra*. What is this concept good for, and why is it worth upholding despite all the criticism directed at the Sāṃkhya-Yoga tradition? Why should a metaphysical claim about the existence of a permanent, immutable and inactive subjective being be favoured over the view that everything, including the self, undergoes continued change and has no substantial grounding whatsoever, being just a continuum of dependently originated events and phenomena?

While specifying the rationale for the absolute aspect of subjectivity one cannot forget the ultimate purpose of any cognition or meditative insight, but also the conceptual view following the act of directly acquired knowledge. Any view, *darśana*, worth maintaining is to be beneficial and useful for attaining liberation. Therefore, the Sāṃkhya claim that whatever

happens in *saṃsāric* reality is for the sake of the self, including the discriminative knowledge (*vivekakhyāti*) of the manifest, the unmanifest and the knower (SK 2), must be *of some use* for the ultimate enterprise, namely achieving liberation (*mokṣa*). Now, if we dare to reinterpret the Sāṃkhya conceptual framework through a Buddhist lens, the first benefit of sticking to the concept of *puruṣa* could be expressed in terms of skilful means (*upāya kauśalya*); a strong conviction of the existence of 'the true self' may act as an efficient motivation, or useful means, which generates or intensifies the practitioner's spiritual aspiration. Even though initially it may seem quite alike all other *ahaṃkāric* motivations and manifest itself in the form of feelings like 'I envy the self for being so pure and free from suffering' or 'I am proud of *my*self' and 'I desire to become as pure and free as the self is' and so on, this spiritual aspiration to become the self-in-itself (*svarūpa*; YS 4.34), if supported by a proper meditative practice, is gradually transformed into the realisation of selfknowledge, being *puruṣakāra*. Thus focusing on the self, being an independent and uninvolved witness, eventually results in a non-afflicted (*akliṣṭa*) endeavour towards discriminative knowledge opposed to *ahaṃkāra* or afflicted (*kliṣṭa*) activity of identifying oneself with variable *prakṛtic* reality.

But of what benefit can the assumptions of passivity and non-cognisability of the absolute self be to a seeker of freedom from suffering? Again, this serves as a pedagogical device, since the self can do nothing apart from witnessing what is done *for* it; every activity and all responsibility for doing or forsaking belongs to this present 'I-am-ness' (*asmitā*).[18] If this present 'I-consciousness', being ignorant, involved, knowable and ever-changing, is not approaching liberation, it will never happen. Therefore the transcendent nature of the self proves to be the inevitable and most beneficial presupposition and anchorage of meditative practice. What we call 'the absolute self' connotes absolutely unknowable entity, unconditioned, independent of mind, like the Kantian thing-in-itself (Greek *noumenon*) opposed to all phenomenal realm accessible to observation, or like Fichte's 'absolute consciousness'. That is why a Sāṃkhya-*yogin*, when cultivating his or her concentration and advancing in discriminative insight (*samādhi*), never tends to identify with the ultimate self (as the Advaita Vedāntins would do), because the aim is not to identify directly with *puruṣa*, but rather to keep disidentifying with the present

phenomenal self by means of constant realisation: ‘I am not, not mine, not I’ (*nāsmi na me nāham*; cf. SK 64; MN 109.15–16). And last but not least, all these superhuman efforts to bring the advantageous, nonafflicted results must be undertaken for the sake of ‘the other’, not for myself (*ahaṃkāra*), but for the self that has nothing to do with my present ‘I’ (*aham*), or ‘mine’ (*mamakāra*), and ‘self-conceit’ (*abhimāna*). In other words, the whole job is done by me, but no virtues or profits are ever enjoyed by myself, since having achieved self-knowledge, which in Sāṃkhyan terms is but negative, namely knowledge of what-I-am-not, or what I am absolutely distinct from, there is no point in continuing *my* phenomenal existence or expecting any rewards for *my*self, these being nothing one can identify with. Does this not echo somehow a Bodhisattva’s mission? Thus Sāṃkhya’s metaphysical theory, if reinterpreted in such a manner, might be, surprisingly, much less alien to the Buddhist worldview than it is commonly thought.[19]

Back to Kāpil Maṭh

When reconsidering the Sāṃkhya-Yoga conception of the self in the context of its response to Buddhist critiques, we should not ignore contemporary commentaries of such independent and original thinkers as Hariharānanda Āraṇya and his followers. Interestingly, they do not just try to defend their doctrine against criticism, but make an effort to reinterpret it creatively, taking into account some of the critical arguments and the advances of contemporary science. What is also significant is that they do not mind using the unbroken lineage of the Buddhist meditative practice to their advantage. When asked about the practical method helpful for the Sāṃkhya-Yoga monks in realising their philosophical and spiritual purpose, Swāmi Ṛtaprakāśa Āraṇya, the younger of the two current residents of Kāpil Maṭh, the chief editor of their journal *Sāṃkhyayāna*, pointed to the *vipassanā* technique as it is taught nowadays at the Vipassanā Meditation Centres initiated by Satya Narayan Goenka, who mastered it under the guidance of his Burmese teacher U Ba Khin.[20]

The example of Kāpil Maṭh shows that tradition may be understood as a succession of ‘reincarnations’ aiming to rediscover the message of Kāpila and to grasp it on the Sāṃkhya-Yoga path through a unique combination of

theory and practice or ‘practised theory’. Contemporary reinterpretations are worthy of consideration, as long as they are philosophically inspiring, non-sectarian, coherent and, above all, *really*sāṃkhyan – that is, in agreement with ‘the spirit of the school’, as Daya Krishna puts it (Krishna 1996: 146), or, to use a phrase coined by Deutsch, as long as they contribute to the ‘tradition text’ by incorporating the philosophical content of a school in a creative and consistent way (Deutsch 1989: 169–70).[21] Bimal K. Matilal’s comment on the Indian intellectual tradition applies here perfectly:

> The tradition was self-conscious. It has been interpreting and re-interpreting itself over the ages. It is hardly a new phenomenon. The myth is tied up with the Indologist’s romantic search for classical, pure form of Hinduism (or Buddhism as the case may be), and is little better than a dream. (Ganeri 2002: 40)

And the Sāṃkhyan ‘spirit’ or the ‘philosophical content of this school’ requires one to assert the ultimate dualism of subject and object, and to maintain that the fundamental error consists in their confusion or wrong identification. Even though an authentic philosophical interpretation does not have to mean uncreative reconstruction, a modern interpretation’s freedom is not limitless.[22] If we agree to keep open the possibility of new Sāṃkhyan works being written in our times and in the future, we are likely to realise that some of these new expositions may be innovative while still remaining traditional and orthodox. However, this may happen only if we do not treat this system of thought as definitely closed, dead and fit only for the archives of the past, but rather recognise it as still living, active and capable of fertilising current philosophical debates.

The contemporary Sāṃkhya-Yoga strategy of dealing with the alternative conception of the self proposed by the Buddha seems to be in line with the general Indian agenda of cultural adaptation and assimilation: a rival view is not rejected or dismissed, but rather assimilated by reinterpreting it according to one’s own perspective and also used to better formulate, enrich and re-evaluate the Sāṃkhyan conception of the self. Thus Sāṃkhya can benefit from Buddhist critiques thanks to the following assumptions:

1. Buddhism as such is considered to be a re-establishment of Kāpila’s tradition.

2. The Buddhist conception of the self is not perceived as totally opposed to Sāṃkhya's position, but rather as a radical presentation of the universal self-knowledge that may be expressed differently and more adequately in terms of Sāṃkhya-Yoga.
3. The fact that in the canonical Buddhist texts there are references to a hermit Ārāḍa Kālāma, a supposed Sāṃkhya teacher, who was abandoned by Siddhārtha after mastering his teachings, does not prove the Buddha's total rejection of the Sāṃkhya *mārga*, but rather testifies to his high motivation for attaining self-knowledge through direct insight, valued higher than any verbal testimony.
4. A textual reference to Ārāḍa's and Udraka's meditative achievements when describing the gradual process of meditation – that is, the conception of *jhāna*s – shows that the Buddha followed his teachers' footsteps, although he contributed some essential innovations to the method used by his predecessors.
5. Even though the Buddha rejects certain features of the early Sāṃkhya metaphysics and develops further its method of meditation, elevating the new concept of *vipassanā*, or insight and thorough penetration of an object, he integrates it with a pre-Buddhist yogic system of *dhyāna* (Pāli *jhāna*), based on the *samatha* method of meditation, which leads to a well-balanced, tranquil mental state.[23]

This invention of the Buddha does not infringe on the Sāṃkhya-Yoga theory of selfdevelopment, and was successfully adjusted and fitted into its own methodology, at least in Patañjali's lineage, in his *Yogasūtra* characterised by Larson as a hybrid form of Sāṃkhya or neo-Sāṃkhya, which reflects the interaction between Ṣaṣṭitantra and Abhidharma of Sarvāstivāda and Sautrāntika (Larson 1989: 135; Larson 1999: 723–32). Studying the contemporary example of the Sāṃkhya-Yoga revived tradition, practised and discussed in Madhupur, we can see how the spirit of innovation and fidelity to tradition interact to produce another hybrid of the Buddhist orthopraxy synthesised with the Sāṃkhyan orthodoxy.

But what about Siddhārtha Gautama? One may say it is more than obvious that he did not become a Sāṃkhya philosopher, because he rejected the concept of the eternal self as just another object of attachment, or if it is not a perceptible entity, as impossible to identify with. However, according to the Kāpil Maṭh-inspired reinterpretation I offered above, there

remains scope for assimilating Siddhārtha to the Sāṃkhya-Yoga tradition by accepting his denial of the self as a view expressed from the perspective of nature (*prakṛti*). But here, contrary to Buddhism, a denial would refer only to the content of the self, not to its existence as such. Although there is nothing I can identify with as 'the true self',[24] what remains undeniable is the fact that there is something else, different from nature, something that serves as the principle of consciousness, since it is a metaphysical dichotomy of subjectively-versus-objectively accessible realms (*puruṣa-prakṛti*) which makes both self-identity and its denial possible.

[1] To learn more about the meaning and historical context of the cave tradition, see Jacobsen (2005: 333–49).

[2] Hariharānanda Āraṇya addressed two interdicts to his disciples: after his death, he wanted his body to be laid to rest in the cremation ground, placed close to the surface so that dogs and jackals could have easy access to a sumptuous feed; he forbade building a memorial temple or organising a commemorative service after his death or annually. Responding to a request from the devotees and his successor as leader of the community, Dharmamegha Āraṇya (1892–1985), he agreed to modify his will as follows: his body was to be laid within the Maṭh, though no memorial edifice could be erected there; no biography was to be written or monument built to commemorate his person; cf. Āraṇya (2003: 141).

[3] Moreover, in 15.89 the Buddha expresses his intention to meet his previous teachers, Ārāḍa Kālāma and Udraka Rāmaputra, to share his liberating insights with them, but then he realises that they are no longer alive. However, this canto is not original because only 14 books of the *Buddhacarita* are extant in Sanskrit; the following cantos were preserved only in the Tibetan and Chinese translations (cf. Johnston 1972; Beal 1883) and some are an attempt by a modern Nepalese author to supply the loss of the original. A reference to the same episode can be found in *Ariyapariyesana Sutta*, MN 26 (cf. Bodhi 2005: 72).

[4] Edgerton (1972: xvii) claims that Aśvaghoṣa, dated between 50 BC and 100 CE, could be inspired by the older parts of the *Bhagavadgītā*.

[5] Kent (1982: 263) rightly notices that these three causes are comparable to the Buddhist cause (*hetu*) of transmigration, namely *moha* (ignorance), *rāga* (passion) and *dveṣa* (hatred). He also offers a clear scheme outlining the factors by which these three causes of *saṃsāra* function in early Sāṃkhya.

[6] Here egotism is identified with a delusive I-sense, or a wrong self-identity, which means conceiving of I as the seer (*draṣṭā*), and the hearer (*śrotā*) and the thinker (*mantā*), while every embodied existence is at the same time the effect and the cause (*kāryakaraṇam ca*) of confusion about one's self-identity (BC 12.38). We wrongly believe that phrases such as 'I say', 'I know', 'I go', 'I am firmly fixed', 'This is mine' or 'I am connected with this' refer to the true self, which results in fatal over-self-estimation or egotism (12.26).

[7] There is a striking resemblance between distinctions made in *Buddhacarita* 12.33 and *Sāṃkhyakārikā* 48.

[8] Interestingly, īśvarakṛṣṇa gives this crucial distinction at the very opening of the doctrine exposition (SK 2), while in Aśvaghoṣa'a record it closes his concise reconstruction of Ārāḍa's philosophical views. Another difference is that in SK there are only three categories to be discriminated in liberating insight – the manifest (*vyakta*), the unmanifest (*avyakta*) and the knowing one, or knower (*puruṣa*) – instead of the four mentioned in the *Buddhacarita*.

[9] Here, in place of the doctrine of the *guṇa*s there is that of the three *bhāva*s, or 'states of being', each having moral qualities through which the unseen *avyakta* attaches a person to *saṃsāra*. Although there are some occurrences of the term *guṇa* in the *Buddhacarita*, all of them imply the meaning of 'quality' in a sense typical to Vaiśeṣika rather than classical Sāṃkhya; cf. BC 12.75–7, 79 and 80.

[10] These two terms are not full equivalents, as the latter seems to cover also the embodied self, *śarīrin*, while the former refers to the true, or supreme self.

[11] In the Buddhist interpretation, Ārāḍa's achievement is equivalent to *ākiñcaññāyatana*, a formless meditative attainment (*samāpatti*), the perception of the dimension of nothingness preceded by the four *jhāna*s; cf. *Jhāna Sutta*, *Aṅguttara Nikāya* 9.36. If the practitioner confines himself to

this stage of self-realisation, his following rebirth will be in the plane of existence called the base of nothingness, where the lifespan is said to be 60,000 eons. It means that when this long period has elapsed, one must pass away again and return to a lower world without achieving ultimate liberation; cf. Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi (1995: 256–8, 1,216, n. 302).

12 In Western tradition it is still commonly repeated that philosophy is nothing but a process for creating discursive theories that do not need to find any fruition in our everyday life. However, recently this predominant opinion on what philosophy in itself is, or at least *was*, has been shaken by Pierre Hadot, a French historian of philosophy, in his fascinating work *What Is Ancient Philosophy?* (2002). He is determined to change our view of ancient philosophy and, by extension, of philosophy as a discipline. Hadot demonstrates that ancient Greek philosophers were concerned not just to develop philosophical theories, but to practise philosophy as a way of life. For the ancients, philosophical theory and philosophical way of life were inseparably linked. At the centre of Hadot's study is the strikingly original notion of the 'spiritual exercise', which he argues lies at the heart of Greek Hellenistic thinking about man, morality and the universe. Thus philosophical discourse originates in a choice of lifestyle as an existential option, not vice versa. This existential option, in turn, implies a certain vision of the world, and the task of philosophical discourse will therefore be to reveal and rationally justify this existential option, as well as this representation of the world; Hadot (2002: 3).

13 Most scholars admit that some form of early Sāṃkhya tradition existed at the time of Aśvaghoṣa or even in Buddha's time (for example, Johnston 1974: 7–10; Chakravarti 1975: 92; Larson 1979: 251), contrary to Edgerton, who argues that the so-called early Sāṃkhya system does not represent any distinct school, being nothing but an aspect of Upaniṣadic brahmanism (1965: 36–9).

14 This phrase seems quite analogous to the claim expressed in *Buddhacarita* 12.63.

15 From the commentary to MN we discover that the 'resistant listeners,' most probably ex-Sāṃkhya followers, were later able to overcome their displeasure and eventually attained *nibbāna* on listening to the discourse reported in *Aṅguttara Nikāya* 3.123 (*At Gotamaka Shrine, Gotamaka-cetiya Sutta*); cf. Nyanaponika and Bodhi (1999: 77).

16 Some scholars relying on the later Mahāyāna sources, like *Lalitavistara Sūtra* (episode 3), locate the *āśrama* of Ārāḍa Kālāma somewhere between Vaiśāli and Rājagir, while others suggest some other place near Kośala Pradeśa, but all of them agree that it must have been within the region of Bihar. For a summary of debate on this issue, see Anand (1996: 2–12).

17 These terms were used interchangeably both in early Sāṃkhya texts and in Buddhism.

18 For a more detailed discussion of 'asmitā' and its comparison to 'ahamkāra' in the context of Sāmkhya-Yoga phenomenology and metaphysics, see Jakubczak (2011: 37–48).

19 This reinterpretation of Sāṃkhya discourse is partly inspired by conversations with the Sāṃkhya-Yoga *sannyāsin*s and the views of Hariharānanda Āraṇya concerning pan-Indian universalism and transmission of knowledge. Therefore, the present author is aware that this particular formulation, articulated 'on behalf' of the Kāpil Maṭh *āśrama*, may carry some risk of over-interpretation.

20 Information based on a private conversation with Swāmi in mid-February 2010. As I was informed during my subsequent visit in February 2012, Ṛtaprakāśa Āraṇya left Kāpil Maṭh in late 2011.

21 The 'tradition text', as Deutsch (1989: 165–73) explains it, does not refer to any particular text but rather to the ongoing process of philosophy making within a certain school. Each tradition text has its authoritative sources grounded in the oral transmission, its summaries and its ongoing written

elaborations. The exegetical material gradually expands, refines and modifies arguments, sometimes adding some new ideas, usually with increasing precision. The philosopher-commentator seeks to remain faithful to his sources and to bring greater systematic coherence, but in his own creative terms.

22 Krishna (1996: 153) says: ‘there may be the greatest possible variations on the theme, but if some variation tends to destroy the theme itself, then obviously it cannot be permitted to function within the style of that thought-system. To take a parallel example from the west, while it may be possible to have theistic or atheistic existentialism, it would be meaningless to have an existentialism which gives ontological and axiological primacy to essence over existence.’

23 The Pāli term *samatha* (Sanskrit *śamatha*) refers to a state of concentration (*samādhi*) which consists in achieving the utmost one-pointedness of thought (Pāli *cittassa ekaggata*) upon a given subject of salutary nature, and then raising one’s conception of the subject to an abstraction. *Samatha* meditation produces the mental purity required for full knowledge, and it induces the clear vision necessary to produce an insight which penetrates into the reality of all phenomenal existence. Such awareness of all observable things as they really are is called *vipassanā* (Sanskrit *vipaśyanā*), and it is considered in Buddhism to be the direct path to *nibbāna* (Sanskrit *nirvāṇa*); cf. Mahāthera (1962: 4–5).

24 Nothing I identify myself with can be an eternal self because every selfidentification, like ‘my body’, ‘my mind’ and so on is within the phenomenal realm of changeable nature (*prakṛti*).

Chapter 3
Self, Consciousness, and Liberation in Classical Sāṃkhya[1]

Mikel Burley

Classical Sāṃkhya is standardly defined as a dualist philosophy. It is dualist in the sense that its analysis of reality reduces everything to two co-ultimate principles or categories, namely *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*, whose co-presence (*saṃnidhi*) gives rise to conscious experience. In English translations and expository literature, the term *prakṛti* is typically rendered as 'matter' or 'nature', and *puruṣa* as 'self' or 'spirit', or alternatively, 'consciousness' or 'pure consciousness' (see, for example, Larson 1987: 49). *Puruṣa* is associated with spiritual liberation in so far as the soteriological goal of Sāṃkhya, as also that of classical Yoga, consists in a recognition on the part of the spiritual aspirant that one's true and exclusive identity is *puruṣa* and that everything else falls within the category of *prakṛti*, which is something other than one's true identity. In short, the goal of Sāṃkhya and Yoga is to realise that *puruṣa* is what one is and *prakṛti* is what one is not. Since the content of all experience, and hence *a fortiori* of all disturbing or distressing experience, is constituted by *prakṛti*, this identification with *puruṣa* and dissociation from *prakṛti* is held to coincide with a cessation of everything that is dissatisfactory (*duḥkha*). The final release from dissatisfaction is referred to in both Sāṃkhya and Yoga as *kaivalya*, which can be translated as 'aloneness' or 'solitude', and has sometimes been rendered as 'isolation' (Larson 1979: 275; Davies 1894: 48). From the brief account of this state that occurs towards the end of the *Sāṃkhyakārikā* (SK), it appears to involve a separation or splitting apart of *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* (SK 68); and from similar accounts that occur in the *Yogasūtra* (YS), the term 'aloneness' seems to indicate that *puruṣa* is no

longer associated with anything other than itself; instead, it ‘abides in its own form’ (YS 1.3), this putative ‘form’ (*rūpa*) really being consciousness alone, or the ‘*power* of consciousness’ (*citiśakti*), devoid of any experiential content (YS 4.34).

This chapter will explore the relations between some of the key concepts that I have just outlined, most notably the concepts of self, consciousness and liberation as they apply in the context of classical Sāṃkhya. My discussion will be oriented around two apparent tensions that continue to generate difficulties for any interpretation of Sāṃkhya that aims at internal consistency. These tensions occur within Sāṃkhya’s conceptions of *puruṣa* and spiritual liberation respectively. The first concerns the question whether *puruṣa* is to be regarded as multiple and empirical, in the sense that its multiple instantiations are differentiated from one another by virtue of empirical characteristics, or whether, alternatively, it is something far more abstract, a bare capacity for consciousness, devoid of empirical qualities in itself yet nonetheless a necessary condition for anything’s becoming manifest at all. I will argue that there is indeed a tension in the classical concept of *puruṣa*, between two divergent conceptions of selfhood that can also be found in other philosophical traditions. To help bring out this point, I will later draw a comparison with some pertinent remarks made by the phenomenologist Edmund Husserl.

With regard to Sāṃkhya’s conception of liberation, it has often been noted that there is something odd about a short series of verses that immediately precedes the account of *kaivalya* near the end of the *Sāṃkhyakārikā*. Verses 62 and 63 in particular are striking in that they state that *prakṛti* alone is released, and that this occurs due to her own efforts; yet she brings it about, in some sense, ‘for the sake of *puruṣa*’ (*puruṣārtha*). This suggests that the purpose of *puruṣa* is not to be liberated from its immersion in false identification with *prakṛti*, for it is only *prakṛti* that is bound and then liberated. But if this is so, then what can it mean for *prakṛti*’s activity to be ‘for *puruṣa*’s sake’ at all? In discussing this issue I will engage with the proposal, made by David Burke, that interpretations of Sāṃkhya should indeed abandon the assumption that *puruṣa* is the beneficiary of *prakṛti*’s activity and should instead give full weight to the pronouncement that *prakṛti* is the one who is in need of, and receives, liberation. While ultimately finding this proposal unpersuasive, I will

acknowledge that, again, my own reading leaves a tension in Sāṃkhya's position unresolved.

Before turning to the two tensions that I have just adumbrated, I shall begin with some comments regarding the relation between classical Sāṃkhya and Buddhism, which will help to locate Sāṃkhya within the broader milieu with which the present volume is concerned.

Sāṃkhya and Buddhism

Sāṃkhya's early development is highly contested,[2] the most salient focus of dispute being the question whether Sāṃkhya, as a system of thought and practice, developed within the Vedic and brahmanical tradition or instead evolved within the context of non-Vedic and non-brahmanical *śramaṇa* movements, of which Jainism and Buddhism are prime examples.[3] In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Richard Garbe argued for a close link between Sāṃkhya and Buddhism, citing as one source of evidence a commentary by Buddhaghoṣa on the *Suttanipāta* (fifth century CE), in which the commentator asserts that the birthplace of Siddhārtha Gautama (the Buddha) was named Kapilavastu because it had been home to Kapila, the originator of Sāṃkhya (Garbe 1917: 12; see also Jacobsen 2008: 10). Buddhaghoṣa does not claim that Kapila had any positive influence on the Buddha's subsequent philosophical development; indeed, on the contrary, the story of the Buddha's birthplace can be read as a mythopoetic account of the supplanting of Sāṃkhya by its allegedly superior philosophical rival, Buddhism.[4] Garbe, however, has stressed certain affinities that obtain between Sāṃkhya and Buddhism, speculating that this indicates Sāṃkhya's having had a significant impact upon the development of Buddhist thought (see Garbe 1892: v–xix).

Despite support from some other Indological scholars in the twentieth century (notably Keith 1949: 26–34), Garbe's hypothesis has been downplayed by Larson (1979: 92), who writes that 'Most of the similarities noted ... are not very convincing, and in most instances are little more than the kinds of similarities one finds generally in ancient Indian culture.' One exception admitted by Larson is the shared emphasis in Sāṃkhya and Buddhism on 'suffering' or 'dissatisfactoriness' (*duḥkha*) and on the need

for its eradication, this being ‘the foundation upon which the respective soteriologies are built’ (1979: 93). While this commonality does suggest some early philosophical exchange between the two traditions, it offers little support for the contention that Buddhism was greatly influenced by Sāṃkhya, especially since Sāṃkhya’s conception of suffering does not come to the fore prior to the *Sāṃkhyakārikā*, which is typically dated to around the fourth or fifth century CE, long after the rise of Buddhism (Johnston 1974 [1937]: 21–4).

Buddhist philosophers have certainly been among the critics of Sāṃkhya in its classical form. These include Dignāga (*c.* 480–540 CE) and Dharmakīrti (*c.* 610–670 CE), both of whom were critical of Sāṃkhya’s epistemology and of its views on perception in particular (Frauwallner 1953: 474–5). Responses from Sāṃkhya advocates are, however, difficult to find. Dignāga’s *Pramāṇasamuccaya* is quoted at least three times in the *Yuktidīpikā* (YD), one of the earliest known commentaries on the *Sāṃkhyakārikā*. But the longest of these quotations is merely a single verse, and none of them is explicitly attributed to Dignāga; neither is there any sustained or systematic engagement with Dignāga’s philosophy or with other Buddhist views beyond these few references to Buddhist epistemology.

Objections to the metaphysical idealism commonly ascribed to Yogācāra Buddhism are presented in commentaries on the *Yogasūtra*, especially in Vācaspatimiśra’s *Tattvavaiśāradī* (TV) of the ninth or tenth century CE. Vācaspati seeks to defend a form of perceptual realism against the suggestion that the perceptions that we ordinarily take to be veridical may in fact be illusory or dreamlike. Even if Vācaspati’s standpoint reflects a view generally attributable to classical Sāṃkhya and Yoga, however, his dispute with Yogācāra Buddhism on this matter is of limited relevance to our present topic, and so I will not dwell on it further here.[5]

More relevant to conceptions of self, consciousness, and liberation are some brief remarks in the *Sāṃkhyasūtra* (SS) and its traditional commentaries. The *Sāṃkhyasūtra*, though attributed by the Sāṃkhya tradition to the primordial sage Kapila, is estimated by most scholars to be a product of the fifteenth century CE, and hence to represent a post-classical form of Sāṃkhya philosophy (Larson and Bhattacharya 1987: 327). A series of 21 *sūtra*s that occurs in the first of its five chapters (SS 1.27–47) can plausibly be construed as containing terse critical responses to a range

of Buddhist doctrines. SS 1.44, for example, appears to summarise the Madhyamaka Buddhist view by stating that ‘reality (*tattva*) is empty (*śūnya*)’, and SS 1.47 flatly denies that this, a state of emptiness, can be *puruṣa*’s end or goal (*puruṣārtha*). The fifteenth-century commentator Aniruddha exposits this latter denial in a way that is reminiscent of one of the arguments used by the Vedānta philosopher Rāmānuja against his earlier rival Śaṅkara. In his commentary on *Brahmasūtra* 1.1.1, Rāmānuj a asserts that anyone who thought that soteriological activity results in the loss of personal existence ‘surely would turn away as soon as somebody began to tell him about “release”’ (trans. George Thibaut, in Radhakrishnan and Moore 1957: 547). Aniruddha, in similar mood, asks rhetorically: ‘If emptiness is annihilation, what intelligent person could strive for it? The use of such positive expressions as “liberation is *puruṣa*’s aim” [cf. SK 56, 58] would be meaningless’ (*Sāṃkhyasūtravṛtti* 1.47).[6] The suggestion from both Rāmānuj a and Aniruddha is that some conception of an enduring self capable of enjoying its liberation (or at least remaining existent!) is necessary for anyone to be motivated to seek liberation in the first place. It should be noted, however, that although such appeals to psychological motivations are not without interest, we do not find them in the *Sāṃkhyakārikā* or in the traditional commentaries thereon. If, therefore, our principal task is to examine the conceptions of self, consciousness, and liberation as articulated in classical Sāṃkhya, we should hesitate before reading post-classical arguments into the earlier texts, especially in view of the Vedānta influence that many scholars detect in the *Sāṃkhyasūtra* and its commentaries (see Larson 1979: 153).

Having noted, then, some points of engagement between the traditions of Sāṃkhya and Buddhism, thereby going some way towards situating Sāṃkhya within a wider context, I will now sharpen the focus in order to examine more closely its treatment of self, consciousness, and liberation. For this purpose, it will be useful to begin by considering how *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* are differentiated in the *Sāṃkhyakārikā*.

Puruṣa’s Differentiation from *Prakṛti*

Puruṣa and *prakṛti* are defined principally in opposition to one another. While they are both ‘uncreated’ (*avikṛti*), in the sense that there is nothing more primordial to which they can be reduced, they are fundamentally different from one another in so far as the very term *prakṛti* implies (pro-)creativity or ‘bringing forth’, whereas *puruṣa* ‘is neither created nor creative’ (SK 3). In emphasising the point that *puruṣa* cannot itself be reduced to *prakṛti*, the *Yuktidīpikā* stresses the difference between these principles with respect to consciousness (*cetana*). It cannot be the case that *puruṣa* derives from *prakṛti*, the commentator writes, because *prakṛti* is in its very constitution non-conscious (*acetana*), and given the general principle that entities inherit the nature of that from which they are produced, something that is intrinsically conscious (*cetana*), namely *puruṣa*, cannot derive from something non-conscious (YD, commentary on SK 3).

This distinction between non-conscious *prakṛti* and conscious *puruṣa* occurs also in SK 11. Here *prakṛti*’s primary or intrinsic nature (*pradhāna*) is distinguished from its expressible or manifest form (*vyakta*), and both these aspects of *prakṛti* are contrasted with *pumān* (a synonym of *puruṣa*). The terms *puruṣa*, *pumān*, and *puṃs* can in many contexts mean simply ‘man’, ‘person’, or ‘human being’, and as we shall see in the discussion of SK 18 below, they do not lose this ordinary sense altogether in Sāṃkhya. But Sāṃkhya also uses them in a more specialised sense, and it is this that prompts interpreters to invoke terms such as ‘self’, ‘spirit’ or ‘soul’.

Of *vyakta* and *pradhāna* SK 11 states that each of them is tripartite, undiscriminating, objectual, generic, non-conscious, and productive, whereas *pumān* is said to have precisely the opposite qualities, despite also being similar in some respect. On this latter point, Vācaspatimiśra comments in the *Tattvakaumudī* (TK) that *puruṣa* is similar to *prakṛti* inasmuch as it too is without a cause; or, as he puts it, *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* have ‘non-causedness’ or ‘causelessness’ (*ahetumatva*) in common (TK 11). Adopting an expression from Heidegger, we might say that *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* are ‘equiprimordial’ (Heidegger 1962: 170, 172, *et passim*). With respect to how *puruṣa* differs from *prakṛti*, then, we can infer from SK 11 that, unlike *prakṛti*, it is characterised by its being *non-tripartite, discriminating, non-objectual, non-generic, conscious*, and *non-productive*. Given this intriguing description, let us briefly consider each of its terms.

Non-tripartite

‘Tripartite’ translates the term *triguṇa*, meaning ‘possessed of, or comprising, the three strands (*guṇa*s)’. Vācaspati refers to these strands as ‘delight’ (*sukha*), ‘distress’ (*duḥkha*), and ‘dullness’ (*moha*) respectively (TK 11), but they are otherwise well known as *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas* (see, for example, SK 13). Since *puruṣa* is said to be the opposite of tripartite, it is fair to presume that *puruṣa* lacks these three strands or characteristics. This interpretation is supported by SK 60, where it is stated that *puruṣa*, ‘being without *guṇa*s, does not reciprocate’ in response to *prakṛti*, who is figuratively portrayed as a female dancer performing before the masculine gaze of *puruṣa*. Being ‘without *guṇa*s’ (*aguṇa*) here seems to entail *puruṣa*’s being devoid, in itself, of any psychological, physiological, or other complex structures or states.

Discriminating

When *prakṛti* is said to be ‘non-discriminating’ (*avivekin*), it is not entirely clear what this means. Vācaspati is undecided between two possible interpretations. First he speculates that it could mean that there are no discriminations to be made within the overall category of *prakṛti*, since all the manifestations of *prakṛti* share the same essence. Then he suggests that, alternatively, it might mean that none among the manifestations of *prakṛti* can be singled out as having efficient causality, since causation can be effected only in conjunction with others (*sambhūya*) (TK 11). If there are difficulties in understanding the sense in which *prakṛti* can be said to be *un*discriminating, so too are there difficulties in understanding how *puruṣa* can be discriminating. It is tempting to make a comparison with YS 2.15, where the term *vivekin* is used to denote the discriminating practitioner of Yoga, who is able to perceive that all experience is ultimately dissatisfactory (*duḥkha*) and hence that the only genuine option is to strive to dissolve the confusion out of which ordinary experience is generated. While there is no suggestion in this *sūtra* that the power of discrimination possessed by the *vivekin* is itself to be attributed to *puruṣa*, it does suggest

that such discriminatory power involves the ability to dissociate oneself from the activities of *prakṛti* and, to that extent, to identify with that which is not *prakṛti*, namely *puruṣa*. We may also be reminded here of SK 2, where it is stated that the best method of overcoming dissatisfactoriness consists in discrimination or discerning awareness (*vijñāna*), or more particularly, discrimination between that which is manifest (*vyakta*), that which is unmanifest (*avyakta*), and that which is the knower or cogniser (*jña*). Although the soughtafter discriminatory awareness is not here explicitly attributed to the knower, the very term 'knower' implies that it is indeed this that has, or is, the awareness in question, and thus, since 'knower' is undoubtedly being used as a synonym of *puruṣa*, it would follow that *puruṣa* has, or is, discriminatory awareness.

Non-objectual

Prakṛti is 'objectual' in the sense that it, or she, is the source of all experienceable phenomena: her manifestation is the coming into appearance of an experienceable world, a world that can be analysed into the 23 conditioning categories that constitute the well-known schema of Sāṃkhya's ontology. *Puruṣa*, by contrast, is non-objectual in the sense that it cannot manifest in any way whatsoever; it is the subjective pole of the *puruṣa–prakṛti* dyad, what Ghosh (1977: 2, 21) has termed the 'subject that is never the object'.[7]

Non-generic

In elaborating the point that *prakṛti* is objectual, Vācaspati contrasts Sāṃkhya with the view commonly ascribed to Yogācāra Buddhists such as Vasubandhu, that all phenomenal qualities are attributable to consciousness or awareness (*vijñāna*) alone. If this were true, writes Vācaspati, then it would follow that, for each conscious being, everything it experienced would be exclusive to itself, and there would be nothing that counted as an item of common experience. The Sāṃkhya view, however, is that there is indeed a common source of objectual experience, and that source is *prakṛti*, and thus *prakṛti* can be said to be 'generic' (*sāmānya*) (TK 11). *Puruṣa*, being the opposite of this, is not common or generic, but particular or individual. Each of us is (or is *a) puruṣa*, and each *puruṣa* is an ontologically distinct centre of consciousness, numerically non-identical to every other. This multiplicity is emphasised in SK 18, which I shall come to below.

Conscious

As noted above, *prakṛti* is non-conscious (*acetana*), whereas *puruṣa* is conscious (*cetana*). A difficulty in understanding this distinction arises from the fact that Sāṃkhya sources often want to resist the suggestion that *puruṣa* is conscious *of* anything. They identify contentful (or *intentional*) consciousness with *buddhi* instead, and place *buddhi* on the *prakṛti* side of the *puruṣa–prakṛti* dualism. Making sense of the notion of consciousness *simpliciter*, devoid of experiential content, is, to say the least, philosophically troublesome, and this, too, I will return to later.

Non-productive

The final contrast to be made here is that *prakṛti* is productive, whereas *puruṣa* produces nothing. *Prakṛti* is the ontological ground of all the

constitutive conditions of experiential reality, whereas *puruṣa* is that to which the constituents of experience display themselves. Sāṃkhya thus has a radically passive conception of the ultimate subject of consciousness, experience being what happens *to puruṣa* and in which *puruṣa* plays no active part.

Puruṣa and Multiplicity[8]

The doctrine of *puruṣa*'s multiplicity has been one of the major targets of Sāṃkhya's critics in both traditional debates and modern scholarship. The classical statement of the doctrine comes in SK 18, which reads as follows:

> Due to various patterns of birth, death, and capacities, and to the disjunction of activities, *puruṣa*'s multiplicity (*puruṣa-bahutva*) is established; and also due to the contrariety of the three *guṇa*s.

I take this to be the claim that conscious beings must be regarded as distinct from one another because, firstly, they are born and die at different times, and secondly, they exhibit different qualities and capacities and perform different activities while they are alive. Since each such being is, in so far as it is conscious at all, a *puruṣa*, the text infers that there are indeed many *puruṣa*s. The multiplicity of *puruṣa*s is implied also in classical Yoga, where it is stated that, when the activities of *prakṛti* have ceased in relation to one whose 'end is fulfilled' (*kṛta-artha*), those activities have not ceased altogether, due to their 'commonality' (*sādhāraṇatva*) – that is, due to their continuing in relation to others (YS 2.22). Commenting on this *sūtra*, Vyāsa's *Yogabhāṣya* (YBh) distinguishes between two categories of *puruṣa*. On the one hand are the 'proficient' (*kuśala*) *puruṣa*s, for whom the 'seeable' (*dṛśya*) has vanished (*naṣṭa*), its end having been fulfilled; on the other hand are the 'non-proficient' (*akuśala*) *puruṣa*s, for whom the seeable continues to manifest, their end having not yet been fulfilled (YBh 2.22). Some such distinction seems to follow unavoidably from the *sūtra* itself.

Traditional criticisms of the multiple *puruṣa*s doctrine have focused largely on its apparent contradiction of sacred texts (*śruti*), principally the

Upaniṣadic utterances to the effect that all selves (*ātman*) are ultimately one. Śaṅkara, for example, directs this criticism at Sāṃkhya in his *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* 2.1.2. A brief attempt to counter such criticisms is ventured in the *Sāṃkhyasūtra* and its commentaries, on the grounds that scriptural references to the non-duality (*advaita*) of *puruṣa* or *ātman* ought to be understood as references to a uniform 'genus' (*jāti*) as opposed to a singular entity (SS 1.154; see also *Sāṃkhyapravacanabhāṣya* 1.154).[9] This point could be paraphrased in terms of a distinction between typeidentity and token-identity: all *puruṣa*s are indeed one in so far as they all belong to the same type or genetic ontological category, yet they are multiple in so far as each of them is a distinct *puruṣa* – a token of the type – and not part of one undifferentiated mass. Whether this constitutes a plausible defence against Sāṃkhya's traditional anti-pluralist critics will depend on one's view of the sacred textual sources themselves. While no obvious analogue of the distinction between type- and token-identity is discernible in the Upaniṣads, if one is inclined to grant to post-classical Sāṃkhya the viability of such a distinction, then one might also be tempted to find it plausibly anticipated in salient Upaniṣadic passages.

Among modern scholars who have attacked the 'many *puruṣa*s' doctrine, one of the least forgiving is Arthur Berriedale Keith (1879–1944), who writes at one place that: '[t]These spirits [*puruṣa*s] if examined are clearly nothing but abstractions of the concept of subject, and are philosophical absurdities, since in the abstract there can be but one subject and one object, neither, of course, being anything without the other' (1949: 60). In a subsequent remark, Keith brings out his objection a little more clearly, noting that in the case of:

> [t]he existence of numerous individuals who are conscious ... their number and individuality are conditioned by the possession of a different objective content in consciousness; if this were removed there would remain nothing at all, or at the most the abstract conception of subject, which could not be a multitude of individual spirits. (1949: 88)

The problem thus seems to be that, if two or more immaterial subjects or spirits are to be differentiated from one another, it must be by virtue of a difference in the objectual content of their respective conscious experiences. So when that content is stripped away, we are left with no differentia, and hence the postulation of a multiplicity of immaterial subjects turns out to be

incoherent. While I think Keith is right to highlight the conceptual problems that are encountered here, his quickness to dismiss the notion of many *puruṣa*s as absurd is unhelpful. It is unhelpful because it is liable to obscure from view the profound difficulties associated with providing any satisfactory account of the relation between the subject and object of consciousness, once the basic dualism between subject and object has been accepted, and Keith, for one, does not appear to want to reject it entirely.

Some scholars have tried to excuse or explain away the 'many *puruṣa*s' doctrine, as does Gerald Larson, for example. '[I]t is hardly likely', he writes, 'that Sāṃkhya teachers were thinking of the plurality of consciousnesses as a set of knowable entities to be counted. They were thinking, rather, of a plurality of intellects through which the disclosure of contentless consciousness occurs' (1987: 80). Larson's thought seems to be that, since it is in the intellect (*buddhi*) that knowledge of *puruṣa* arises, and since there are as many intellects as there are rational beings, it can be admitted that there are many instances of *puruṣa*'s being cognised without our needing to admit that there are many *puruṣa*s. The multiplicity is thus construed as applying to an epistemic state, which can be undergone by many individuals, as opposed to the ontological reality that is the object of that state.

This proposal of Larson's appears to accept the sort of objection that Keith raises, that a multiplicity of contentless centres of consciousness is absurd, and thus to adopt, perhaps for reasons of interpretive charity, the view that it must be *buddhi* that is plural, and not *puruṣa* at all. The problem with this reading is not only the stubborn fact that SK 18 unambiguously speaks of many *puruṣa*s rather than many *buddhi*s, but also the nature of Sāṃkhya's reason for insisting on a distinction between *puruṣa* and *buddhi* in the first place. In making this distinction, Sāṃkhya seems to want to distinguish between the *having* of an experience on the one hand, and the one who *has* that experience on the other. *Buddhi* might be defined as intentional consciousness or as the capacity to undergo intentional conscious episodes (Burley 2007: 115; Burley forthcoming). As such, *buddhi* is a necessary condition of the possibility of undergoing such episodes, which is likely to be why it features so prominently in Sāṃkhya's metaphysical system. It features there because the system as a whole comprises a thoroughgoing analysis of the necessary conditions of possible experience. But even once *buddhi* is defined in this way, the question

remains: Who, or what, is the subject of the conscious episodes? In other words: *Whose experience is it?* To this question, Sāṃkhya gives the answer: *puruṣa*. But this in turn generates the question with which SK 18 and YS 2.15 seem concerned, namely why, if *puruṣa* is the subject of experience, everyone's experience is not identical; why, that is, there exist more than one range or sequence of experiential episodes. Thus, once *puruṣa* has been defined as that which *has* experience – or, in the terms typical of Sāṃkhya, as that to which *prakṛti* displays herself – it is difficult to see how the pull towards a multiple *puruṣa*s doctrine can be resisted. Larson's proposed solution hardly addresses the problem; it seems rather to push it aside.

Although I am all in favour of interpretive charity, it remains the case that if there is a deep-rooted tension within a philosophical system, then its presence needs to be acknowledged. I think there is indeed such a tension within Sāṃkhya's conception of *puruṣa*. Unlike Keith, however, I think the tension results from a depth in Sāṃkhya's philosophical thinking rather than from a tendency to overlook conceptual absurdities. The nature of the tension can be brought out as follows. In reflecting upon our status as conscious subjects, philosophers have often oscillated between two possible directions of thought, which seem mutually incompatible. This philosophical situation is thus comparable to someone looking at a picture with two radically distinct aspects, such as the duck–rabbit that Wittgenstein made famous in his *Philosophical Investigations* (2001: 165–6). I can, as it were, think of myself as the 'duck' of individuated personhood, inhabiting a world comprised of myriad entities, some of which are persons such as myself; or I can think of myself as the 'rabbit' of transcendental consciousness – what Wittgenstein himself, in his earlier work, refers to as 'the philosophical self' or 'metaphysical subject'. This latter self is, as Wittgenstein puts it, 'not the human being, not the human body, or the human soul, with which psychology deals, but rather ... the limit of the world – not a part of it' (1974: Proposition 5.641).

The tension between these two conceptions – between, that is, the conception of the self as an embodied inhabitant of the world on the one hand, and as the very possibility of there being a world at all on the other – might be said to lie at the heart of metaphysical disputes between realists and idealists in the history of philosophy. It is a tension that is brought out

well in Edmund Husserl's *Cartesian Meditations* (1931), from which the following passage is especially pertinent:

> I, the reduced 'human Ego' ('psychophysical' Ego), am constituted ... as a member of the 'world' with a multiplicity of 'objects outside me'. But I myself constitute all this in my 'psyche' and bear it intentionally within me. If perchance it could be shown that everything constituted as part of my peculiar ownness, including then the reduced 'world', belonged to the concrete essence of the constituting subject as an inseparable internal determination, then, in the Ego's self-explication, his peculiarly own world would be found as 'inside' and, on the other hand, when running through that world straightforwardly, the Ego would find himself as a member among its 'externalities' and would distinguish between himself and 'the external world'. (Husserl 1977[1931]: 99)

The two incompatible descriptions of *puruṣa* that are presented in the *Sāṃkhyakārikā* correspond in certain important respects to the two aspects of egoity or selfhood identified by Husserl. The individuated *puruṣa* of SK 18 is analogous to Husserl's '"psychophysical" Ego ... constituted ... as a member of the "world"', whereas the pure self or consciousness (of SK 19, for example) is more like what Husserl in other passages calls the 'transcendental ego' (see, for example, 1977: 23). Of course, *puruṣa* cannot be said to 'constitute' the world of objects, but it might tentatively be regarded as the arena within which objects *are* constituted. It makes possible anything's appearing as an object, whereas *prakṛti* is that which constitutes the objects as part of the totality of conscious experience. Consequently, *puruṣa* might be said to 'bear [the "world"] intentionally within [itself]', as Husserl says of the constituting ego, provided we remember that Sāṃkhya would want to deny that *puruṣa* can be reduced to intentional consciousness itself.

A defender of Sāṃkhya might respond to these suggestions by contending that there is not really a tension in Sāṃkhya's conception of *puruṣa*, for the fact that *puruṣa* is conceivable under two aspects does not go to show that these aspects are mutually incompatible; they might simply represent two alternative perspectives on the same reality. Indeed, my analogy with Wittgenstein's duck–rabbit is liable to encourage this thought. However, the problem with this response – and the limitation of my own analogy – is that it fails to acknowledge the metaphysical difference between the two aspects under which *puruṣa* is conceived. To see *puruṣa* as an empirical person, occupying a material world alongside other

empirical persons and objects, is to regard *puruṣa* as an inhabitant of the world, and not as the world's precondition; to see *puruṣa* as the arena within which the world is constituted, meanwhile, is precisely to regard *puruṣa* as a condition of the world's existing at all.

Further to my initial comparison with Husserl, it should be acknowledged that Sāṃkhya seems to attach a far more austere sense than does Husserl to the notion of 'purity' in relation to self and consciousness. For Husserl, 'pure' or 'transcendental' consciousness is merely ordinary consciousness conceived in terms of phenomena alone – conceived, that is, in such a way that the occurrence of phenomena within it is not assumed to provide access to a world of mindindependent objects beyond the phenomena themselves. To conceive of the Husserlian pure consciousness is to think of consciousness as being coextensive with the apparent world. Subjecting oneself – or attempting to subject oneself – to this solipsistic exercise is, in Husserl's terms, to suspend the 'natural attitude', the latter being the attitude that we ordinarily adopt, wherein we assume the material objects we encounter in experience to exist independently of our experiencing them. Pure consciousness, for Husserl, is 'pure' merely in the sense that its contents are no longer tainted by any 'prejudice' concerning their ontological status (see Smith 2003: 19). Correspondingly, the pure or 'transcendental' ego is not experienceless, but is merely the ego as considered in terms of its encompassing (or 'constituting') its intentional objects rather than being itself just another entity within the transegoic world.

For Sāṃkhya, on the other hand, pure consciousness is not arrived at merely by means of an attitudinal shift. More than being just the context within which experiential material shows itself, it is also that which remains when all phenomenal content is removed. It is held to be a state of being in which the transcendental self or consciousness is neither drawn out of itself into a world of mental and physical events, nor even constitutes a boundary around those events, but abides solely in its own nature. In this sense of 'pure consciousness', it is not only ontological prejudices that have been stripped away, but experience *tout court*.

Who is Liberated?

Without pretending that there is any straightforward resolution of the tension in Sāṃkhya's conception of *puruṣa*, then, let us turn to the soteriological goal towards which the whole Sāṃkhya system declares itself to be oriented. Here we find a further apparent tension, which has been noted by several modern commentators on the *Sāṃkhyakārikā*.

A common assumption is that spiritual liberation – freedom from the suffering (*duḥkha*) that constitutes the primary motivation for the whole Sāṃkhya system[10] – must apply to *puruṣa*: it is *puruṣa* that is one's true identity, and hence liberation, which consists in *realising* one's true identity, must consist in *puruṣa*'s realising its identity as *puruṣa*. On this account, it seems that liberation must involve some cognitive change in *puruṣa*, a change from ignorance of its own identity to awareness of that identity. This notion of *puruṣa* undergoing some change, however, implies a kind of complexity of cognitive structure that is inconsistent with Sāṃkhya's emphasis on *puruṣa*'s inherent purity and passivity. In SK 19 in particular, *puruṣa* is characterised in terms of 'witnessing, aloneness, equanimity, awareness, and inactivity'. As I noted earlier, it is passive and 'without qualities' (*aguṇa*, SK 60; cf. SK 11).

An awareness of the problem of attributing emancipatory transformation to something passive and devoid of cognitive complexity is demonstrated within the *Sāṃkhyakārikā* itself; for in SK 62, where it would be natural for the reader to expect an allegorical account of *puruṣa*'s liberation from its absorption in *prakṛti*'s seductive display, what we instead find is the pronouncement that 'no one is bound, nor released, nor wanders [from one life to another]; it is *prakṛti*, in its various abodes (*āśrayā*), that wanders, and is bound and released'. If this verse is puzzling, then the immediately subsequent one is even more so, for it states that *prakṛti* both binds herself and liberates herself, and does so *puruṣārtha*. This latter expression, variants of which occur several times in the *Sāṃkhyakārikā*,[11] is normally translated as 'for the sake of *puruṣa*', the implication being that *prakṛti*'s activity is exclusively for the sake of *puruṣa*'s liberation – the establishment of *puruṣa* in its primordial condition of aloneness (*kaivalya*). Thus the question unavoidably arises: who or what is liberated; is it *puruṣa* or *prakṛti*?

In an article entitled ‘Transcendence in classical Sāṃkhya’ (1988), David Burke goes against the interpretive grain by arguing that SK 62 and 63 should be taken very seriously indeed; when they say that it is *prakṛti* and not *puruṣa* that is liberated, we should take them at their word, and if statements elsewhere in the text appear incompatible with these, then we should revise our interpretations of those apparently incompatible statements. Recognising that *puruṣārtha* and cognate expressions such as *puruṣasyārtha* (SK 36) are especially problematic for the interpretation that he wants to propose, Burke (1988: 25) argues that these expressions should not be understood to mean ‘“for the sake of *puruṣa*” in the sense of *puruṣa*’s release’. Instead, they should be taken to mean ‘“for the sake of helping *puruṣa* fulfil its function”, that is, “serving indirectly to secure the release of the *sūkṣma-śarīra* from the transmigratory cycle by enabling *buddhi* to realize the absolute distinction between *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*”’ (1988: 26; transliteration of Sanskrit terms slightly amended). This way of rendering the expression *puruṣārtha* effectively turns the standard translation on its head, changing it from ‘for the sake of *puruṣa*’ to ‘for the sake of enabling *puruṣa* to fulfil its function for the sake of *prakṛti*’. Given the forced appearance of this revised translation, strong grounds would be needed to support its adoption. I am not persuaded that Burke provides such grounds, but since there is a genuine interpretive problem that he is trying to solve, let us consider his proposal a little further.

In making his proposal, Burke acknowledges that among the most difficult passages of the *Sāṃkhyakārikā* to reconcile with it is that which comprises verses 56–8. The main difficulty here is that, in each of these three verses, the term *vimokṣa* occurs in a way that unambiguously applies to *puruṣa*, and *vimokṣa* is best translated as ‘release’ or ‘liberation’. Thus, Burke’s own rendering of SK 56, for example, reads:

> This creation, brought about by *prakṛti* – from the great one (*mahat*) down to the specific gross elements – (function) for the sake of the release of each *puruṣa*; (this is done) for the sake of another, as if it were for her own (benefit). (SK 56, tr. Burke 1988: 26)

Burke’s suggestion with respect to this and the succeeding two verses is that they ‘are concerned with the ever present state of *mokṣa* of each individual *puruṣa*’ (1988: 27). Furthermore, the term *mokṣa* or *vimokṣa* is not to be

regarded as synonymous with *kaivalya*, for '[t]he *mokṣa* of *puruṣa* is primary and continuous' whereas '*kaivalya* places its emphasis on the disinterested and "burned out" functioning of the three *guṇas* as they once again enter a state of *prakṛti*', *prakṛti* being 'the condition of equilibrium between the three *guṇas*' (1988: 28).

One of the main problems for this aspect of Burke's revisionary interpretation is the occurrence of the term *kaivalya*, 'aloneness', in the very definition of *puruṣa* that is offered in SK 19. Its inclusion in that definition suggests that aloneness is *puruṣa*'s natural state, and from this it seems plausible to infer that the occurrence of *kaivalya* later in the text denotes the return of *puruṣa* to its natural or intrinsic state. It would be very surprising indeed if this same term were, as Burke proposes, to be used in SK 68 to denote the state of *prakṛti* once its conjunction (*saṃyoga*) with *puruṣa* has ceased. Burke, perhaps reasonably, is wary of standard translations of this latter verse which routinely insert the term *puruṣa* where it does not explicitly appear. Larson's translation, for example, reads: 'With the cessation of *prakṛti* due to its purpose having been accomplished, (*the puruṣa*) on attaining separation from the body, attains isolation (*kaivalya*) which is both certain and final' (SK 68, tr. Larson 1979: 275).

Burke (1988: 27) regards this interpolation as gratuitous, and argues that it is the *sūkṣma-śarīra* – the so-called 'subtle body' – and not *puruṣa*, that achieves 'absolute and final separation from the physical body'. He contends that this interpretation, unlike that which is implicit in Larson's translation, maintains continuity with the text's earlier claim that it is *prakṛti* who is first bound and then liberated. It does so, however, only at the expense of an incoherence of its own. For, given that *prakṛti* comprises everything that is experienceable, *prakṛti* thus encompasses both the physical body and those psychological and proprioceptive capacities that constitute the *sūkṣma-śarīra*; so, if *kaivalya* were to consist, as Burke suggests, in the *sūkṣma-śarīra*'s liberation or isolation from the physical body, it would necessarily involve one part of *prakṛti* being liberated or isolated from another, and there is certainly nothing in any part of the SK or its traditional commentaries to support this conception of soteriological liberation.

Concluding Remarks

So, as in the case of its conception of *puruṣa*, the best I can do is to accept that there remains an unresolved tension in the conception of liberation presented by classical Sāṃkhya. As before, however, it does not follow that this is a sign of philosophical naivety on Sāṃkhya's part. For the tension can just as well be viewed as arising from an implicit awareness of a deep conceptual problem that plagues many soteriological systems, both in Indian traditions and elsewhere. The problem, in short, is that of theoretically reconciling the conception of liberation as a discovery, or rediscovery, of one's true identity on the one hand, with the conception of that identity as eternally uncontaminated by falsehood, or, for that matter, by any kind of cognitive content whatsoever, on the other. Mircea Eliade (1969: 32) puts his finger on the problem when he asks: 'If Spirit is free, why are men condemned to suffer in ignorance or to struggle for a freedom they already possess? If *puruṣa* is perfectly pure and static, why does it permit impurity, becoming, experience, pain, and history?' Clearly, this remark is made with specific reference to Sāṃkhya (and Yoga), but very similar questions could be asked of, for example, Advaita Vedānta, Abhinavagupta's Tantric Śaivism, the Jaina doctrine of 'living souls' (*jīva*s) becoming shrouded by karmic matter, or Neoplatonism's conception of the One whose emanations become the manifest universe.

At the heart of each of these, and other, systems of thought is a profound mystery concerning the relation between pristine, unsullied selfhood and the condition of entrapment in an imperfect world in which we all, according to these same philosophies, find ourselves. At some point, it seems, the striving for a complete and cohesive theoretical framework must yield to the impulse for spiritual peace. An acknowledgement of this need to turn from abstract metaphysics to soteriological practice is one that comes through especially strongly in, for example, certain Buddhist texts, such as the famous dialogues on the 'inexpressible' or 'indeterminable' (Pāli: *avyākata*) questions in the *Majjhimanikāya* (see Warren 1915: 117–28). In the spirit of the Buddha's replies in those dialogues, the following might be said on Sāṃkhya's behalf: To say that *puruṣa* is multiple would not fit the case. To say that *puruṣa* is singular would not fit the case. To say that *puruṣa* is both multiple and singular would not fit the case. And to say that *puruṣa* is neither multiple nor singular would not fit the case. To say that *puruṣa* and not *prakṛti* is liberated would not fit the case. To say that

prakṛti and not *puruṣa* is liberated would not fit the case. To say that both *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* are liberated would not fit the case. And to say that neither *puruṣa* nor *prakṛti* is liberated would not fit the case.

In the end, it must be admitted, the case is very hard to fit, and thus the residual tensions of which we have been reminded in this chapter are, as I have stressed, not to the utter detriment of Sāṃkhya's philosophical competence. Nevertheless, it might be regretted that the tensions are not explicitly acknowledged in the Sāṃkhya texts, and some explanation sought. While it is beyond the scope of the present chapter to advance a theory as to why this lacuna exists, one particularly pertinent factor may be mentioned. Something that, though present in many schools of Indian philosophy, is especially prominent in Sāṃkhya is the practice of declaring one's body of teachings to be derived, via an unbroken lineage of preceptors, from one primordial source.[12] In the case of Sāṃkhya, this source is the 'highest sage' (*paramarṣi*), whom the tradition universally assumes to be Kapila (see Jacobsen 2008, esp. ch. 3). This narrative of inheritance exerts a subtle pressure on exponents of the system to portray it as a unified whole, and I suspect that such pressure has played a part in dissuading traditional Sāṃkhya exponents from devoting as much attention to residual tensions within the system as they might otherwise have done. Notwithstanding this tendency towards dogmatism and away from self-criticism, however, it remains the case that classical Sāṃkhya has made an outstanding contribution to the history of world philosophy, and not least to discussions of the self, consciousness and liberation.

[1] I am grateful to the participants in the ‘Self: Hindu Responses to Buddhist Critiques’ conference (22–23 September 2010) out of which the present volume has grown for prompting me to think more carefully about some of the issues discussed in this chapter.

[2] For accounts of Sāṃkhya’s history and known textual sources, see Larson (1979: 75–153, and 1987: 3–42).

[3] A useful overview of early *śramaṇa* groups is provided by Warder (2000: 32–4).

[4] A similar purpose appears to be served by the story of Siddhārtha Gautama’s rejection of Ārāḍa Kālāma’s teaching in the *Buddhacarita* of Aśvaghoṣa, which Marzenna Jakubczak discusses in Chapter 2 of the present volume.

[5] For critical discussion of Vācaspati’s commentary on this matter, see Burley (2007: 84–8).

[6] I have here modified Garbe’s translation. See also, in Ballantyne’s 1885 edition of the SS, the excerpt from an unattributed commentary on SS 1.47, which states that emptiness cannot be *puruṣa*’s end ‘because everyone (or the world, *loka*) agrees that *puruṣa*’s end consists in delight (*sukha*) and so forth, which abide in it’ (my translation).

[7] Cf. Sartre’s account of our attempts to recognise ‘God as a subject who can not be an object’; Sartre (1969: 290).

[8] This section adapts and develops some points discussed in Burley (2007: 147–50).

[9] For further discussion, see Sharma (2004: 434–5).

[10] See SK 1: ‘Due to the affliction of threefold distress (*duḥkha-traya*), the inquiry into its removal [begins] ...’.

[11] See SK 36 and 63 for *puruṣasyārtha* and *puruṣārtha* respectively. Semantically similar expressions include ‘for the sake of aloneness’ (*kaivalyārtha*) at SK 17 and 21, and ‘for the sake of liberation’ (*vimokṣārtha*) at SK 56 and 58. See also SK 69, where the whole body of Sāṃkhya teachings is described as ‘the knowledge of *puruṣa*’s goal’ (*puruṣārthajñāna*).

[12] The credibility of this story of lineal descent is usefully questioned by Marzenna Jakubczak in Chapter 2 of the present volume.

Chapter 4
Buddhist No-self: An Analysis and Critique

Jonardon Ganeri

The reconciliation of naturalism with the existence of a first-person perspective is the first work of a concept of self. The views of ourselves as corporeal beings and as subjective presences ‘of self to self’ seem to pull in different directions. Immanuel Kant recognised the tension and sought to resolve it this way:

> I may further assume that the substance which in relation to our outer sense possesses extension is in itself the possessor of thoughts, and that these thoughts can by means of its own inner sense be consciously represented. In this way, what in one relation is entitled corporeal would in another relation be at the same time a thinking being, whose thoughts we cannot intuit, though we can indeed intuit their signs in the appearance. Accordingly, the very same being which, as outer appearance, is extended, is (in itself) internally a subject, and is not composite, but is simple and thinks. (*Critique*, A359–60)

We stand in two relations to ourselves, one of which is as to a corporeal being and the other as to a subject of experience. P.F. Straws on says that we should think of ourselves as specimens of ‘a type of entity such that both predicates ascribing states of consciousness and predicates ascribing corporeal characteristics, a physical situation etc. are equally applicable to an individual entity of that type’ (1963: 100), and he identifies the concept of such an entity as the concept of a person. Straws on is famously dismissive of what he called ‘the “no-ownership” or “nosubject” doctrine of the self’ (1963: 95), according to which it is denied that states of consciousness are ascribed to any subject, a doctrine which implies that our concept of a person is ‘wrong or confused’ (1963: 94). Strawson, however, notices that in its rejection of the concept of a corporeal person as the owner of states of consciousness, the no-ownership doctrine takes a fundamentally

Cartesian view about the nature of ownership, and indeed, that it can be described as a form of dualism, a 'dualism of one subject – the body – and one non-subject' (1963: 98), and he suggests that 'both the Cartesian and the no-ownership theorists are profoundly wrong in holding, as each must, that there are two uses of "I", in one of which it denotes something which it does not denote in the other' (1963: 98).

I wish to return to the no-ownership view, in the formulation it was given by the Buddhist philosopher Vasubandhu. The centrality of Vasubandhu's theory to later Hindu critique of Buddhist 'no-self' theory lends importance to a clarification of his theoretical position. My goal here is to retrieve a conception of self in play within Vasubandhu's Buddhist theory, and to identify the exact grounds on which it is rejected. My argument will be that the Buddhist rejection presupposes what is in fact a most insightful conception of self. For Vasubandhu's aim is not merely to reject some given theory of self in the Indian debate, but to diagnose what he takes to be a deep mistake in our primitive conceptual scheme, and for that it is incumbent upon him to provide an accurate descriptive metaphysics of self. I will separate the conception described from the error-theory, and argue that bracketing the error-theory leaves a viable conception of self, one which is uncluttered by extraneous theoretical commitment. I also believe, but will not have time to argue the point here, that the conception of self implicit in Vasubandhu influenced later Hindu theory about self.

The Concept of a Person

The use of the term 'person' (*pudgala*) is puzzling in Buddhism. We can distinguish two basic Buddhist positions: a reductionist position and an emergentist one. A provisional working definition of emergence is this:[1]

A property P of a mereologically complex object O is emergent if

1. [supervenience] P supervenes on the properties of the parts of O;
2. [non-structurality] P is not had by any of O's parts and is not a structural property of O, and
3. [autonomy] P has a direct determinative influence on the pattern of behaviour of O's parts.

The purpose of the third clause is to give sense to the idea that emergence produces properties that are causally autonomous, but it is open whether some other formulation of the autonomy requirement is better. The so-called Buddhist 'Personalists' (Pudgalavādins or Vātsīputrīyas) are emergentists about persons: they claim that the person is an inexplicable product of diachronic aggregation of states of conscious experience. Like the Indian materialists, they point to examples from the natural world to illustrate their theory of mind. For them, the choice example is the relation between fire and the fuel in which it burns: the fire is dependent on the fuel, but not in the same way that the shape of a heap of sand is dependent on the grains. Their view is that, like fire, persons are dependent upon but yet irreducible to the constituent ingredients. They use the term 'person' to refer the macrostate of a dynamical system, subject to a microdynamic (*pratītya-samutpāda*, 'combined origination in dependence') by which its total collective state at one time determines its state at the next. The view is that the micro-elements are in a process of mutation, and that the emergent macrostates yielded by this process of mutation are to be identified as corresponding with mind, just as a flame is something emergent from a process of combustion in which the constituent material is continuously in flux. Such a theorist thinks that there is something other than the stream: emergent upon the underlying dynamical system, there are macrostates which take the stream as their owner. This is what this group of Buddhists give the name 'person'. Their theory is best understood as the thesis that a person is an ownership relation emergent from the dynamical system that is the interlaced stream of the five sorts of mental particular, or the stream itself in its new capacity to function as a place of ownership.

Vasubandhu strongly disagrees. The exact nature of his disagreement, however, needs to be stated with care. His view is that nothing corresponds to the Pudgalavāda use of the term 'person'. That is because he has a no-ownership view, and such views deny that there are emergent macrostates of the sort posited. Equally clearly, however, he does not deny that streams, the underlying dynamical systems themselves, exist, and it might seem that there is nothing to prevent one using the term 'person' to denote that. He has been called a 'Buddhist Reductionist', seeming to imply that he reduces persons to streams. But again, he clearly does not hold a normal reductionist view (the view of Parfit 1984 and 1999, for example). This is

again because he has a no-ownership view, and so, in particular, denies that streams are owners of states of consciousness.

To make progress here, we need to have a still clearer understanding of the ideas of reduction and emergence. Broad (1925: 581) defined emergent qualities as 'qualities which are possessed by groups having such and such a structure and such and such constituents but are not deducible from a knowledge of the structure of the group and the qualities of its constituents'. In another place, he said that 'an emergent quality is roughly a quality which belongs to a complex as a whole and not to its parts' (1925: 23). The adverb 'roughly' here is important, because another category of quality shares with emergent qualities that same feature, so-called structural properties. Something's shape, for instance, need be the shape of none of its parts, but we would not count it as an emergent property. This is because it is entirely explicable ('deducible') how something's shape depends on and is a result of the arrangement and shape of its parts. There are thus three ways for a property to be a property of a complex (or whole or aggregate) without necessarily being a property of any of its constituents or parts:[2]

1. *Scalar sums* – For example, the mass of an object is not the mass of any of its proper parts. The mass of the whole is a scalar sum of the masses of the parts.
2. *Structural resultants* – For example, the shape of an object is not the shape of any of its proper parts. The shape of an object is a structural property, deducible from knowledge of the parts and their arrangement.
3. *Emergents* – For example, arguably, the biological or psychological properties of an organism emerge from the nature and arrangement of its parts, but are not deducible from knowledge of their nature and arrangement.

Jaegwon Kim has argued that the right way to understand the non-deducibility condition characteristic of emergent properties is as a condition that rules out functional reduction (Kim 2006). What marks out scalar sums and structural properties is that they are functionally reducible to the constituents. The mass of a heap of sand is a function of the masses of the grains; indeed, the function is simply addition. The conical shape of the heap of sand is also a function of the shapes and positions of the grains; in

this case, the function is a more complex one. What distinguishes emergents, then, if there are any, is that they are not functionally reducible to their constituents. Kim is a reductive physicalist who takes the reduction of the mental to the physical to consist in the functionalisation of mental properties and the identification of their physical realisers.

There is a different and older concept of reduction, still in play and also relevant to our understanding of the Buddhist theory about persons. This is the model developed by Ernest Nagel, which sees reduction as consisting in the nomic derivation of the laws of the theory to be reduced from the laws of the reducing theory. Such derivations need auxiliary empirical premises called 'bridge laws', which correlate the predicates in the reduced theory with those of the reducing theory:

> Bridge Law Requirement. If theory T is to be reduced to T*, for each primitive predicate M of T there must be a bridge law of the form M <-> N, providing M with a coextensive predicate N of T*.[3]

When the theory to be reduced is a theory of mind, the bridge law might, for example correlate the predicate '... is a pain' with a predicate from the theory of neuroscience, such as '... is a C-fibre firing'. It might then seem that under a Nagel reduction, any statement in the reduced theory can be translated into an equivalent statement in the reducing theory. One might think, for example, that if the theory of macroscopic middle-sized objects permits of a Nagel reduction to a theory of atoms and their interactions, then our talk about tables and chairs will be translatable into talk about their constituent atomic swarms. And then one might be led to the conclusion that tables and chairs really are nothing over and above swarms of atoms, or even that swarms are all there really are, and that middlesized objects exist only in name and not in reality. It is in this context that David Lewis draws a distinction between the cautious and the incautious reductionist: the cautious reductionist does not confuse the 'nothing but' clause in a reductionist thesis with a denial of existence.[4]

These distinctions are precisely what we need to make sense of Vasubandhu's view about persons. Vasubandhu insists that 'person' is just a name we use for a resultant combination of mental particulars. He states that whatever exists but is not fundamental physical stuff is such as to disappear when broken up in actuality or in thought:

> That of which one does not have a cognition when it has been broken is real in a concealing way (*samvṛti-sat*); an example is a pot. And that of which one does not have a cognition when other [elemental qualities (*dharma*)] have been excluded from it by the mind is also conventionally real. That which is otherwise is ultimately real (*paramārtha-sat*).[5]

The examples Vasubandhu gives are a pot and (in the autocommentary) a body of water. A pot, clearly, is something which none of its proper parts are: it disappears if broken into its parts. A body of water seems, on the face of it, to be a stranger example, since water is a fundamental type of elemental material. I propose that what is going on is that he is mentioning something which is a scalar sum (a body of water) and something which is a structural resultant (a pot), and that the implication is that this exhausts the ways in which combining elements can create something new. Vasubandhu's point is then that the 'new' properties of the pot are not at a higher metaphysical level than those of its constituents. Although such objects have properties which their constituents do not have, these are merely resultant properties.

When Vasubandhu turns to a discussion of the concept of a person, which he does only in an appendix to the main work,[6] he says that the case is exactly the same as with the pot and the water in his earlier example, and he further adds that a person is also like a heap or a river.[7] Vasubandhu's thought seems to be this. If the term 'person' refers to anything, it must refer to something which has a property that none of its constituents have. The lesson from the earlier discussion is that any such property is either a scalar sum or a structural resultant. There is simply no room for the Pudgalavāda theory, namely that being a person is an emergent property. To put it another way, Vasubandhu's argument is that *if* it is a conceptual truth about persons that they are emergent, *then* there are no persons. What Vasubandhu is claiming is there are no persons *as persons are conceived of by the Pudgalavādin*. His alternative idea is that the only legitimate use of the term 'person' is to refer to a structural property of the stream. Those entities are reducible their constituent experiential tropes, just as a heap or a flow is reducible to its constituents.

A different reading of Vasubandhu has it that what he argues is that all talk of persons is mere talk. According to the alternative view, being a person is not a property at all, let alone a resultant one. It is a fiction, a mere

convention. On this reading, he is an incautious reductionist, someone who says that the reduced entities do not really exist at all. I am arguing that a less uncompromising reading of Vasubandhu is available. The point at issue is whether one attributes to him an elimination thesis, according to which the existence of a reduction entails that the terms of the reduced theory are not genuinely referential, or an identity thesis, which says that what best explains the existence of the reduction is that reduced entities are identical to their reducing counterparts, so that persons are identical to diachronic clusterings of mental particulars. The availability of cautious reductionism, a middle way between eliminativism and emergentism about persons, is most clearly noticed by Vasubandhu's contemporary, Saṃghabhadra. The best thing to say about Vasubandhu himself is probably that he did not fully distinguish between these two alternatives to Personalism. When he denies that there are persons what he is denying is that there is anything corresponding to the Pudgalavāda conception of an emergent entity, not *eo ipso* asserting that persons are mere fictions. To say that a person is nothing other than a stream of mental particulars is not of itself to say that a person is nothing at all. Vasubandhu is an eliminativist about the illegitimate use of 'person' and a Nagel reductionist about its legitimate use, with a degree of caution that is unclear. Saṃghabhadra is more clearly a cautious Nagel reductionist about the legitimate use.

What is clear is that the Buddhist 'pudgala' is not a Strawsonian person, something to which both corporeal and psychological predicates are ascribed. The Strawsonian concept is rather that of the Cārvāka *puruṣa*: 'A human being (*puruṣa*) is a body qualified by consciousness.'[8] The Buddhist concept of a *pudgala* is the concept of an owner of experience, itself emergent from the stream of conscious experience.

Person to Self: Naturalism

Can Buddhist *pudgala* be seen as a naturalist philosophy of self? Quine describes methodological naturalism as a consequence of the 'abandonment of the goal of first philosophy', which has come about because of 'the recognition that it is within science itself, and not in some prior philosophy, that reality is to be identified and described' (Quine 1981: 72). The suggestion goes back to Hume. In the introduction to the *Treatise*, Hume

proposes that the old methods of ‘metaphysical reasonings’ be replaced with a new ‘experimental philosophy’. This new philosophy applies the methods of the sciences to a study of human nature:

> For to me it seems evident, that the essence of the mind being equally unknown to us with that of external bodies, it must be equally impossible to form any notion of its powers and qualities otherwise than from careful and exact experiments, and the observation of those particular effects, which result from its different circumstances and situations. (Hume 1978: xvii)

Hume’s failed attempt, using this method, to detect a self is one of the most famous and influential experiments in the history of philosophy:

> For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call myself, I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never can catch myself at any time without a perception, and never can observe anything but the perception. (Hume 1978: 252)

Hume concludes from this experiment that a self must be something ‘whose different and co-existent parts are bound together by a close relation’, and not something which is ‘perfectly simple and indivisible’. In the notorious Appendix, he summarises the view that he has advanced in the body of the *Treatise* thus:

> When I turn my reflection on myself, I never can perceive this self without some one or more perceptions; nor can I ever perceive anything but the perceptions. It is the composition of these, therefore, which forms the self. (Hume 1978: 634)

With regard to all objects, not just the self, he draws a contrast between ‘the doctrine of philosophers’, by which he means a natural philosophical or scientific attitude, and ‘the doctrine of the vulgar’, the ordinary opinion of common sense:

> When I view this table and that chimney, nothing is present to me but particular perceptions, which are of a like nature with all the other perceptions. This is the doctrine of philosophers. But this table, which is present to me, and the chimney, may and do exist separately. This is the doctrine of the vulgar. (Hume 1978: 634)

Hume seems to think, therefore, that his experiment establishes that there is no self understood in the 'vulgar' sense as something simple and indivisible. The same method also establishes that there is no table in the vulgar sense. In the case of the table, of course, the co-existent parts are perceptions of the constituent material parts from which the table is made, the sorts of thing one would see if one were to look at the table through a very powerful microscope. Introspection, for Hume, is a kind of microscope for the mind, and the mental particulars which it detects – sensible qualities, emotions, thoughts – are the mental parts from which a self is made.

It might now seem that it is only in a rather contrived sense that Hume can say that he does not observe a self, in the strange 'philosophical' sense in which he would also say that one does not observe a table: one does not observe a table as something 'simple and indivisible' separate from its constituent parts and their properties. Yet one does observe a table, and one does so in virtue of the pattern of co-existence of its parts. In that same sense, we might think that one does observe a self when one introspects mental particulars: one observes a self in virtue of the pattern of co-existence of those mental particulars. Hume's anxiety in the Appendix is the result of his belief that he can find nothing in perception corresponding to such a pattern of co-existence, and so can form no idea of a self as anything other than a clump and succession of discrete perceptions.

This anxiety, it seems to me, is an inevitable product of Hume's scientific naturalism. The patterns of co-existence that 'bind together in a close relation' the individual mental happenings are not describable in merely causal terms. They are patterns that must be articulated in a vocabulary unavailable to the Humean naturalist. Hume's experiment is a failure. It is a failure because what he set out to detect is not something that could be detected within the design-specification of the experiment he conducts. His scientific method, of microscopic inspection and introspection, never could detect a self. So Shoemaker (1996: 24) rightly says that 'whether we interpret "perceive" in the broad sense or in the narrow sense, the [Humean] view that we have introspective perception of individual mental happenings but not of a self is indefensible'.

The problem with Hume's naturalism is that his method is blind to the facts which are constitutive of selfhood. He speaks about individual 'perceptions', but not to what it is for a subject to own a perception. A concept of self affords an explanation of the sources – real or illusory – of

the distinction between what is mine and what is another's. In so far as it does indeed supply such an explanation, our interim conclusion is that the operative concept of self at work in Buddhist theory is neither Cartesian, nor Strawsonian, nor Humean.

First-person Psychological Ascription and Unconscious Ownership

What does Vasubandhu say about the ownership of conscious experience? In his later, post-Abhidharma, writing, he postulates the existence of an aspect of experience which he calls *manas*. He says that this *manas* is a way of being aware, associating it with the activity of 'thinking' (*manana*); that it takes the storeconsciousness (*ālayavijñāna*) as its foundation; that it undergoes a transformation (*pariṇāma*) into something that we metaphorically call a self, but also that this transformation is the work of cognitive fabrication (*vikalpa*) and there is in fact no such thing:

> For the metaphorical designation of self, which functions in several ways, is upon the transformation of consciousness.
>
> Based on it [sc. the store-consciousness], there functions the consciousness called *manas*, which consists in mentation (*manana*) having that as its base.
>
> This transformation of consciousness is a cognitive fabrication, and what is cognitively fabricated by it does not exist.[9]

The import of the use of the terms 'conceptual fabrication' (*vikalpa*) and 'metaphorical designation' (*upacāra*) in connection with the self is that the end result of the transformation of pre-attentive self-consciousness is the sort of firstperson present-tense psychological ascription one would express in the words 'I am F.' The transformation has made the self into a conceptual thought-content; but the expression of that thought-content uses a word, 'I' for example, in some way that is not one of genuine literal reference. The claim is that three distinct phenomena are involved in self-consciousness:

1. conscious attention to one's own states of mind (*manovijñāna*)

This must have a base (*āśraya*). The base is:

2. a pre-attentive mode of being self-aware (*manas*)

This is subject to transformation (*pariṇāma*). What it is transformed into is:

3. first-person present-tense ascription of a psychological state (*ahaṃ-pratyaya*) – thinking ‘I am F’ for some psychological predicate F.

My possession of a first-person view, a view on my own mental life, has to be underwritten. What underwrites it is the fact that my mental life presents itself to me, in a primitive and pre-attentive way, as being mine. This same primitive mode of being self-aware is rendered in such a way that it seems to justify me in making assertions of the form ‘I am F.’ In fact, it is never the case that assertions of such a form are true of a self. Uses of ‘I’ never literally refer. The proposal we are examining might be expressed as the conjunction of three propositions: (1) There is a pre-attentive mode of self-awareness because of which my experiences present themselves to me as mine. (2) First-person present-tense ascription of a psychological state draws upon additional conceptual resources, ones not available on the basis of (1) alone. (3) First-person psychological ascriptions do not actually involve genuine reference to a self.

Can one hear an echo of Vasubandhu’s new thought in the following remark (the very remark, as it happens, out of which Strawson constructed the noownership view; 1963: 95, n.1)?

> One of the most misleading representational techniques in our language is the use of the word ‘I’, particularly when it is used in representing immediate experience, as in ‘I can see a red patch.’ It would be instructive to replace this way of speaking by another in which immediate experience would be represented without using the personal pronoun. (Wittgenstein 1975: 88)

In another place, Wittgenstein speaks of ‘two different cases in the use of the word “I” (or “my”)’, the use ‘as object’ and the use ‘as subject’ (1960: 66–7). The use ‘as object’ is the use to which it is put when we refer to ourselves as human beings, embodied entities in a public space, the use it has when, for example, one person says to another, ‘I am just going to the shops to get the paper’ or ‘I have twisted my ankle.’ Having distinguished

between these two uses, one strategy would be to identify one of these uses as the primary use, and analyse the other use as being in some way derivative upon the first. The derivative use is metonymic or modulated – the term is used to refer to something else, which stands in some relation to the primary referent.

A variant on this approach is recommended by Galen Strawson. Strawson argues that the two uses are both genuinely referential, and neither is primary – in short, that 'I' is not univocal. One use is to refer to what he describes as a 'thin subject', which is 'an inner thing of some sort that does not and cannot exist at any given time unless it is having experience at that time' (2008: 156). The other use is to refer to the human being 'considered as a whole':

> Are we thin subjects? In one respect, of course, we are thick subjects, human beings considered as a whole. In this respect we are, in being subjects, things that can yawn and scratch. In another respect, though, we are in being subjects of experience no more whole human beings than hands or hearts: we are – literally – inner things, thin subjects, no more things that can yawn or scratch than eyebrows or thoughts .... – But 'What then am I?' Am I two different sort of things, a thin subject and a thick subject? This is ridiculous .... My answer is that 'I' is not univocal. We move naturally between conceiving of ourselves primarily as a human being and primarily as some sort of inner subject (we do not of course naturally conceive of ourselves as a thin subject). Sometimes we mean to refer to the one, sometimes to the other; sometimes our semantic intention hovers between both, sometimes it embraces both. (G. Strawson 2008: 157–8)

Vasubandhu, although he does not say so here, would perhaps be content to endorse as 'conventional' (*saṃvṛti-sat*) the use of the first person in statements like 'I am going to the shops', a use governed by the token-reflexive rule that 'I' refers to the speaker. When 'I' is used in the expression of first-person present-tense ascription of a psychological state, however, his claim is that the reference to an inner self fails, that this use erroneously imports a subject–predicate model and imposes it upon one's inner experience. In other words, his view of this use of 'I' is that there is a combination of metonymy and error-theory. When 'I' is used metonymically to refer to the inner subject, something always goes wrong, and what goes wrong is that there is nothing at the far end of the metonymic relationship for it to refer to.

According to the interpretation of Vasubandhu we have reached, then, 'I' does not function as an expression of genuine reference, but is rather one of

disingenuous reference: it is a referring expression without a referent, its use creating the false impression that there is one. That is, I suggest, the best way to understand Vasubandhu's claim that it is a 'metaphor'. The claim that the first person itself, the word 'I', is used 'metaphorically' in reporting the contents of the first-person perspective, therefore clearly rests on a *prior* commitment to the nonexistence of an inner subject of experience. Only this permits him to claim that its use is one of what I have called 'disingenuous reference'. What we have seen, however, is that a no-ownership theorist need not deny that a sense of ownership accompanies experience, a sense which is grounded in the subconscious activity of *manas*. One can deny that first-person present-tense ascriptions ascribe states of consciousness to subjects without falling into the incoherence, identified by P. Strawson, of denying that experience is necessarily experience as that of someone.

What is No-self?

If the ambition of Buddhist philosophy is to recommend that we assume a spectatorial or third-person stance on our own mental lives, then one promising idea is that what is distinctive of a first-person position is that thoughts are associated with a detachable phenomenology of ownership. In Vasubandhu's model of the mind, when we make present-tense self-ascriptions, we do so on the basis of a pre-existing sense of ownership that attaches to our thoughts. In normal cases, I experience my thoughts as things I have thought myself, rather than things someone else has thought and put in my mind. A plausible way to make sense of Vasubandhu's position is to take it that what he recommends is the detaching of a sense of agency from our thoughts. Ownership, Vasubandhu states explicitly, is a causal relation, a matter of how it is generated and not what its entitlements are (*Abhidharmakōśabhāṣya* 1975: 1,217). This consideration leads to a first formulation of the Buddhist 'no-self' claim:

> No-self [first formulation]: The phenomenology of ownership that accompanies normal thinking should be eradicated.

‘No-self’ is the advice to turn to forms of mental training whose outcome is that the trainee’s thoughts no longer carry with them any sense that they have been generated by, authored by, the subject themselves. This does not have to imply that they are felt of as being someone else’s thoughts, but rather that they are occurrences from the phenomenology of which any sense of agency, and so ownership, has been removed. It is important that the phenomenology is one of thoughts not felt as generated, rather than as one of thoughts felt as generated by someone else; for a sense that the thoughts to which one has first-person access are generated by someone else soon leads to distinctive sorts of mental disintegration, and that is not at all what Vasubandhu sees as the aim of philosophy. What Vasubandhu is saying is that we are in the grip of a false phenomenology when we have a sense that we ourselves have agency with respect to our thoughts. We need training to break that phenomenology, and if the training works, it will not be as if all our thoughts are someone else’s, but rather that they are as if arising unbidden, spontaneously.

Vasubandhu distinguishes, as we have seen, between two dimensions of self-awareness: *mano-vijñāna*, which is third-person knowledge of one’s mind, and *manas*, which is an additional sense of being-mine, and which transforms merely third-person knowledge into first-person self-knowledge (*Triṃśikā* 5). The addition of *manas* marks the distinction between a merely spectatorial view of one’s inner life and a participant’s view. Unlike Hume, Vasubandhu is thus fully aware that there is an important distinction between first-person and third-person stances. He does not take the first-person stance to consist in the operation of anything like an inner sense, and he firmly rejects any Cartesian perceptual model of self-knowledge.

The whole weight of the Buddhist ‘no-self’ can now be seen to rest on a further idea, and one which belongs to practical reason, not to theoretical reason. This is the idea that if we want to lead our lives well, we should not assume a first-person stance, but instead should adopt a spectatorial or deliberative stance. We should do this because only by doing so can we immunise ourselves against the temptations of egotism and self-pride, and cultivate compassion. Vasubandhu is explicit that *manas*, the distinguishing feature of a deliberative stance, is also *kliṣṭa*, ‘afflicted’, the source of all the vices associated with self-centredness (*Triṃśikā* 6). So a second formulation of the Buddhist ‘no-self’ claim is this:

> No-self [second formulation]: The first-person stance that accompanies normal thinking should be suspended.

According to Vasubandhu, it is best to have an entirely third-person, spectatorial stance with respect to one's mental life. Buddhism is the theoretical defence of a life committed to the cultivation of the disengaged, impersonal, intellect. Vasubandhu does not make the voluntarist mistake of supposing that one can simply *choose* to suspend the first-person stance. The techniques that will bring about such a transformation of mind do not themselves use reason or philosophical argument. There is a presumption, therefore, that the way of a no-self philosophy is not itself a philosophical way. There is a presumption too that the first-person stance *can* be suspended, and indeed, that it would be a good thing to do so.

A Sustainable Attitude?

Vasubandhu's analysis of the first-person stance is very perceptive. I have argued that it is free from any trace of a Cartesian conception of ownership, and is able to side-step Strawson's criticism of the no-ownership view. What I am critical of is the dismissive attitude towards the first-person stance, something which I have argued is constitutive of the Buddhist no-self view. Vasubandhu recommends that we should give up a first-person stance and cultivate an entirely theoretical stance towards our mental lives. Yet virtues such as autonomy rest on a preservation of the idea of ownership:

> The respect that individuals claim for their preferences, commitments, goals, projects, desires, aspirations, and so on is ultimately to be grounded in their being the person's own. It is because those preferences, commitments, and so on are a person's own that disregarding them amounts to disregarding him or her qua that distinctive individual. By contrast, disregarding preferences, commitments, and so on that are the product of coercion or deception does not seem to involve a violation in the same sense, raising the vexing issue of what makes some preferences, commitments, and so on 'one's own', and others not. (Christman and Anderson 2005: 9)

So, for example, in order to resist the impositions of a tyrant, one needs a conception of self that can sustain demands for one's autonomy and individual rights to be respected. The view of Vasubandhu is a much more

resilient version of the no-ownership doctrine than Strawson's reconstructed position. Vasubandhu presents an extremely astute analysis of the first-person perspective and of the phenomenology of ownership. I have argued that Buddhist 'no-self' theory should be understood as an attitude towards, not an analysis of, this phenomenology.

I began by saying that the reconciliation of naturalism and the first-person stance is the first work of a concept of self. Neither Buddhist refusal of the virtues of a first-person perspective nor non-Buddhist anti-naturalism is an acceptable way to fulfil this obligation; both are abrogations of the philosophical task that a theory of self ought to be responsive to. Strawson sought a middle ground with his theory of persons, but Strawsonian persons are not selves. My view is that the doctrine of *manas* can be made to serve as a very good account of the self, and that only a prior meta-philosophical commitment prevents Vasubandhu from acknowledging it as such. Conceived as a self, this *manas* is neither Cartesian, nor Humean, nor Strawsonian. Moreover, and unlike many accounts of the self, it is properly individuated. The distinction between *manas* and *pudgala* is an anticipation of the contemporary idea that we should distinguish within the concept of self distinct strands corresponding to minimal and narrative conceptions of self. Vasubandhu is right, I suggest, to see that there is a transformation (*pariṇāma*) involved in the transition from a basic pre-attentive sense of ownership to the grounding of present-tense first-person ascription of psychological predicates. My view is that this 'transformation' consists precisely in the genuine emergence of self within an individual's mental life. It is indeed true that concomitant with the formation of self there emerges too a capacity for pride, conceit, and all the other self-regarding moral psychological afflictions; but the cure for them is the rational cultivation of a moral identity, not the use of techniques that undermine one's very possession of a participant stance.

[1] Bedau (1997: 376), adapted from O'Connor (1994).

[2] Armstrong (1978: vol. 2, 69); O'Connor (1994).

[3] Kim (2005: 98).

[4] 'A supervenience thesis is, in a broad sense, reductionist. But it is a stripped-down form of reductionism, unencumbered by dubious denials of existence, claims of ontological priority, or claims of translatability. One might wish to say that in some sense the beauty of statues is nothing over and above the shape and size and colour that beholders appreciate, but without denying that there is such a thing as beauty, without claiming that beauty exists only in a less-than-fundamental way, and without undertaking to paraphrase ascriptions of beauty in terms of shape etc. A supervenience thesis seems to capture what the cautious reductionist wishes to say'; Lewis (1998: 29).

[5] 'yatra bhinnena tadbuddhir anyāpohe dhiyā ca tat | ghaṭārthavat saṃvṛtisat paramārthasad anyathā ||' AK 6.4 ||; Vasubandhu (1975: 334).

[6] Vasubandhu (1973: 1,189–234); tr. Duerlinger (2003), Kapstein (2001: 347–74).

[7] 'prajñaptisat pudgalo rāśidhārādivat'; Vasubandhu (1973: 1,205).

[8] *Cārvāka-sūtra* 1.6: 'caitanya-viśiṣṭaḥ kāyaḥ puruṣaḥ |'; Bhattacharya (2002: 603–4).

[9] 'ātmadharmopacāro hi vividho yaḥ pravartate | vijñānapariṇāme 'sau ||' 1a–c '|| tasya vyāvṛtir-arhatve tad-āśritya pravartate | tad-ālambaṃ manonāma vijñānaṃ mananātmakam ||' 5 '|| vijñāna-pariṇāmo 'yaṃ vikalpo yad-vikalpyate | tena tan-nāsti ||' 17a–c ||; *Triṃśikāvijñapti-kārikā*; tr. Richard Robinson, in Lusthaus (2002: 275–91).

Chapter 5
Emotions: A Challenge to No-self Views

Irina Kuznetsova

In this chapter I would like to look at emotions and consider what classical and contemporary philosophical theories of emotions can contribute to the debate on the existence and nature of self. In *ātmavāda* texts we do find an occasional argument for a continuous substantial self from emotions, more specifically *sukha*, 'pleasure' or 'contentment', and *duḥkha*, 'pain' or 'suffering', but they are very brief and therefore have not received much scholarly attention, unlike some of the core arguments for *ātman*, such as the argument from memory or from cross-modal perception (in fact, as we shall see, the latter also play a significant role in arguments for *ātman* from emotions). In this chapter I briefly analyse the arguments for a continuous substantial self on the basis of emotions found in the chapter on *ātman* and two designated sections on pleasure (*sukha*) and suffering (*duḥkha*) of the *Padārthadharmasaṃgraha*, the work of the fifth-century CE Vaiśeṣika philosopher Praśastapāda. They exemplify the types of arguments *ātmavādin*s derived from examination of emotional experience and the limitations of these arguments. Much richer and more convincing arguments can, however, be drawn from contemporary, often cross-disciplinary, discussion of emotions. What becomes clear when examining contemporary material on emotions is that (i) far from being an add-on, let alone a disposable add-on, to conscious life, emotions are not only its vital component, but in their basic form its foundation, which means that findings on emotions should be given substantial weight in philosophy of mind and self, and (ii) these findings point to irreducibility of 'mineness' or individuation (taken in the particular sense described in this chapter) and unity of consciousness. While this does not do all the work required to secure any given doctrine of *ātman* in its entirety, it does mitigate against

any strong no-ownership or anonymity claim[1] and against reduction of self to a sequence of momentary selfcontained cognitive events.[2]

For a subject of such obvious philosophical interest, we may be surprised to find that historically, philosophical theories of emotions come few and far between. It is not that emotions were entirely neglected, but their treatment was most often embedded within a larger, usually ethical, philosophical agenda. Few philosophers set themselves the task to define the nature of emotion per se. From around the 1970s, however, there has been a remarkable surge of interest in emotion in philosophy, psychology, developmental psychology, psychiatry and neurobiology, and emotion now constitutes a distinct research area with a great scope for cross-disciplinary collaboration. One of the reasons why emotion had not enjoyed as much focused philosophical attention as it deserved until recently was a persistently assumed dichotomy between emotion and reason, with reason granted rarely disputed superiority over emotion. This meant, on the one hand, that emotion did not readily suggest itself as a subject of rational philosophical enquiry, or alternatively, that it was viewed as an irrational, even dangerous, aspect of our nature that must be controlled by reason. Curiously enough, when emotions did come into the philosophical spotlight in the last quarter of the twentieth century, it is the cognitive theory of emotions as judgements that gradually became the widely accepted and dominant view. This theory traces its origins back to the philosophy of emotion developed by the Stoics, whose analysis of emotions viewed as misguided judgements conducive to misery, was motivated by the practical concern with control of emotion. In a way, it represents a reduction of the dichotomy of emotion and reason to the latter, which in practice should result in a complete victory of reason and, in the Stoics' aspiration, a complete eradication of emotion. However, having abandoned this ultimate goal of the Stoic programme as not only unrealistic but undesirable, neo-Stoics like Martha Nussbaum and Robert Solomon embrace and develop its main premise that emotions are evaluative judgements.

One of the main claims of the cognitive view of emotions is that emotions have intentionality, they are always *about* something.[3] Martha Nussbaum describes emotions 'as value-laden ways of understanding the world' (2001: 88) characterised by 'predication – usually of some thing or person with an idea of salience, urgency, or importance' (2001: 125–6). Nussbaum makes a further point that emotions are 'judgments in which

people acknowledge the great importance, for their own flourishing, of things that they do not fully control – and acknowledge thereby their neediness before the world and its events' (2001: 90):

> [T]he experience of passivity in emotion is well explained by the fact that the objects of emotion are things and people whose activities and well-being we do not ourselves control .... In emotion we recognize our own passivity before the ungoverned events of life. (2001: 78)

Nussbaum's account acknowledges our vulnerability, our dependency on the world, even if we ourselves cognitively construct the way it appears to us through our emotions. But the term 'appearance', taken from the Stoics, is crucial here. It is up to us, argued the Stoics, whether to assent to appearance or not. It is only in the evaluative framework of our wants, values, interests and goals that we form our affective appraisals, and by reconfiguring this framework we can redefine our appraisals and thus control our emotions. Richard Sorabji (2002), for example, advocates selective application of Stoic therapy to get rid of unwanted or counterproductive emotions. We should question how reasonable is our emotional assessment of the situation, how justified our emotional reaction, and whether it is counterproductive in relation to our larger goals. The foundational principle of Stoic therapy is that, unlike most other things, our character is under our control, and this means that our happiness is under our control, because by cultivating certain attitudes and dispositions we can become immune to the world dragging us down. There is both pre-emptive work involved in building up the right type of character, and continuous monitoring, analysis and reassessment of affective judgements. In the monograph appropriately entitled *Not Passion's Slave* (2003) Robert Solomon defends the thesis that our emotions are our choice:

> [E]motions, as judgments, are a species of activity, and thus to be included on the 'active' side of the all-too-simple 'active–passive' disjunction according to which we evaluate most human affairs. This means, too, that emotions fall into the realm of responsibility, so that it always makes sense ... to praise or blame a person, not just for contributing to the situation that caused the emotion but, in some sense to be worked out, for having the emotion itself, as one blames a person for bigotry, for example, or praises them for their courage. (2003: 22)

> In a sense, our thesis here is self-confirming: to think of our emotions as chosen is to *make* them our choices. Emotional control is... the willingness to become self-aware, to search

> out, and to challenge the normative judgments embedded in every emotional response. To come to believe that one has this power *is* to have this power. (2003: 17)

Here we may draw a parallel with emotional discipline that is integral to the Buddhist path. As Stoics should mistrust the so-called first movements of sinking and expanding, so Buddhists must not reify a mere bodily suffering into other kinds of suffering, and must constantly monitor their emotional reactions and transform them at as early a stage as possible from habitual and conducive to suffering to such that would accord with Buddhist principles. Inasmuch as this involves a lot of pre-emptive work in building up the right belief system by gradually replacing unwholesome or unhelpful beliefs and attitudes with ones that discourage mental clinging and ensuing emotional misery, this could be appropriately described as an exercise in self-cultivation, so we may question how well it sits with *anātmavāda* as a campaign against any kind of extended self. It could be put to Buddhists that what allows them in practice to educate their emotions is an integrated temporally extended self which they rely on in a particular moment to give out an appropriate affective response, integrating and bringing the whole history and breadth of cultivated Buddhist judgements and attitudes to bear on this one particular object, thereby perceptually and affectively constituting it as such. In this connection we may refer to Solomon's point that emotion is not one simple judgement that can be translated into one propositional statement; emotion integrates and manifests the entire system of both long-standing and situational judgements: '[E]motion is never a single judgment but a system of judgments, and although one might well make one or several judgments of the system without having the emotion, ... one cannot make all of them and not have the emotion' (2003: 21). 'My emotion is a structure of my world, which may at times manifest itself in certain specific displays of feeling and behavior' (2003: 32).

This account of emotion already points to two features pivotal to consciousness, which, as I want to argue in this chapter, analyses of emotions can help us ascertain: (i) irreducible 'mineness' which pervades consciousness to its deepest core, and (ii) integration, both diachronic and synchronic (with the latter boiling down to the former, as convincingly argued by Zahavi 2011: 72). 'Mineness' on this level is evident in what Nussbaum terms the 'localised character' of emotion – the fact that what makes this particular emotion what it is, is that it is situated within a large framework of unique personal preferences, attachments and beliefs formed

through the unique personal history of the particular individual. Most contemporary judgement theories of emotions stress that what stands behind the term ‘judgement’ is a complex of interlocking evaluations, desires, attitudes, dispositions and intentions; emotion in which this multidimensional framework finds its expression evidences integration.

Judgement theories of emotions, however, operate on the level of personhood or selfhood particularised by personality, and while this is the level on which the bulk of Western philosophy of self operates, for Indian philosophy this is a superficial level of provisional truth about self. Examining emotion from the perspective of cognitive or judgement theories of emotions does not get to the heart of the disagreement between proponents and opponents of *ātman*, as they both affirm the psycho-physical continuity constitutive of personhood and also agree that this continuity is insubstantial, fluid, and subject to variation, loss and accretion. When, on the other hand, emotion is considered in the light of contemporary neurobiological studies which need not be regarded as competing with, but rather as complementary to, cognitive theories of emotions, we see that ‘mineness’ and integration cut right through consciousness and are present at all levels, including preconscious and therefore pre-/sub-personal levels. In an interview on emotions, eminent psychologist Anthony Marcel points out that the judgement theory of emotion describes a secondary superstructure of conscious judgements articulating the underlying preconscious integrated system of ‘concerns’:

> Gallagher: One may have an emotion because something matters, or as you put it, emotion may be relevant to a concern. In that case, does emotion depend on an appraisal or judgment consciously made by an agent?
>
> Marcel: It may be that for many theorists of emotion who emphasise appraisal, what they mean by appraisal is a judgment. But our point is that specific things or events matter to a creature because that creature already has concerns (i.e. they matter continuously implicitly), but they may only become occurrent when there is a specific turn of events .... There are judgments (if you wish to call them that) that are embedded and immediate .... (Gallagher 2008: 188)

Before we look at how the latest findings of neurophysiology on emotion can contribute to the discussion of self and lend some support to *ātmavādin*s' case, let us see what arguments *ātmavādin*s themselves put forward in defence of self on the basis of emotions. As an example of an *ātmavāda* analysis of emotion incorporating arguments for the necessity of a continuous substantial self as the substratum of emotions, let us examine Sections 290 and 291 of Praśastapāda's *Padārthadharmasaṃgraha*, which aim to define the ontological status and nature of pleasure and suffering and relate them to *ātman*, and Section 79, which forms part of the chapter on *ātman* and discusses the qualities of *ātman*, including emotions. It is not for nothing that Praśastapāda treats pleasure and suffering separately, in two designated sections (quoted in my translation in the Appendix to this chapter). The commentators Śrīdhara and Vyomaśiva reject the view that happiness is the mere absence of suffering, but neither are happiness nor bliss the inherent nature of *ātman*, as is claimed, for instance, in Advaita Vedānta. Pleasure and suffering are contingent qualities or attributes (*guṇa*) of *ātman*, which is a substance (*dravya*). Yet even as contingent qualities, they are important. We cannot identify bare substances; we can only identify them through their qualities, provided there is a necessary relationship between the quality and the substance. If it is established that this type of quality can reside only in this substance, it means that this quality could not exist without this substance, so its existence proves the existence of the substance.

Sections 290 (2.13) and 291 (2.14) each open with a statement of the causal factors for the arising of pleasure and suffering respectively. For pleasure or suffering to arise, an agreeable or disagreeable object respectively must be proximate, the perception of this desirable or undesirable object must occur through its contact with a sense-faculty and the contact of the mind (*manas*) and self (*ātman*), given that there are also favourable background conditions (designated as *dharma*) or unfavourable conditions (designated as *adharma*) respectively. Śrīdhara's commentary explains why contact between a sense-faculty and the pleasant object is required for pleasure to arise: if the subject's attention is directed to a different object, then even in the presence of an enjoyable object no pleasure arises. So for pleasure to arise, the subject's attention must be directed to the object which can serve as a source of pleasure. According to Vaiśeṣika and also Nyāya, we are able to attend to only one object at a time,

and in the case of a sense-object, to an object in only one sensory modality at a time. This is where the role of the mind comes in. Self is understood as the agent of cognition that deploys the mind as an instrument of cognition in a way that Praśastapāda compares to a boy throwing a ball. The ball is thrown at other balls which stand for sense-faculties. Thus it is via the instrumentality of the mind that self picks which sense-faculty to activate, and accordingly which sense object to cognise. The mind also has another function – to act as an inner sense that registers inner, mental objects, such as a belief or an emotion.[4]

The last important point that I will mention in this very brief overview of Vaiśeṣika's definition of suffering and pleasure is the place of the latter in Vaiśeṣika's soteriology. They want to de-link pleasure and the state of liberation, and Śrīdhara's commentary explains why: pleasure induces attachment (*anurāga*) to its sources, so whatever the state of liberation might be, it must not be thought of as pleasurable, because such a view, while providing motivation to pursue liberation, would at the same time be counterproductive in terms of its attainment. It is for this reason too that the quoted passage describes the wise men on the path to liberation as enjoying contentment without pursuing, remembering or contemplating objects of enjoyment.

Following this short introduction to Vaiśeṣika's views on emotions, let us examine the arguments that Praśastapāda puts forward to defend the thesis that emotions must be qualities of *ātman* in Section 79 (which forms part of Chapter 1.8 of the *Padārthadharmasaṃgraha* devoted to the exposition and defence of *ātman*, and is partially quoted in the Appendix to this chapter). We must understand the term 'qualities' in reference to emotions, such as pleasure and suffering, in a technical Vaiśeṣika sense, meaning that emotions require a substratum to reside in. Praśastapāda maintains that this substratum can only be *ātman*. Why?

Praśastapāda aims to prove by elimination that only self, *ātman*, can be the substratum of such qualities as emotions; he does this by refuting two alternative possibilities suggested by the opponent: (i) that the body could be the substratum of emotions, and (ii) that emotions could reside in the sense-faculties. According to Jagadīśa's commentary, the second possibility, that the sense-faculties could be the substratum of emotions, is put forward by the opponent in response to Praśastapāda's argument that they must be attributed to *ātman* due to their unperceivability by the external senses. In

the opponent's view, the fact that the sense-faculties are equally unperceivable makes them a good candidate to serve as the locus of emotions. Earlier, in Section 78, Praśastapāda makes the argument from cross-modal perception and recognition for the necessity of a unified enduring self to store and synthesise the data received by different senses. In his commentary Jagadīśa gives the example of perceiving a sour fruit, such as a tamarind. I see it and, remembering its taste, start to salivate. The response in the organ of taste to a visual stimulus would be inexplicable without self as a cogniser unified in terms of its operation across sensory modalities and also cross-temporally. This also explains why a particular sense-faculty could not assume the role played by self: it would have no access to or control of the other sense-faculties; a meta-substance is required for that.

In the quoted commentary I have left out arguments relying on the acceptance of *karma* and rebirth, which are used to refute both the possibility that the body could be the locus of emotions and also that it could be the sense-faculties. Jagadīśa argues that only *ātman*, in so far as it survives the change of bodies and sense-faculties in rebirth and also the disjunctions and conjunctions of the body and the sense-faculties, can accommodate the group of qualities of which emotions form a part, but which also characteristically includes *dharma* and *adharma*, positive and negative fruits of actions carried across in rebirth. Another interesting quality in this group is memory – some of the strongest arguments in defence of an integrated enduring self *ātmavādin*s have been able to formulate are based on recognitive or recollective cognition, and, as we see in Sections 290 and 291, they are incorporated into Vaiśeṣika's account of emotions. After stating that the arising of pleasure and pain ordinarily requires contact between a sense-faculty and an external object, such as a flower garland, Praśastapāda points out that emotions can also arise without any external stimulus being present at the time, through anticipation[5] and recollection, thereby connecting the argument for self from emotions with the argument for self from memory.[6] Conceiving recollective cognition as the exact reproduction or revival of the original cognition, Vaiśeṣika philosophers maintain that the pleasure arising from recollection is that very pleasure which arose in the original experience. This means that the pleasure from recollection is as real as the pleasure from current experience of an agreeable object, in contrast to a false pleasure that may arise if the

object one thinks is currently present is not in fact present. Re-experiencing of the original experience in recollection is made possible by *ātman*. The fact that experience is remembered as experience, linguistically translatable as 'I cognised this', rather than as an object, or in other words, that first-person perspective cannot be eliminated from the recollective cognition and in fact *makes it* a recollective cognition, points to a unified enduring self as the substratum of memory.

Turning again now to Section 79, what can we make of the five arguments Praśastapāda puts forward to establish *ātman* as the locus of emotions by refuting the possibility of alternative loci? Two arguments: (ii) from their localised occurrence, and (iii) from the fact that they do not last as long as their substratum, are too embedded in the Vaiśeṣika metaphysics and not generalisable enough to be of much interest in the context of this chapter. Here Praśastapāda contrasts emotions with essential properties of the tangible substances, such as colour or form, which pervade their substratum in its entirety and last as long as the substratum. The remaining arguments are easier to generalise. In (i) Praśastapāda argues that emotions are always predicated of 'I'. Jagadīśa's commentary reconstructs the corresponding debate. As a counter-argument, the opponent draws a parallel between a statement like 'I who was sad, am now happy' (in the omitted part of the commentary discussion of emotions is tied with *dharma* – that is, if I want to be happy in a future birth, I perform prescribed acts and that very I will enjoy their fruits when reborn) and a statement like 'I who was thin, am now fat'. The opponent implies that 'I' could refer to the body as a stable substratum of transient and contingent qualities, such as thinness and fatness, and equally pleasure and suffering. The Vaiśeṣika argues that the body is not fit for this role precisely because of its changeability. The notion of the same body persisting through bodily changes is erroneous. Each different bodily state is a different body, and it is only the stability of self that maintains the continuity of 'I' to myself and of me to others, as my body turns from thin to fat or as I grow from a child into an adult. Point (iv) stresses the internality of emotions; like *ātman*, they are accessible only through internal perception.[7] Emotions are available only in first-person mode; concomitant bodily changes are in principle open to third-person observation, but not the experience of emotion itself. There is an essential gap between first-person perspective and third-person perspective, and so

also between the unique word ‘I’ that captures the former and all other words, as pointed out in (v).

One of the barriers to *ātmavāda* philosophies being accepted into and taken seriously in contemporary debates on self is that most of them present *ātman* as a substance, a position which Western philosophers read as Cartesian. In contrast, Buddhist philosophies have been met with much greater acceptance and recognition precisely because their discourse is just about consciousness conceived neither as itself a substance nor requiring an underlying substance. What those quick to dismiss Hindu philosophies may not realise is that most of them contain resources for separating out the two issues: (i) of self as a necessary presupposition for a coherent account of our experiential life, and (ii) of self as a substance. Specifically, in Nyāya/Vaiśeṣika the issue of self’s existence as a substance separable from experience arises only in the context of ultimate liberation, so if we bracket soteriology, we are left with their assertion of the necessity of self for a coherent account of our experience. While Praśastapāda’s arguments discussed above do not amount to an unassailable defence of a substantial self, they point to two features of experience that analysis of emotions can help us ascertain – irreducible subjectivity and diachronic integration – which together support the claim that experience evidences a continuous unified self.

Perhaps unexpectedly, *ātmavādin*s may find some support for their case in the latest neurobiological research on emotion, as presented in Antonio Damasio’s excellent monograph *The Feeling of What Happens: Body, Emotion and the Making of Consciousness* (2000), which demonstrates that the two features of ‘mineness’ and unity I highlighted above run even below the waterline of consciousness.

Firstly, Damasio (2000) has a very accurate, in my opinion, appreciation of *what* it is that he, as a neurophysiologist, is studying and where in the understanding of consciousness the role of neurophysiology stops and the work of philosophy begins:

> Conscious images can be accessed *only in a first-person perspective* (my images, your images). Neural patterns, on the other hand, can be accessed *only in a thirdperson perspective*. (2000: 318)

> As far as we can fathom, no amount of knowledge about the neurophysiology of the formation and experience of mental images will ever produce the experience of those mental images in those who possess that knowledge, although greater knowledge will give us a more satisfactory explanation of how we come to have such experiences of images .... The experience of a particular stimulus, including color, depends not just on the formation of an image but also on the sense of self in the act of knowing .... *Explaining* how to make something mental or something ours in scientific terms is an entirely different matter from making that something mental and ours *directly* .... The mind and its consciousness are first and foremost private phenomena, much as they offer many public signs of their existence to the interested observer. The conscious mind and its constituent properties are real entities, not illusions, and they must be investigated as the personal, private, subjective experiences that they are. (2000: 307–8)

What neurophysiology studies is biological *correlates* of consciousness or experience, not experience itself, which is inherently subjective. The two will always remain to some extent correlating, but different paradigms (with no oneto-one mapping of a particular brain state onto the specific mental event), thirdperson and first-person respectively, and while the latter can be to some degree explained by the former, it cannot in principle be reduced to the former.[8]

Damasio's next move is to argue that 'consciousness and emotion are *not* separable' (2000: 16).[9] Firstly, emotions constitute the unconscious scaffolding that underpins consciousness. Secondly, core consciousness identified with reflexivity, in Damasio's view (2000: 285), evolved evolutionarily precisely due to the advantageousness for the organism of feeling and knowing its emotions:

> Knowing a feeling requires a knower subject. In looking for a good reason for the endurance of consciousness in evolution, one might do worse than say that consciousness endured because organisms so endowed could 'feel' their feelings. I am suggesting that the mechanisms which permit consciousness may have prevailed because it was useful for organisms to know of their emotions. And as consciousness prevailed as a biological trait, it became applicable not just to the emotions but to the many stimuli which brought them into action. Eventually consciousness became applicable to the entire range of possible sensory events.

Pathologies allow us to observe the vital link between emotions and core consciousness, since they 'tend to go together, in the literal sense, by being present together or absent together' (Damasio 2000: 100). For example in 'epileptic automatisms', which can occur as part of or immediately following 'absence seizures' and 'can be like a scalpel and separate consciousness from the things that are in consciousness', while the sufferer

engages in automatic behaviour, consciousness or sense of ‘knowing centred on a self’ and emotion are suspended. The sufferer will ‘stare blankly, his eyes focused on nothing, his face devoid of any expression – a meaningless mask’, and, unlike normal actions, his actions will be ‘devoid of ultimate purpose and ... inappropriate for an individual in that situation’ (Damasio 2000: 96–9). Self-awareness arising on the basis of self-concern – which, as we shall see, drives the processing already on preconscious levels – is what separates a first-person experience from a third-person mechanistic simulation:

> Can we, with the assistance of advanced technology and neurobiological facts, create an artefact with consciousness? ... No, we have little chance of creating an artefact with anything that resembles human consciousness, conceptualized from an inner-sense perspective ... the artefact’s internal states may even mimic some of the neural and mental designs I propose here as a basis for consciousness. They would have a way of generating second-order knowledge, but, without the help of the nonverbal vocabulary of feeling, the knowledge would not be expressed in the manner we encounter in humans and is probably present in so many living species. Feeling is, in effect, the barrier, because the realization of human consciousness may require the existence of feelings. The ‘looks’ of emotion can be simulated, but what feelings feel like cannot be duplicated in silicon. (Damasio 2000: 314–15)

The final component of Damasio’s argument, and the most important one for the discussion of self, is that ‘the secret behind the efficacy of consciousness is selfness’ (2000: 304). Damasio (2000: 279–84) distinguishes three stages of the emotional process which play an important and constitutive role on the three corresponding levels of self: (i) the initial stage he terms ‘emotion’, which stands for unconscious emotional processing and corresponds to proto-self; (ii) at the next stage of ‘feelings of emotion’ corresponding to core self or core consciousness ‘we know that we have an emotion when the sense of a feeling self is created in our minds’ (2000: 279); (iii) the final stage of ‘knowing a feeling’ corresponds to autobiographical self which structures extended consciousness. Damasio’s analysis highlights the fundamental importance of emotions to our conscious life on all levels: emotions constitute the preconscious foundation of consciousness; feeling of emotions coincides with sense of self or core consciousness that in its turn serves as the basis for the unfolding of extended self with its narrative continuities also woven through with consciously processed emotions.

In examining the judgement theory of emotions in the beginning of the chapter, I have already discussed the connection between autobiographical self and emotions. We constitute our own world or our private version of the public world through affective judgements instantiating our preferences, interests, desires and goals. There is no need to discuss the functioning of emotion on the level of extended or narrative self any further because it does not get to the heart of the debate between *ātmavādin*s and *anātmavādin*s.

There is a growing consensus in the fledgling field of cross-cultural philosophy of self that the concept of core or minimal self, championed most prominently by Dan Zahavi[10] who developed it on the basis of his reading of the phenomenological tradition, is very amenable to comparisons with brahmanical conceptions of *ātman*. Parallels are usually drawn with Advaita[11] as probably the best-known brahmanical school among philosophers coming from the Western tradition and also the most analytical one. Ram-Prasad (2011) argues, however, that since Advaita's *ātman* is 'reflexive subjectivity as such' (2011: 226) which, contra Buddhists, is inherently unified, but, contra rival brahmanical schools, 'is not about individuality' (2011: 232), Zahavi's core self which connects reflexivity with 'mineness' is closer to non-Advaitic brahmanical schools' conceptions of *ātman* (2011: 222).

Damasio's conception of core self agrees with Zahavi's, in so far as both describe it as the invariant, strictly singular, stable and stabilising factor of experience consisting in what Zahavi (2011: 60) terms 'a *ubiquitous* dimension of first-personal givenness'. Zahavi's core self is, however, 'a thin experiential notion of self' (2011: 70), which possesses a strictly 'phenomenological reality' and diachronicity (2011: 74). Since Zahavi's account does not investigate the emergence and nature of the self beyond experience, it leaves open the possibility that this self is just a construct of experience. While perfectly satisfying as a phenomenological account, it does not address the principal concern of classical Indian debates as to the metaphysical nature of the self in the deepest analysis. The advantage of Damasio's account in this respect is that it goes deeper and finds unity, continuity and self-centredness below the level of reflexive awareness, on the preconscious level of the proto-self. On this account, evidence from neurobiological study of emotion is on *ātmavādin*s' side. No claim should be made, of course, that it secures the *ātmavāda* doctrine of any particular

school in its entirety, which is not a problem for scholars approaching Indian schools of thought not with a view to defend or knock down any of them, but to understand the nuances, philosophical viability, implications, and historical and contemporary relevance of the views explicitly or implicitly entailed in their doctrines. The level of the preconscious self opens up a new frontier in self and consciousness research and can yield insights relevant to the concerns of both classical Indian and contemporary Western philosophical debates on the self, so it deserves a detailed examination.

Proto-self is defined as 'the nonconscious forerunner for the levels of self which appear in our minds as the conscious protagonists of consciousness: core self and autobiographical self', and is constituted by 'the ensemble of brain devices which ... continually represent, *nonconsciously*, the state of the living body, along its many dimensions' (Damasio 2000: 22). It is already at this nonconscious or preconscious level that emotions first appear evolutionarily, developmentally and in the course of a particular cognitive episode, yielding important evidence for the study of the self. Experiments involving healthy subjects and also subjects with neurological disorders and brain trauma conclusively prove that coherent emotional processing exits below the waterline of consciousness, at a depth and speed that we are unable to register consciously. Out of the many fascinating cases examined by Damasio and other neuroscientists, I can mention only a few.

Damasio (2000: 301–2) cites a 'decisive example of high-level nonconscious processing' revealed in an experiment based on a game of cards, in which, without the player's knowledge, some decks are randomly designated as bad (picking certain cards from them results in a financial penalty) and some decks are randomly designated as good (picking certain cards from them results in a financial reward). Very quickly, before the players can form a 'conscious depiction of the situation they are facing' or 'formulate a conscious strategy for how to deal with the situation', the brains of the players 'are already producing systematic skin-conductance responses, immediately prior to selecting a card from the bad decks', but never prior to selecting a card from the good decks. This 'nonconscious bias' driven by emotions helps the players choose the good decks and avoid the bad decks before these decisions can be arrived at through conscious knowledge and logic.

One of the pioneers in the exploration of the emotional unconscious was Robert Zajonc, who published the results of a series of experiments in the 1980s which have since been confirmed by many other experimental studies, establishing that emotional processing and emotional reactions can occur in the absence of conscious awareness. Novel visual images, for instance Chinese hieroglyphs, were presented to subjects (who did not know Chinese) subliminally, too briefly to be consciously distinguished and identified, yet the subjects reliably expressed preference for the previously exposed stimuli (exhibiting the 'mere exposure' effect which links liking to familiarity, well established through conscious exposure experiments). LeDoux (1999) focused his research on fear, and conclusively established that basic fear occurs before the subject is conscious of what she is afraid of.

In healthy individuals, nonconscious emotional reasoning and nonconscious emotional learning are eventually extended and enhanced by conscious mechanisms, but where consciousness is impaired due to brain trauma or neurological disease, we can observe their functioning in isolation from the conscious superstructures. Damasio (2000: 300–301) gives the example of face-agnostic patients to whom truly unfamiliar faces and faces of relatives and friends are equally consciously unrecognisable, and yet if their skin conductance is recorded with a polygraph, it shows that familiar faces cause a distinct skin-conductance response, with the highest surges corresponding to exposure to faces of the closest relatives.

An even more dramatic example is that of Damasio's patient David, who due to 'one of the most severe defects in learning and memory ever recorded, cannot learn any new fact at all' (2000: 43). As a result of brain damage caused by severe encephalitis, he has a memory span of only 45 seconds in which he can learn and remember new facts, and a very skeletal knowledge of some general facts, but almost no specifics, so he cannot, for instance, recognise his relatives or himself in photographs. If he is introduced to a new person who then leaves the room and returns within 20 seconds, he is able to recognise this person and recount how the latter walked out of the room and came back, but if this person comes back in two minutes, David will have no recollection of him at all. Despite this devastating memory and learning impairment, David displays what can be described as emotional memory, which enables subconscious learning. An experiment under controlled conditions confirmed what was already evident

to David's carers in the facility where he lived, namely that he exhibited consistent emotional preferences that made sense in the context of his life, although they could not make any sense to him. In a good-guy/bad-guy experiment,[12] where goodness and badness encoding was specifically emotional – the bad guy was an attractive young woman (to offset David's manifest preference for the company of young and beautiful women) who gave David a boring, emotionally unrewarding task and was standoffish with him – David was asked to look at sets of four photographs several days after he had equal timed exposure to the bad guy, the good guy and the neutral guy, and to say who he would turn to for help and who was his friend out of the four, the fourth being a person David never met. Remarkably, despite not being able to recognise any of the people nor determine whether they have ever met, David chose the good guy over 80 per cent of the time, and almost never chose the bad guy. When he was faced with the three individuals who took part in the experiment, he consistently chose the good guy. But how did he choose so well despite being incapable of remembering and learning anything? Clearly, learning did occur on a nonconscious emotional level and was retrievable through a similarly nonconscious mechanism: seeing the people who took part in the test again caused nonconscious reinduction of some of the emotions he had during earlier interaction with them.

How would a Buddhist *anātmavādin* explain such a case? David certainly cannot be accused of *constructing* a continuous unitary self – he is physically incapable of doing that – and yet, without any conscious work, he has a continuous unified self. He lacks any conscious continuities beyond a 45-second window that would allow him to make conscious use of this self, and yet without being consciously aware of it, he benefits from it and is able to learn and to make good choices conducive to his emotional wellbeing across time periods exceeding 45 seconds by hundreds of thousands of times and more, even without cognitive resources to learn or make rational decisions across such temporal distance.

Ram-Prasad (2011: 219–20) formulates the core issue of the *ātmavāda–anātmavāda* debate as follows:

> [I]t is the perspectival presence, a consciousness of subjective unity, that is the point of disagreement in Indian philosophy. The question for the Indians is whether what is phenomenologically given – the experience, and the sense of a subject that is the ground

> condition for experience – is best explained by a genuine unity of consciousness, or whether that unity is itself a construct of experience, and if it is agreed that there is unity of consciousness, whether that points to a unified self. Buddhists, of course, generally deny that there is a unified self which generates unity of consciousness; through a wide range of positions, they maintain that that felt unity is constructed. Broadly, Hindu realists, like the Nyāya and Mīmāṃsā schools, hold that there is a unified self to which phenomenology points, which is the condition for the construction of the empirical person (although there are different theories about how the nature and existence of that self is affirmed).

The latest neurobiological findings on emotions go some way to undermine the Buddhist thesis of the constructed nature of self. While normally it is difficult to ascertain whether continuity and integration persist without the input of extended consciousness, David's case points to the existence of continuity and integration not only below the level of extended consciousness, but even below the level of core consciousness, on a preconscious level. Preconscious emotional processing is directed by self-interest or self-affection[13] and distinguishes that which is beneficial from that which is harmful to the self. From the existence of continuous unified preconscious emotional processing occurring for the benefit and therefore, so to speak, 'from the point of view' of the self, we can conclude that continuous unified self is not a construct of experience. It is not the case that phenomenal unity and continuity create an impression of a self out of ownerless discrete processing events, rather they reflect oneness and integration that prefigures self-awareness. In other words, it is not the persistence of the identical first-person perspective that is responsible for unity, rather the diachronic identity of first-person perspective is accounted for by the unity of lower level preconscious processing. Damasio's (2000: 126) view that 'core consciousness is generated in pulselike fashion' at first sight seems to suit *anātmavāda*, but since core consciousness signals the *fait accompli* of diachronic integration centred on the self on a preconscious level, the 'pulselike fashion' of this report cannot be claimed by *anātmavādin*s as support for their case. Elsewhere Damasio (2000: 218) emphasises the diachronicity of the core self when he speaks of 'the narrative of core consciousness and ... the transient core self that is born within it'. Damasio (2000: 355) also stresses the oneness of the core self, arguing, for instance, that patients with multiple personality disorder:

> in spite of being able to display more than one autobiographical self ... continue to have only one mechanism of core consciousness and only one core self. Each of the

> autobiographical selves must use the same central resource ... Presumably the distortion [of the one core self] would not be compatible with life.

Underneath normal and abnormal changes of personality, each of us is invariably and necessarily ‘a single unified self’ (Damasio 2000: 225), and ‘a state of consciousness which encompasses a sense of self ... is indispensable for survival’ (2000: 305). Neurobiological study of emotion allows us to look deeper into the foundations of our mental life than ever before, where – even below the waterline of consciousness – we do not find our self lost to anonymity and disintegration.

Appendix to Chapter 5

Section 290: ‘Pleasure is marked by agreeableness (*anugrahalakṣaṇaṃ sukham*). When in the presence of an agreeable object, such as a flower garland, from the contact of a sense faculty with [this] object [resulting in] perception of the desirable object [and] from the contact of self and the mind (*ātmamanasoḥ saṃyogād*), in dependence on *dharma* and such like, arises [the feeling of] agreeableness and fondness which makes eyes shine, etc. this is pleasure. [Pleasure] from objects [cognised] in the past arises through recollection (*atīteṣu viṣayeṣu smṛtijam*). [Pleasure] from [objects] yet to be [cognised] arises through anticipation (*anāgateṣu saṅkalpajam*). [The pleasure] of men of knowledge (*viduṣām*), on the other hand, which manifests without objects being remembered, desired or anticipated, is accounted for by their knowledge, peace of mind, contentedness and special *dharma*.’

Śrīdhara’s commentary (Nyāyakandali)

‘[...] Pleasure is that [feeling] which arises in the presence of agreeable objects, such as a flower garland, sandal paste or a beloved wife, when a desirable object is perceived as a result of the contact of a sense faculty with [this] object, given the necessary *dharma* and such like. Even when an agreeable object is proximate, a person whose attention is directed to a different object (*viṣayāntaravyāsaktasya*) does not experience pleasure.

Given that a person distracted [from perceiving the agreeable object] has no pleasure even in its presence, perception of the desirable object must be recognised as [one of] the causal factors [in the arising of pleasure]. In the expression "*dharma*, etc.", "etc." refers to such [factors] as good health.

[...] Pleasure causes attachment to its means (*sukhasādhaneṣv anurāgaḥ sukhād bhavati*). [Pleasure] from objects [cognised] in the past arises through recollection. Pleasure from sources of pleasure experienced in the past arises through recollection of the original [experience]. [Pleasure] from [objects] yet to be [cognised] arises from anticipating: "This will be mine (*idaṃ me bhaviṣyatīti*)". [The pleasure] of the wise who possess knowledge of *ātman (ātmajñānavatām*), on the other hand, which manifests without objects being remembered or anticipated, when no [agreeable] object is present, none remembered and none anticipated, is accounted for by their knowledge, peace of mind, contentedness and special *dharma*. "Knowledge (*vidyā*)" refers to knowledge of *ātman (ātmajñānam*). "Peace of mind (*śama*)" means having the sense-faculties under control. "Contentedness (*santoṣa*)" means not entertaining desires [for anything] beyond the bare means of subsistence. "Special *dharma (dharmaviśeṣaḥ*)" is the superior *dharma* marked by lack of attraction [to sense objects]. This combination of four factors accounts for [the pleasure of the wise]. Some, however, maintain that pleasure is but absence of suffering (*duḥkhābhāvam eva sukham*). Their [view] is contradicted by *ātman*'s experience of bliss (*ānanda*). [If they were correct], it would also make no sense to use two types of expression: "I will obtain the favourable" and "I will avoid the unfavourable".'

Section 291: 'Suffering is marked by hurt (*upaghātalakṣaṇaṃ duḥkham*). Suffering is that which arises on account of anger, [feeling] hurt or depressed, [from] perception of an undesirable object, [which occurs] in the presence of a disagreeable object, such as poison, from the contact of a sense faculty with [this] object, [and] from the contact of self and the mind, in dependence on *adharma*, etc. [Suffering] from objects [cognised] in the past, such as snakes, tigers and thieves, arises through recollection. [Suffering] from [objects] yet to be [cognised] arises through anticipation.'

'[Praśastapāda] expounds suffering immediately after pleasure because it is its opposite. Suffering is marked by hurt. Hurt [occurs] when one gets harmed. "Marked by hurt" means "hurtful by nature". [...] Experience of suffering hurts the self (*ātmopaghātaḥ*). [Suffering] from objects [cognised]

in the past, such as snakes, arises through recollection. [Suffering] from [objects] yet to be [cognised] arises through anticipation. Here the explanation is the same as in the previous [section].'

* * *

Section 79: 'By virtue of the qualities of pleasure (*sukha*), pain (*duḥkha*), desire, aversion and effort we infer the existence of one to whom these qualities belong (*guṇair guṇy anumīyate*). And these are not qualities of the body or of the sensefaculties. Why so? (i) Because [the qualities of pleasure, pain, etc.] are always predicated of "I" (*ahaṅkāreṇaikavākyatā*); (ii) because [their] occurrence is localised (*pradeśavṛttitvāt*); (iii) because [they] do not last as long [their] substance (*ayāvaddravyabhāvitvāt*); (iv) because [they] are not perceptible by the external senses (*bāhyendriyāpratyakṣatvāt*). (v) [The existence of *ātman* (self) as a distinct substance is] also [inferred] from the essential distinction between the word "I" and words such as "earth".'

Jagadīśa's commentary (Sūktī)

'[Praśastapāda] states that it (self) is also inferred from qualities, such as pleasure, by saying "Pleasure and suffering, etc ...." Pleasure, etc., since they are qualities, inhere in a substance (*dravyasamavetaṃ*); by this inference from qualities we infer a bearer of [these] qualities. That is the meaning.

Objection: This could have the alternative meaning that they inhere in the body, that is why he says that they are qualities. Why [must it be self]? [The opponent] asks: "Why are they not intrinsically qualities of the body or the sense-faculties?"

The reply to that is: "On account of the notion of I". This means, on account of the particular cognition, "I". The meaning is: "Since [they] are not [expressed] in one sentence with it (I)". Here "are not" refers to logical contradiction. The phrase "[expressed] in one sentence" refers to the experience of being based in the same substratum. The meaning is: since the experience of [the body or the sense faculties] being based in the same substratum as "I" is logically contradictory. [...]

[Objection:] “I who used to be fair, that very I have now become dark due to suffering. I who used to be thin, that very I have now become fat ...”

Here the cognition associating the I-substance with the body is erroneous and cannot be taken to be a valid cognition because it contradicts what has been argued before. Distinct states correspond to distinct bodies, and so the notion of there being the same body here is erroneous (*avasthābhedena śarīrabhedāt śarīrābhedabuddher api tatra bhramatvāt*).

It must be noted that the person born in Caitra’s household does not stop being Caitra’s son on account of his having a different body by virtue of the difference of his current state from that of childhood. [The self is the substratum of I, and so] we recognise Caitra’s son as such, in spite of his later body being different from his body at birth. [...]

He also gives another reason against the body or the sense-faculties being the bearers of qualities such as pleasure: [their] localised [occurrence]. The meaning is: on account of [these] qualities occurring in only a specific place.

[...]He gives another reason [why pleasure, etc. are not qualities of the body or the sense-faculties]: the fact that they do not persist as long as their substratum does. Pleasure, etc. are not qualities of the body or the sense faculties, because they do not persist as long as their substantive substratum; [in other words,] due to their lack of persistence contemporaneously with the substantive substratum, [which must be exhibited by] the essential properties [of the atomic or tangible substances]. The meaning is, because qualities such as pleasure happen not to persist as long as their substratum, whereas it is never the case that the essential properties of the body and the sense faculties, such as form, do not persist as long as their substratum. [...]

Another reason is given: “by the external senses...” The meaning is, because they are essentially unperceivable by the external senses.

[Objection:] But the fact that they are unperceivable by the external senses does not exclude them from being properties of the sense faculties, because they too are unperceivable.

[Reply:] Pleasure, etc., however, do not actually lack that (perceivability), and that is what establishes self. [Praśastapāda] says that its perception [is expressed] by the word “I”. “From its being the object of [mental] perception”, it must be added. And thus the word “I” refers to the perception of “I”. The meaning is: because “I” is an object of perception

(*pratyakṣaviṣayatvād*). And the object of this kind of perception is not the body on account of the difference of the apprehension “I have a body (*ahaṃ śarīrīti*)” [from “I am a body”].

[Objection:] The apprehension “I” should refer to earth, etc.

To that [Praśastapāda] replies: “The words “earth”, etc ....” The meaning is, because we do not use expressions, such as “I am earth”.

He refers to qualities of self when he says: “its qualities”. With respect to these qualities he also expresses agreement with the author of the Vaiśeṣika sūtra that they are the inferential marks of self.’

[1] I owe the terms ‘anonymity claim’ and ‘anonymous’ to Zahavi (2011).

[2] For an examination of the critiques mounted against Buddhist momentarist theory of consciousness within Advaita Vedānta, Nyāya and Kashmir Śaivism, see MacKenzie (Chapter 11), Chakrabarti (Chapter 12), Taber (Chapter 6) and Ram-Prasad (Chapter 8) in this volume.

[3] The class of self-directed emotions, which includes embarrassment, pride, guilt and shame, is worthy of particular mention (for analysis, see, for instance, Lewis 1993). Among them shame stands out as the most centripetal emotion, targeting self in the most accentuated way: in the grip of shame, the focus on the globally degraded self is so exclusive that the world recedes from attention, and so does the past and the future, leading to confusion and loss of speech and action.

[4] See Ganeri (2009), where *manas* is aptly termed the ‘faculty of introspection’.

[5] Anticipation as projection of self and its experience into the future – note how anticipation is expressed in the commentary: ‘This will be mine.’

[6] See Taber’s Chapter 6 in this volume for a discussion of an analogous argument in Nyāya. As Taber points out, Vātsyāyana in his commentary on the *Nyāyasūtra* 1.1.10, which lists ‘inferential marks (*liṅga*) of self (*ātman*)’, including pleasure and pain, and Uddyotakara in his subcommentary make it clear that affective and other mental states ‘are inferential marks of a self, insofar as they involve memory which presupposes a permanent and identical subject of past and present experiences’.

[7] For a discussion of Nyāya’s claim (which is analogous to Vaiśeṣika’s) that we have direct perceptual apprehension of self, see Taber’s Chapter 6 in this volume. I agree with Taber that this is one of Nyāya’s and Vaiśeṣika’s weak arguments, which presents us with inferential, rather than perceptual, evidence of self.

[8] Anthony Marcel expresses scepticism of the premises underlying the Neural Correlates of Consciousness project, commenting on the relationship between the firstperson experience and a third-person neuronal process as follows: ‘Sometimes I really think it is a matter of two discourses. But, oddly enough, it is not clear that there is any isomorphism between them, or that you can translate them. This is quite common in many disciplines .... But certainly it is never the case that we can reduce one to the other. I find it an uncomfortable position, but the fact that it is uncomfortable doesn’t mean that I would give it up. What I don’t want to do is what I feel to be crass and ridiculous. Namely, there are a number of cognitive neuroscientists or cognitivists who take something to be phenomenological, and then say this is equivalent to some “X” in a functionalist or information-processing scheme. I remain terribly unconvinced by that because these are not the kind of entities that exist in personal level or phenomenological discourse – they’re just not, and it’s absurd to say they’re equivalent to such and such, because they are not’; Gallagher (2008: 106).

Neurobiologist and philosopher Francisco Varela explains the fundamental difference between reductionism and emergentism which, in his view, is a more viable position: ‘This concept of emergence is central to contemporary scientific research, even if many have failed to understand its importance .... It is likely that consciousness, like life itself, is something in excess of the neuronal processes that we want to nail down as the NCC ... it is, so to speak, virtual – virtual but efficacious. Once a new identity emerges it has effects that are irreducible to the effects of its antecedent elements. With respect to consciousness, this means that we can truly speak of mental causality. Consciousness is not epiphenomenal, a byproduct of brain activity. Rather, the emergence of a mental state can have an effect on the local components, and there is indisputable evidence that experience changes the brain, that my experiences change the states of the synaptic processes in my brain’; ibid.: 116.

According to David Chalmers (1996: 4), consciousness in its central sense is ‘the subjective quality of experience’. By his own admission ‘strongly inclined toward materialist reductive

explanation', after hoping for years for a materialist theory he reluctantly had to admit 'that reductive explanation of consciousness is impossible', the conclusion which would be 'forced on anyone who wants to take consciousness seriously' (ibid.: xiv), because 'there is an *explanatory gap* between the physical level and conscious experience', or, in other words, 'the fact that consciousness accompanies a given physical process is a *further fact*, not explainable simply by telling the story about the physical facts' (ibid.: 107). 'So the problem of consciousness may be a scientific problem that requires philosophical methods of understanding before we can get off the ground' (ibid.: xiv). See also Baker (2007).

[9] Varela and Depraz (2005: 79) also argue that 'affect-emotion is not simply one among many types of aspects of lived experience; they are *generative for consciousness itself*'.

[10] Conceptions parallel to Zahavi's core self include Gallagher and Marcel's (1999) minimal self and Panksepp's (1998) SELF.

[11] Two authors in this volume, Fasching (Chapter 10) and MacKenzie (Chapter 11), bring in Zahavi's theory of self when discussing Advaita.

[12] See Damasio (2000: 42–9). On David's case, see also ibid.: 113–21.

[13] For a discussion of self-affection as 'a pre-noetic ground' of mental life, see Varela and Depraz (2005: 66).

Chapter 6
Uddyotakara's Defence of a Self

John Taber

In this chapter I shall examine the defence of the existence of a self against Buddhist counter-arguments by the sixth-century Nyāya philosopher Uddyotakara.[1] My discussion will be primarily interpretive and philosophical. A more exhaustive historical treatment, which would identify the origins of the Buddhist arguments he considers and trace the developments that led up to his own refutations and the fate of his ideas in subsequent Indian philosophical (especially Nyāya) literature – not to mention the task of reconstructing the whole socio-religious background to the Indian debate about the self – I must leave to other scholars. Although there has been available a good, if rather free, English translation of Uddyotakara's subcommentary on Vātsyāyana's commentary on the *Nyāyasūtra* (henceforth NS) for almost a century to help the Sanskrit reader decipher the text,[2] the text remains obscure in certain passages, and it is not always easy to get the drift of what Uddyotakara is saying. Claus Oetke included a summary of the section I shall be focusing on, the introduction to NS 3.1.1, in his important monograph '*Ich' und das Ich*, published in 1988. Arindam Chakrabarti touches on aspects of Uddyotakara's introduction to NS 3.1.1 in an early article published in *Journal of Indian Philosophy* in 1982, which also contains a new translation of a portion of the passage. Here, I shall be emphasising different points than they have.

In my account I shall highlight four themes which I believe are central to understanding *philosophically* the position Uddyotakara is working out:

1. It is impossible, according to Uddyotakara, to deny the self, or at least to *prove* that there isn't one. In general, one cannot prove negative existential claims.

2. The original Buddhist denial of a self, according to Uddyotakara, was intended only as a singular (or particular) negative proposition, or a series of them, not as a negative existential proposition (what Uddyotakara calls a ‘particular denial’, *viśeṣaprati ṣedha*, as opposed to a ‘general denial’, *sāmānyaprati ṣedha*).
3. The main Buddhist argument against a self that Uddyotakara considers appears to be what is sometimes called an argument *ex silentio*, namely, ‘There is no self because it is not apprehended (*anupalabdheḥ*).’
4. The alternative account offered by Buddhists, for example by Vasubandhu, to explain the ‘connection’ (*pratisandhāna*) of past and present mental states, which Naiyāyikas believe requires the postulation of a self as the ‘connector’ (*pratisandhātṛ*), in terms of a causal relationship among experiences alone, finally shipwrecks on the idea that one momentary mental state ‘perfumes’ another.

Unfortunately, limitations of space allow me only to allude briefly to the fourth point, which requires us to go back to Uddyotakara’s commentary on *Nyāyabhāṣya* (henceforth NBh) 1.1.10, where Nyāya’s own proof of the existence of a self is presented.

Uddyotakara occupies an important place in the history of Indian philosophy. He refers to views of Dignāga and Vasubandhu, but not to those of Dharmakīrti. This is the basis for assigning him to the sixth century (probably the first half). Uddyotakara is especially valuable as a source of information about earlier Brahmanical thinkers, especially Naiyāyikas and Mīmāṃsakas – earlier commentators on the *Nyāyasūtra*, the *Nyāyabhāṣya*, and the *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* – whose names, however, he doesn’t mention. The maturity of his thought clearly presupposes a rich development that preceded him. Another Hindu author somewhat earlier than Uddyotakara who refutes Buddhist arguments against a self extensively in a text that has been passed down to us is the Mīmāṃsā philosopher Śabarasvāmin.[3] It would be interesting to compare Uddyotakara’s and Śabara’s discussions, but I do not have space to do so here.

The passage of Uddyotakara’s *Nyāyavārttika* (henceforth NV) that I shall mainly focus on comes at the beginning of the third part (*āhnika*) of the work. Prior to this, in the second part, the *Nyāyasūtra* (NS) has examined the various *pramāṇa*s or means of knowledge: perception, comparison,

inference, and language (which includes scripture). *Āhnika* Three begins the examination of the *prameyas*, the objects of knowledge, foremost among which is the self. Now the existence of a self has already been proven in the first part. NS 1.1.10 enumerates the six 'inferential marks (*liṅga*) of a self', namely, desire, aversion, effort, pleasure, pain, and cognition.[4] One interpretation of this proof is that these affective, volitional, and cognitive states imply a 'connector' that ties past and present mental states together. One has a desire for something one *remembers* experiencing previously as being pleasurable. It can only be one thing that has existed continuously from the past until now that both had the original experience and remembers it now as pleasurable. That would be the self. As Uddyotakara and Vātsyāyana (the author of NBh) make clear in their discussions, NS 1.1.10 presents what is essentially an argument from memory. The different mental states mentioned are inferential marks of a self, in so far as they involve memory, which presupposes a permanent and identical subject of past and present experiences.

Specific Buddhist objections to the arguments suggested by NS 1.1.10 – Uddyotakara briefly proposes another interpretation of the *sūtra* besides the one I have just presented[5] – are raised in Uddyotakara's commentary. These will have to be set aside for the time being; we will come back to one of them later. NS 3.1.1 begins the investigation into what *kind* of thing the self is, for 1.1.10 has left this open. In particular, is the self something distinct from the body, senses, mind, and intellect (*buddhi*) or not (NV 698.4)?[6] NS 3.1.1 initiates a long argument, continuing through NS 3.1.17, that will establish that the self is not any one of these things individually nor all of them collectively (the aggregate, *saṅghāta*), since they do not have, individually or collectively, the properties or functions that we typically ascribe to a self (such as consciousness). NS 3.1.1 specifically shows that the self cannot be any of the senses or the aggregate of body and faculties that includes the senses.[7]

However, a doubt is raised at the outset which reopens the whole matter of the existence of a self. Namely, how can an enquiry into what kind of thing the self is even get started when the self itself, the subject (*dharmin*) of the enquiry, is not established (*siddha*) (NV 698.4–6)? Uddyotakara's initial response to this seems dismissive. First of all, he says, the existence of a self has already been proven by *sūtra* 1.1.10 – no need to revisit the matter. Moreover, he says, there is really no dispute about the existence of a

self. No propounder of any doctrine (*vādin*) questions the existence of a self. We will see that he really means to include the Buddhists in the scope of this statement. Rather, there is only a difference of opinion about its specific nature: whether it is the body, the intellect and other cognitive faculties, the collection of these things, or something distinct from them. And this dispute would not be possible for people who do not accept the existence of a self at the outset (NV 698.8–10). Finally, he says, there is no means of knowledge (*pramāṇa*) that proves the non-existence of a self, and for this reason as well there can be no real dispute about its existence (NV 698.10–11). It is this last statement that opens the door to considering specific Buddhist arguments that purport to prove that there is no self and, in general, the possibility of proving the non-existence of a self.

Having now set the stage, so to speak, I shall take up the themes I mentioned earlier. Obviously – or mercifully – I do not have space to give a detailed, blow-by-blow account of Uddyotakara's debate with his Buddhist opponents; and, concerned more with the philosophical essence of the arguments than the letter of the text, I shall allow myself to paraphrase Uddyotakara somewhat freely.

Proof of a Negative Existential Proposition is Impossible

The first argument Uddyotakara takes up is as follows: 'There is no self, because it is not produced (*ajātatvāt*), like a rabbit's horn' (NV 699.2).

I shall have something to say about the middle term 'because it is not produced' later, though, as we shall see, the meaning of the middle term is not crucial to what I take to be Uddyotakara's main point. I have not traced this argument, as formulated, to any Buddhist text; I suspect, however, that it is of Mādhyamika provenance.[8]

He begins by stating that the two terms of the thesis, 'self' and 'does not exist', 'are contradicted [by each other]' (*vyāhanyete*); for the term 'self' indicates an existing thing (*sattva*) – either because, as we shall see, Uddyotakara thinks that every term refers to something, or else because the subject (*pakṣa*) of any inference must be 'established' (*siddha*) – while 'is not' or 'does not exist' is its denial (NV 699.2–4). The statement, 'There is

no self,' in other words, simultaneously affirms and denies the existence of a self. This defect of the inference, being specifically a defect of the thesis (*pratijñādoṣa*), will vitiate the inference no matter what reason or example it may have. This constitutes an objection to any argument that would attempt to prove directly the statements 'There is no self' or 'A self does not exist.' And although Uddyotakara does not explicitly do so, one would think that he could generalise his view to include *any* negative existential proposition about anything.[9]

Uddyotakara indeed appears to be moving in this direction when he goes on to say that a denial of something particular about something – for example, that it does not exist here or now – can only be made in so far as one assumes the existence of the subject of the denial. And often these denials have the form of negative existential judgements. When I utter the sentence 'There's no pot,' I usually do it to deny something particular about pots: there is no pot *here*, in the kitchen, *now*, when I need one. I am not saying there are no pots at all (Uddyotakara calls the latter a *sāmānyapratiṣedha* – a denial of something in general). And in order to deny a particular fact about pots, I must assume they exist (NV 699.4–700.1). Analogously, when I say 'There is no self,' one should interpret that as a denial of a particular fact about selves, usually, that some *particular thing* or collection of things is not a self. Indeed, this is what Uddyotakara will go on to say the Buddhists are actually doing!

Yet even as a denial of a particular fact about a self, it is unlikely that the statement 'There is no self' could be true. A self is not something physical, so it does not exist anywhere in space; and being eternal, it cannot be located in time. It would therefore not make any sense to say it does not exist in a particular place, say 'here' (NV 700.4–5), or at a particular time, say 'now' (701.3–5). Perhaps it can mean that the self is not the body, suggests Uddyotakara, but who believes such a thing (700.5–6)?

Finally, he who would deny the existence of a self by means of an argument with a thesis that has the self as its subject must be able to give an account of the referent of the word 'self', 'for', Uddyotakara states baldly, 'we do not see a single [that is, uncompounded] word that is meaningless (*anarthaka*)' – that is, without a referent (NV 701.6). Here, Uddyotakara again rejects that 'self' could refer to the body and so on (the senses, mind and intellect), for there would still be the incoherence of the statement 'There is no body, etc.' (NV 701.6–7). Nor could it refer to something

imagined by the self theorist, because there can be an imaginary self only in so far as there exists somehow a self as the object of one's imagination (NV 701.9–14). Uddyotakara comes back to defend his claim that there is no word without a referent. One might think that words like 'darkness' and 'empty' are counter-examples, but he offers analyses of them in terms of existing referents: 'darkness', for example, refers to substances that are not in proximity to light (NV 702.5–6). Something is 'empty' (*śūnya*) which has nothing to protect it from dogs. That is to say, Uddyotakara maintains that it literally means *śvabhyo hitam*, 'fit for dogs' (NV 702.3–7)! This seems to be a gratuitous insult thrown at the Buddhists, which Brahmin readers of the text probably thought was really funny.

Having disposed of the thesis, the *pratijñā*, of the Buddhist argument 'There is no self, because it is not produced, like a rabbit's horn,' Uddyotakara proceeds to attack the reason or *hetu*, 'because it is not produced', and the example 'like a rabbit's horn'. His discussions of these terms are too complicated to relate here, but in general it can be observed that his strategy in treating these items is very much the same. Namely, he attempts to show that they, too, presuppose what is being denied. Thus, for example, to say that something does not exist 'because it is not produced' – presumably this appeals to the Buddhist idea that all existing things are conditioned, while the self is supposedly eternal, hence not conditioned[10] – is to say that it does not exist because it possesses a particular property. But of course it could not have any properties if it did not exist (NV 703.5–11).

In sum, Uddyotakara has argued that it is not really possible to deny a self, except in a particular sense. Even then, it is unlikely that such a denial will be true or meaningful (that is, worth making). We shall see presently that he will have to modify the latter assertion. After all, he is about to launch into an investigation into what kind of thing a self is – whether the aggregate of the body and so on, or one of the senses, or something different from all these things – and presumably not all of these options are acceptable. The first assertion, however, that it is not possible coherently to say (or think) or prove that 'there is no self' merits some discussion.

Two points seem to be in order here.

First, this is obviously not Descartes's *cogito* argument.[11] The *cogito* turns on the impossibility of personally doubting one's own existence. One cannot coherently think or utter 'I do not exist' because any such thought or utterance implies the existence of the person who thinks or utters it, referred

to by the pronoun ‘I’. I am unable to doubt my existence, therefore I must exist.[12] But Uddyotakara’s rejection of the coherence of ‘There is no self’ has nothing to do with the fact that, specifically, *I* am thinking or uttering it. Rather, it has to do with the fact that it both implies the existence of the subject of the statement (the self) by mentioning it and denies its existence at the same time, and so would be self-contradictory no matter *who* utters it.[13] As I have suggested, it turns either on the doctrine of Indian logic that the subject of the thesis of an *anumāna* must be already ‘established’, or on the doctrine that every word must have a referent,[14] while Descartes’s *cogito* argument turns on the idea that when I make a first-person statement, the pronoun ‘I’ at least must have a referent. With Descartes, we seem to be on firmer ground.

Second, the issues that Uddyotakara raises about the judgement ‘There is no self’ would seem to apply to all negative existential judgements. Yet, obviously, there are true negative existential propositions. If such propositions are incoherent when analysed as subject–predicate statements, then we must find some other way to analyse them. Both Indian and Western philosophers recognised this. The eighth-century Mīmāṃsaka and Advaita Vedāntin Maṇḍanamiśra, for instance, already offered interesting alternative ways of analysing denials of things that are ‘absolutely nonexistent’, such as sky-flowers, and in his view, the *pradhāna* of Sāṃkhya philosophy,[15] and Medieval Western philosophers came up with solutions to this problem as well. It just took an awfully long time for us to arrive at a system of logical notation that could satisfactorily represent the underlying structure of negative existential judgements.

Be that as it may, it may have been this aspect of Uddyotakara’s discussion – that it seems implicitly to call all negative existential judgements into question – that led later Naiyāyikas and other Brahmin philosophers to abandon his strategy for critiquing Buddhist proofs of the non-existence of a self.[16] Another Advaita Vedānta philosopher, Śaṅkara, about 150 years after Uddyotakara, famously based his claim that the self is already ‘commonly known’ (*prasiddha*) – therefore an enquiry into its true nature can move forward – not on the kind of reasoning employed by Uddyotakara, but on a version of the *cogito*: ‘Everyone cognises his own existence insofar as [he does] not [think], “I am not.”’[17]

However, did Uddyotakara really believe that no negative existential proposition is true? In fact, nothing he says entails that. What his discussion

suggests, rather, is that one cannot coherently assert or *prove* a negative existential. As for the latter claim, in accordance with the theory of the five-part *anumāna* as formulated in classical Nyāya in particular, the rule that one has to start out with a thesis that ascribes a certain property-to-be-proved to an 'established' subject,[18] moreover that the reason (for example, 'not produced') has to be a property of the subject – given a theory of inference of this sort, the subject (*pakṣa*) has to be accepted as existing in order to prove anything about it. In other words, Indian logic, as formulated in classical times, is not powerful enough to prove negative existential propositions, even if they are true. If you want to devise an *anumāna* that proves that something does not exist in classical Indian logic, you are out of luck. And this may be all that Uddyotakara is saying here to the Buddhists. The burden of proof that there is no self is on you – for prima facie there is one – and there is no way you can deliver such a proof that meets the strictures of Nyāya.[19]

The Buddhist Denial of a Self is Intended Only as a 'Particular Denial'

The second theme of Uddyotakara's critical treatment of Buddhist arguments against the existence of a self that I wish to highlight is that, according to Uddyotakara, the Buddhists themselves intend their denials of a self to be only *viśeṣaprati ṣedha*s: denials of particular facts about the self, specifically that it is this or that particular thing, not *sāmānyaprati ṣedha*s, denials of a self in general. As Uddyotakara puts it:

> [A Buddhist] who says, 'There is no self,' contradicts his own *siddhānta* [final position]. [When it is said,] 'I am not corporeality, Venerable One, I am not feeling, formations, consciousness, Venerable One. Thus you, O monk, are not corporeality; you are not feeling, formations, consciousness,' these *skandha*s, corporeality, etc. are being denied as the referent of 'I'. And this is a denial in regard to something particular, not a denial of a universal. (NV 702.8–11)

Moreover, he goes on to say, there are scriptural passages where the Buddha explicitly mentions a self. He alludes to two in particular: the *Bhārahāra Sutta*, which is one of the proof-texts for the Pudgalavāda – 'I shall explain

to you, O monks, the burden and the bearer of the burden. The burden is the five *skandha*s, the bearer of the burden the person (*pudgala*)'[20] – and the *Sabbāsava Sutta*, 'He who says, "There is no self," holds a false view'[21] (NV 703.2–4).

There has been a modern debate about precisely this question. Do the early Buddhist writings present the Buddha as teaching that there is no self at all, or merely that this finite personality consisting of the *skandha*s is not a self, hence leaving open the possibility that there is some self apart from the *skandha*s?[22] To illustrate the latter view I cite Erich Frauwallner. After presenting a key passage in which the Buddha explains that none of the *skandha*s could qualify as a self, Frauwallner writes:

> To be sure, one has wanted to extract in various ways from the above passage a denial of the self on the part of the Buddha. But that would certainly go too far. For the unbiased judge it says only that the five *skandhas* are not the self, and that is the only purpose served by this argumentation. Every attempt to find more in it would exceed this purpose and mistake it. Indeed, one could rather, from the statement that everything that is perishable and suffering is not the self, draw the inference that the self is therefore permanent and free from suffering, and someone who argues in this way presupposes the existence of such a self.[23]

For a forceful presentation of the opposing view, one may read Rahula's chapter 'The Doctrine of No-soul: Anatta' in his classic *What the Buddha Taught*.[24]

Now it seems as if Uddyotakara has taken sides in this debate! The Buddha indeed, he maintains, restricts himself to saying that the self is not this or that particular thing. And by making only such specific denials, he in fact presupposes that the self does exist in some sense.[25] Uddyotakara, of course, is not interested in the definitive interpretation of the Buddhist writings. He is rather, as I read him, adducing further support for the view that one cannot really deny that there is a self. Even the Buddhists, it turns out, do not attempt it.

The problem with this approach is that one can in fact succeed in denying that there is a self through a series of particular denials – the self is not a, not b, not c, and so on – accompanied by a statement to the effect that all of the things that one has just denied being a self comprise an exhaustive list of all the things that conceivably could be a self. This is in fact Rahula's response to scholars like Frauwallner: 'According to the Buddha's teaching, a being is composed only of these Five Aggregates, and nothing more.

Nowhere has he said that there was anything more than these Five Aggregates in a being.'[26]

Of course, Rahula's last sentence hedges the matter a little. It may be that the Buddha has said that there is nothing more to a person, to a *finite living being*, than these five *skandha*s, but the self could still be something other than this finite living being. It seems that it was not until the *Milindapañha* that the Buddhists figured out how to construct a denial of a self in general out of particular denials, in a way that anticipates the Mādhyamika *prasaṅga* argument. In that text the Buddhist teacher Nāgasena makes it clear that he, Nāgasena, is none of the *skandha*s individually, nor all of them collectively, *nor anything besides the* skandhas.[27] Here, it seems, every possible candidate for being a self has been mentioned and ruled out. If one assents to all of the denials, one must accept that there could not be a self of any kind, within or outside the *skandha*s.[28]

One could even argue that this is what the *Āgama*s really intend to present as the teaching of the Buddha, they just fail to make the argument fully explicit.

The Main Buddhist Argument Uddyotakara Considers is an Argument *ex Silentio*

Another Buddhist *anumāna* for the nonexistence of a self that does not have the kind of *pratijñādoṣa* to which Uddyotakara has drawn attention for the argument from 'not being produced' (*ajātatvāt*) goes something like this:[29] 'The living body is without self, because it exists.'[30] This argument appears to avoid the problems that arise from having 'the self' as the subject of the inference, for now the subject of the inference is the body, and no one questions the existence of the body. The reason 'because it exists' may allude to the well-known Buddhist doctrine that everything that exists is 'without self' – *sabbe dhammā anattā*.

Still, as Uddyotakara easily shows, the problem of referring to a self persists. It is just transferred from the subject to the predicate, the *sādhya*, of the thesis of the argument! If you say something is 'devoid of X,' then X must still refer to something, as when you say, 'devoid of mosquitoes.' If something is without or devoid of self, Uddyotakara asks, then what is it

that is *endowed* with a self (NV 707.12)? Moreover, however one interprets the statement 'The body is devoid of self,' it amounts to saying that the self is not this or that: not the body, not in the body, not connected with the body, not assisted by the body. These are all *viśeṣaprati ṣedha*s (NV 708.2–4), which again presuppose the existence of a self.

Yet another, rather peculiar, argument that Uddyotakara briefly considers is: 'The word "self" refers to something impermanent, because it consists of letters (*varṇas*)' (NV 708.5).[31] Vācaspati explains this argument as resting on the belief that every word refers to something impermanent, for example the word 'jar'. So the word 'self' must refer to something transient precisely because it is a word – it consists of letters! Uddyotakara dismisses this argument by citing the word 'eternal' (*nitya*) as a counter-example.

The argument to which Uddyotakara devotes the most attention after the argument from 'not having arisen', however, is the following: 'There is no self, because it is not apprehended (*anupalabdheḥ*)' (NV 704.11).[32] I shall refer to this as the *anupalabdhi* argument. I suspect that Uddyotakara devotes substantial space to this argument because it was in his day the most popular Buddhist argument against the existence of a self. The idea that 'we do not apprehend' a self either perceptually or inferentially appears to be at the heart of the Buddhist's strategy in Śabara's discussion.[33] The argument is critiqued by later Brahmin philosophers as well, such as Udayana[34] and Bhaṭṭa Rāmakaṇṭha.[35]

I believe that this is the only Buddhist argument critiqued by Uddyotakara in the text we are considering of whose origin we can be more or less certain. Namely, it appears to be the argument that Vasubandhu develops in the ninth chapter of his *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*. Unfortunately, I can only sketch my reasons for this hypothesis here.

At the beginning of that chapter Vasubandhu poses the question: 'How is it understood that the designation "self" refers just to the series of *skandha*s and not something else?' 'Because of the absence of perception and inference' in regard to such a thing, he answers.[36] For, he explains, there is an immediate perceptual apprehension (*pratyakṣam upalabdhiṣ*)[37] of those entities which exist when there is no obstruction – for example, the six kinds of objects of the senses and the mind. And we are also able to infer things that exist (*anumānaṃ ca*). Here, Vasubandhu relates how we infer the existence of the external senses from the fact that sometimes when some of the factors of perception are present – an object placed in the light and

mental attention (*manaskāra*) – an apprehension of the object occurs, but other times it doesn't occur (for example, for someone who is deaf or blind). Thus, one postulates a sense faculty as another cause whose presence or absence in conjunction with the other factors brings about a perception. But 'it is not like this for the self,' Vasubandhu says.[38] In other words, there are no such considerations that would require us to infer or postulate one.

Thus, Vasubandhu's initial argument against the existence of a self appears to be: there is no self because there is no perceptual or inferential evidence for one. One might, however, hold that there is *scriptural* evidence for a 'person' (*pudgala*), if not a self. This in fact was the view held by the Vātsīputrīyas, most prominently by a subsect of the Vātsīputrīyas, the Sāṃmitīyas: the existence of a 'person' – which they maintained is 'neither the same nor different from the *skandha*s' – is implied by certain key Buddhist doctrines, especially the doctrines of *karma* and transmigration, and scriptural passages.[39] Vasubandhu devotes the bulk of his treatise to refuting this position – which, I believe, has the ultimate purpose not to refute the *pudgalavāda* per se, but to deny that it is sanctioned by Buddhist scripture.[40] Then he addresses various *tīrthika*, 'outsider' (Brahmin), theories, as if to confirm that there is no other inferential evidence for a self. Thus, the overall structure of *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* 9 suggests what I would call a classic *anupalabdhi* argument – a proof of the non-existence of an entity from its 'non-apprehension', that is, its non-observation or non-cognition:[41] that there is no self (or anything resembling one), because it is not cognised by any of the three *pramāṇa*s recognised by Buddhists in Vasubandhu's day, perception, inference, or scripture. (That one is not apprehended by perception, Vasubandhu seems simply to take for granted.) Since we know that Uddyotakara was otherwise well acquainted with the ideas of Vasubandhu, it seems reasonable to assume that he had Vasubandhu in mind when discussing the *anupalabdhi* argument.[42]

Be all that as it may, it would appear that one of the main arguments prevalent among Buddhists against the existence of a self in Uddyotakara's day, and one that was perceived as particularly formidable by Brahmin philosophers in general, was an argument from the lack of any evidence of a self to its non-existence. Now this type of argument, under the name *argumentum ex silentio*, is usually considered a fallacy. But it is only a fallacy if presented as a deductively valid argument. It can, however, be

presented as an inductive argument to the best explanation, and like any inductive argument, it can be strong or weak.[43] If, despite all reasonable efforts, we are unable to detect something perceptually or even inferentially, its non-existence – provided there is no other explanation – is the best available explanation for the lack of any evidence. Arguments like this are employed and considered strong arguments in a variety of situations in daily life and science. In philosophy, it has been effectively used to deny the existence of God.

Uddyotakara's response to this argument is to say, naturally, that there *is* evidence for a self. Of course, he believes that NS 1.1.10 provides a sound inference of one. He also mentions, however, that there is *perceptual* evidence of a self, namely the cognition 'I' (*ahaṃpratyaya*). This cognition is perceptual in nature, he maintains, because it is 'independent of any memory of the connection of *liṅga* and *liṅgin*', and it conforms to the distinct nature of the object, like a cognition of colour (NV 704.13–14). An inferential cognition, to the effect that something has a certain property, arises from an awareness of the major premise (the *vyāpti*), which states that the thing in question has some other observable property which is invariably connected with the property one wishes to prove. It is indirect in that way. The notion 'I', on the other hand, is not mediated by some other awareness. Moreover, it 'varies with the variations in the character of the object' (ibid.), as Jhā felicitously translates.[44] That is to say, as Vācaspati explains, sometimes it cognises the self as 'knowing' something, sometimes as 'enjoying' something, so that it apprehends the self variously as knower and enjoyer.[45] By extension, it seems that this cognition apprehends my self as loving this or hating that, fearing this or desiring that, and so on. This, too, attests to the immediacy of this cognition 'I'.

Uddyotakara then need only show that the object (*viṣaya*) of 'I' is not something other than a self – corporeality (*rūpa*) and so on – for we do say such things as 'I am white,' 'I am dark,' and so on (NV 704.16–705.6). In fact, argues Uddyotakara, we do not think 'I am this [thing] which is my white body (*mama rūpaṃ gauram*).' Rather, we think 'My body is white,' so that when the expression 'white' is used in the sentence 'I am white,' it really means 'I am possessed of a white body' (NV 705.6–7).[46]

Uddyotakara summarises his discussion of the reason 'because it is not apprehended' thus far as follows:

> Thus, it is established that the self, being the referent of the notion 'I', is sometimes apprehended by direct perception itself. How again the self is apprehended by means of inference has been explained under *sūtra* [1.1.10]. There is scripture also [which attests to the existence of a self, namely, the Upaniṣads]. Thus, it is found that all three *pramāṇa*s, combining to point to the same thing, establish the existence of a self. And there is no other *pramāṇa* which is the basis for disagreement. Therefore, [the premise] 'because the self is not apprehended' is not established. (NV 705.13–16)[47]

The perceivability or observability of the self is a thorny issue in Western philosophy, about which there is a vast literature. It was also a thorny issue in Indian philosophy. Even the Naiyāyikas did not agree about it.[48] Later Vedānta and Śaiva authors were inclined to play down the cognition 'I' as the principal perceptual evidence for a self, emphasising instead 'self-awareness' (*svasaṃvedana*) as a kind of non-positional, non-conceptual reflexive awareness of a self which is essentially conscious or consciousness itself.[49] Obviously, I cannot hope to solve here the problem of whether we have any kind of direct acquaintance with a self. I will only say that I am sympathetic to the view that an adequate theory of selfcognition should take into account the fact that the self would have to function somehow as both subject and object in the same cognition; the self, it would seem, cannot appear as an object standing over against itself. Therefore, it seems inappropriate to refer to any self-cognition as a *perception*, which is generally understood to be a kind of cognition directed toward an object (in other words, a kind of intentional awareness).[50]

The main point I wish to make is this. The self is obviously not perceptually evident to everyone in the same way the sun is, for example. Otherwise, there would really be no dispute about its existence.[51] That one has a perception of a self or is directly acquainted with one is something philosophers are forced to argue for.[52] Here, in fact, we find Uddyotakara inferring that the cognition 'I' is a perception of a self from certain features it shares with other perceptual cognitions: it conforms to changes in the object, and it is not mediated by some other awareness. In that case, however, Uddyotakara, in appealing to the cognition 'I' as a self-perception, does not really present us with perceptual evidence of a self. Rather, he is only introducing further *inferential* evidence. That is to say, one can only *infer* that one has a perception of it, and from *that* – since a (veridical) perception represents things as they really are – that it exists.

The Theory of the Connection of Mental States over Time by Means of *Vāsanā*s (Mental 'Perfumings') is Untenable

The final theme of Uddyotakara's critique of the Buddhist critique of a self that I want to highlight is that the alternative Buddhist account of the 'connecting together' of mental states over time as states of a single subject of experience, which the Naiyāyika presents as the main evidence for the existence of a self, does not hold up. This point comes out in Uddyotakara's discussion of NS 1.1.10, where the Nyāya arguments *for* the existence of a self are presented. As explained above, the main argument developed there comes down to an argument from memory. A 'connector' of past and present experiences is required in order to account for memory, which is presupposed by desire, aversion, effort, and so on. For a more extensive treatment of this argument as developed by the later Nyāya author Udayana (tenth century), I refer the reader to Chakravarthi Ram-Prasad's Chapter 8 in this volume.[53]

In his discussion of 1.1.10, Uddyotakara considers different Buddhist objections to this argument. The chief objection is that the connection of mental states alluded to by the *sūtra* can be explained by a causal relation between mental states alone, without invoking a 'connector'. This, of course, is an argument that Vasubandhu develops in *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* 9, even insisting that memory can be explained in terms of a causal relation between momentary mental states.[54] Yogācāra philosophy, meanwhile, developed the theory that there is a 'perfuming' of successive momentary cognitions in the *ālayavijñāna*.[55]

Uddyotakara's response to this objection, which was picked up by other Brahmin philosophers, is that there cannot be a causal relation between momentary entities.[56] Because cognitions vanish as soon as they arise – that is, 'because they are not stable' – one cannot exist long enough to 'perfume' the next. Conversely, the cognition that arises in the next moment cannot 'be perfumed' by the preceding cognition, since the preceding cognition has vanished and has 'no relation' to it. In short, there is no *vāsya–vāsaka–bhāva*, no relation of perfumer and perfumed, for

momentary cognitions (NV 189.2–190.6). Kumārila Bhaṭṭa will later summarise the objection forcefully as follows:

> The previous cognition, as long as it has not arisen, cannot bring about an effect in regard to anything. [In particular, it cannot transmit its form, its content, to another cognition.] Nor [can it do so] when it has vanished. And when it has come into being, it does not last for an instant. Therefore, vanishing as soon as it has arisen, there is not even a moment of causation (*ārambhakṣaṇo 'pi*).[57]

The main problem with the Buddhist 'perfuming' theory for the Brahmins, then, is that it requires causation between *momentary* entities that occur at different times. How can the effect arise after the cause has completely disappeared? Although there may be an answer to this conundrum, it becomes incumbent upon the Buddhists to provide it. Otherwise, the appeal to a 'causal relation' between mental states to account for the phenomenon of memory without positing any other factor (a self) that connects those states, amounts to mere hand-waving.

Note that Dharmakīrti will later admit that there are no real causal relations between momentary entities. Indeed, in his *Sambandhaparīkṣā* he will argue against the reality of relations of any kind. Causation holds only conventionally. Kumārila notes this in his critique of the *vāsanā* theory at the end of the *Nirālambana* chapter of his *Ślokavārttika*, where he is probably referring to some precursor to Dharmakīrti, and considers it a fatal concession: 'Therefore, this [*vāsanā*] is imagined as conventionally true (*saṃvṛtisatya*), it does not really exist. But by an entity of this sort [a *vāsanā* that doesn't really exist] an effect never arises.'[58]

The point I wish to make in drawing attention to this final detail of Uddyotakara's critique of the Buddhist attack on the Nyāya argument for a self – namely, that it ultimately comes down to the problematic nature of a causal relationship between momentary *vāsanā*s – is that it was not a reductionist account of the self per se that the Brahmins found objectionable, but the peculiar Buddhist variety of it: a reductionist account *cum* momentariness! It is important to keep this in mind, I believe, when reflecting on the classical Indian debate about the self in relation to contemporary theories of personal identity. It is uncertain how Brahmins would have reacted to a position like Derek Parfit's, for instance – which is reductionist, to be sure, but without the additional, and it would seem completely gratuitous, assumption of the momentariness of physical and

mental states.[59] To whatever extent Parfit concedes the existence of substances (for example, brains, nervous systems in certain states upon which mental states supervene, and so on), they would probably have thought that he goes a considerable way toward accepting the existence of a self.

Conclusion

I hope that these observations shed more light on what Uddyotakara is up to in his defence of a self against Buddhist challenges in his *Nyāyavārttika*. It has been said of Uddyotakara that he had a strong polemical streak, that he was perhaps more concerned with refuting the views of his Buddhist adversaries than really solving philosophical problems. In the introductory verse to his work, Uddyotakara himself says that it is intended to 'eliminate the ignorance of the sophists' (*kutarkikājñānanivṛttihetu*) – meaning, no doubt, the Buddhists. Yet it can hardly be said that he resorts to sophistry himself.[60] His arguments are clever, well crafted, and not easily refuted; they are not really trick arguments – which, of course, is not the same as saying they are conclusive! He may indeed have been more concerned with refuting the Buddhists than getting at the truth. But that is only to say that he was engaged in *jalpa* (disputation), not *saṃvāda* (constructive debate), which is true of a great deal of Indian philosophy.[61] He certainly never sank to the level of *vitaṇḍā*, attempting to win the debate by any means, fair or foul, without putting forward a thesis of his own.

[1] I would like to express my gratitude to Vincent Eltschinger, Elisa Freschi, Roy Perrett, Alex Watson, and Jan Westerhoff, who offered insightful comments on this chapter that led to a number of improvements.

[2] Jhā (1984; 1912–19). Some might consider it more a paraphrase than a translation, but it accurately renders the sense of the text in most instances and reflects a profound knowledge of the Nyāya tradition.

[3] In *Mīmāṃsāsūtrabhāṣya* 1.1.5; Frauwallner (1968: 50.1–60.23). It is possible that the passage in question should be attributed to a certain 'Vṛttikāra', identified by some as Upavarṣa, whom Śabara quotes or paraphrases at some length in his discussion of *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* 1.1.5. One cannot say for sure, however, how far the view of the Vṛttikāra extends.

[4] *icchādveṣaprayatnasukhaduḥkhajñānāny ātmano liṅgam iti*; NS 1.1.10.

[5] Namely, that desire and so forth, being qualities, must inhere in some substance, which however cannot be the body; NV 192.10–193.9. Chakrabarti (1982), curiously, focuses on this as if it were the main argument Uddyotakara considers in his discussion of 1.1.10, when in fact the bulk of Uddyotakara's commentary is occupied with the argument from memory; the argument from desire and so on as qualities is only brought in at the end. The inference of the self as the possessor of mental states is in fact more clearly associated with Vaiśeṣika in the early period than with Nyāya.

[6] All references to NV and NBh are from *Nyāyadarśanam* (1985).

[7] In the passage we are considering – the introduction to 3.1.1 – Uddyotakara typically refers to that *from which* it is being enquired into whether the self is distinct, as 'the body and so on'. In their discussions of the following *sūtras* both Uddyotakara and Vātsyāyana often refer to it as 'the aggregate of the body, and so forth' or 'the aggregate of body, senses, mind, and intellect' (for example, NBh 716.2, NV 716.13, and NS 3.1.4) – even when it is a question of just one particular faculty, such as the mind (*manas*) (NBh 737.3–6). In their discussion of 3.1.1, however, *saṃghāta* is used properly to refer a collection of various items. This can be confusing.

[8] Although all Buddhists would agree that all existing things are produced, we find Bhāviveka working specifically with the reason *ajātatvāt*, among others, to deny the reality of unconditioned things, including the self, in the *Tattvajñānaiṣaṇā* chapter of his *Madhyamakahṛdaya*. See *Tattvajñānaiṣaṇā* (1980), vv. 129–34 (p. 300).

[9] For a classic depiction of the problem of asserting negative existential judgements, see Quine (1953: 1–2).

[10] See NV 703.6–7: *kiṃ punar jātaṃ kiṃ cājātam iti. yasya kāraṇavataḥ sattā taj jātaṃ yasyākāraṇavataḥ sattā tad ajātam*.

[11] Chakrabarti (1982: 213–14) also takes note of this.

[12] I am following the analysis of Hintikka (1965).

[13] One could say that the *cogito* argument has to do with the utterance, while Uddyotakara's argument has to do with the proposition.

[14] Chakrabarti (1982: 211–12) stresses the latter doctrine to the exclusion of the former. The *pūrvapakṣin* (opponent) himself, however, raises the question of the establishing of the *dharmin* at NV 698.4–6.

[15] See *Brahmasiddhi* (1984) 44.22–45.3. Uddyotakara himself suggests in the passage under discussion how one might analyse the denial of a rabbit's horn: namely, the expression 'rabbit's horn' refers to a causal relation between a rabbit and a horn. In effect, one would be saying that there is no horn that grows on the head of a rabbit, in the way one grows on the head of a cow. But that does not entail that there is no rabbit's horn *simpliciter*. Just as there could be 'Devadatta's pot' (which is not a

cause or effect of Devadatta), there could be a rabbit's horn (NV 703.19–704.4). For Udayana's theory of non-referring expressions, see the seminal article by Matilal (1970: 93–8).

16 Similar self-refutation arguments, however, were developed by Udayana against the view that God does not exist (*Nyāyakusumāñjali* (1980) 160.1–163.4) and against the Buddhist doctrine that there is no external object (*Ātmatattvaviveka* (1986; 1907–1909) 544–5). See also Matilal (1970).

17 *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* (1982) 81.1.

18 Classically, this rule is stated as a requirement of the *hetu*. The *hetu* of an inference must be established (*siddha*). An 'unestablished' *hetu* is one of the 'false *hetu*s' (*hetvābhāsa*). One type of unestablished *hetu* is a *hetu* which is not established with respect to its *āśraya* (*āśrayāsiddha*) – that is to say, its substratum does not exist. In the thesis of an *anumāna*, the *pakṣa* is the *āśraya* of the *hetu*; see *Tarkasaṃgraha* (1974) 46–7. Uddyotakara introduces the *āśrayāsiddha hetu* at NV 385.8–10.

19 See Oetke (1988: 368).

20 *Saṃyutta Nikāya* vol. 3: 25 (Pāli Text Society). On this *Sutta*, see Eltschinger (2010: 326–7, fn. 112).

21 *Majjhima Nikāya* vol. 1: 8 (Pāli Text Society). Neither quotation is exact.

22 If one phrased the latter alternative as 'some self that is neither the same nor different from the *skandha*s', the debate would be an ancient one as well. Thanks to V. Eltschinger for pointing this out. For a review of the *modern* debate, with special reference to the question whether the Buddhist teaching about the self implies 'nihilism', see Collins (1990: 7–12).

23 Frauwallner (1953: vol. 1, 224).

24 See esp. Rahula (1974: 56–8).

25 I have simplified Uddyotakara's discussion here. He allows the Buddhist to say that the other thing besides the individual *skandha*s is just the collection (*samudāya*) of them. But, he responds, if you accept that the collection of the *skandha*s is something really distinct from them, then you admit the self by another name (NV 702.12–14), and so on.

26 Rahula (1974: 57).

27 *Milindapañha* 25–8 (Pāli Text Society).

28 Of course, if one assents to the last denial, that there is no self outside of the *skandha*s, one has pretty much given the game away.

29 It has to be reconstructed from NV 707.9: *apare tu jīvac charīraṃ nirātmakatvena pakṣayitvā sattvād ity evamādikaṃ hetuṃ bruvate*.

30 Again, the provenance of this argument is uncertain. See, however, *Tattvajñānaiṣaṇā* 93ab: *evaṃ nirātmakāḥ skandhā nirjīvāḥ sattvavarjitāḥ*/, and 94ab: *śarirendriyasaṃghāto nirātmā ca tattve mataḥ*/; *Tattvajñānaiṣaṇā* (1980) 290.

31 One again suspects a Mādhyamika origin of this argument. The (Svātantrika) Mādhyamikas seemed to think that practically anything is nonexistent or unreal if it shares a property with a sky-flower or a rabbit's horn.

32 It is clear from Uddyotakara's discussion that he takes *anupalabdhi* more broadly to mean 'non-cognition' or 'non-apprehension', as opposed to just 'non-perception'. See note 41 below.

33 See Frauwallner (1968: 50.5; 52.17; 54.4–9; 56.25–58.4). Śabara's response is, essentially, that the self is evident to itself (*svasaṃvedya* 56.25), in particular, in acts of memory that involve self-recognition.

[34] *Ātmatattvaviveka* (1986; 1907–1909) *Anupalambhavāda* [pp. 739ff.].

[35] Watson (2006: 126–30).

[36] *pratyakṣānumānäbhāvāt* (*Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* (1981) 1190.1).

[37] Following Yaśomitra's first explanation of this expression: *pratyakṣam ity upalabdhiviśeṣaṇam. pratyakṣaṃ tadupalabdhiḥ, pratyakṣata upalabdhir ity arthaḥ. athavā pratyakṣaṃ pramāṇam upalabdhiḥ, upalabhyate 'nayeti upalabdhiḥ; Sphuṭārthā* (1981) 1,190.11–13.

[38] *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* (1981) 1,191.2. Cf. Kapstein (2001: 42).

[39] See Eltschinger (2010: 292–6).

[40] The thrust of Vasubandhu's critique is that the theory of *pudgala* is incoherent. To say, for instance, that 'the *pudgala* is designated in dependence on the *skandha*s' (*skandhān upādāya pudgalaḥ prajñapyate*, 1,192.7–8), or that it could be perceptible (1,195.11ff.), leads to absurd consequences. Hence, it is not something the Buddha ever could have taught.

[41] By 'classic *anupalabdhi* argument' I mean not the type of inference (*anumāna*) that employs an *anupalabdhi-hetu*, as first articulated by Dharmakīrti, but the more general tendency, widely evident in early Brahmanical and Buddhist literature, to deny the existence of something on the grounds that there is no evidence for it. See Steinkellner (1992) for *loci classici* for this argument. At NS 2.2.18, for instance, it is asserted that sound does not exist prior to being uttered – therefore it is not eternal, it must be brought into existence – 'because it is not apprehended and no obstruction, etc., is apprehended [either]' (*prāg uccāraṇād anupalabdher āvaraṇādyanupalabdheś ca*). Vātsyāyana introduces the *sūtra* by asking: 'Moreover, how is it known "This exists," "This does not exist"? By apprehension by a *pramāṇa* and non-apprehension by a *pramāṇa*' (*athāpi khalv idam astīdaṃ nāstīti kuta etat pratipattavyam iti. pramāṇata upalabdher anupalabdheś ca*) (NBh 14.2–3). Here, it seems again that 'non-apprehension' is taken more generally, as non-apprehension by *any* of the means of knowledge, not just non-*perception*.

[42] Of course, Vasubandhu does not explicitly state in *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* 9 as his reason for holding that there is no self distinct from the *skandha*s that one 'is not apprehended' (*anupalabdheḥ*). I am proposing that Uddyotakara is *restating* Vasubandhu's argument in *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* 9 as 'there is no self, *anupalabdheḥ*,' where that should be taken to mean 'because it is not apprehended by any *pramāṇa*.'

[43] That is to say, if, given the non-apprehension of P, one asserts not-P, the argument is a fallacy. If, on the other hand, given the non-apprehension of P, one *presumes* not-P, it is not. (Thanks to Roy Perrett for this clear way of stating the difference.) Uddyotakara would have a good argument against the Buddhists if he just meant that they are not cautious enough; instead of merely presuming, they assert. However, one cannot rule out the possibility that Buddhists considered the *anupalabdhi* argument to be a valid deductive argument. If nonapprehension is taken to be not a sign of non-existence, but tantamount thereto, then the non-existence of an entity would follow immediately from its non-apprehension.

[44] *viṣayasvabhāvabhedānuvidhāyy aham iti vijñānam*; NV 704.13–14; Jhā (1984; 1912–19: 1,078).

[45] See *Nyāyavārttikatātparyaṭīkā* (1985) 704.22–6. Vācaspati seems to be saying in his comment that if the self were not recognised as having certain properties, it could not be the *karman* of a cognition; but the passage is difficult.

[46] When he says, *kevalaṃ mutublopaṃ kṛtvāhaṃ gaura iti ṣaṣṭhyarthaṃ nirdiśati* (NV 705.7), Uddyotakara indeed seems to be understanding *ahaṃ gauraḥ* as *ahaṃ gaurarūpavān*, with

the elision of the possessive suffix, as Jhā (1984; 1912–19: 1,079) suggests. He justifies this, however, not by allusion to Kātyāyana's *Vārttika* 3, *guṇavacanebhyo matupo lug vaktavyaḥ*, ad *Aṣṭhādhāyī* 5.2.94 (*Mahābhāṣya* (1962–72): vol. 2, 394.8), which explains why, for example, something that *possesses* a certain colour can be called that colour ('The pot is white'), but by the argument that the notion 'my' (*mamapratyaya*) and the notion 'I' (*ahaṃkāra*) are sometimes seen to have the same referent. One refers, for example, to an assisting factor (*upakāraka*), such as one's servant, as oneself.

47 Uddyotakara also notes about the argument, 'There is no self, because it is not apprehended,' that it suffers from the same *pratijñā* and *dṛṣṭānta* defects as the argument from 'not having arisen'; NV 704.11.

48 Roughly, Vātsyāyana and Jayanta held that a self can only be inferred, not perceived, while Uddyotakara and Udayana insisted that it can be both inferred and perceived. See Watson (2006: 131–2, n. 25).

49 See Neevel (1977: 105–47), and Watson (2006: 209–55 [ch. 2]). The Prābhākara theory that the self is only cognised as the agent (*kartṛ*), never the object (*karman*), also tends in this direction. See, for example, *Prakaraṇa Pañcikā* (1961) 334.8–17.

50 The idea is already stated forcefully in the Upaniṣads: 'You can't see the seer who does the seeing; you can't hear the hearer who does the hearing; you can't think of the thinker who does the thinking; and you can't perceive the perceiver who does the perceiving'; *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 3.4.2; Olivelle (1996: 39).

51 This is pointed out by Śāntarakṣita, *Tattvasaṃgraha* (1981): vol. 1, 212–16.

52 As does Roderick Chisholm, for example, in classic papers such as Chisholm (1969).

53 For an analysis of the debate on memory between Naiyāyikas and Buddhists, see also Berger's Chapter 7 in this volume.

54 See *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* (1981) 1,215.11–1,218.1.

55 See La Vallée Poussin (1935). The notion of *vāsanā*, of course, is not restricted to Yogācāra.

56 At least by Jayanta and Udayana as well as Kumārila. See Watson (2006: 165) in regard to Jayanta. For an analysis of Udayana's treatment of this problem, now in the form of whether a relation of a *upādāna-upādeya* can exist between momentary cognitions, see Oetke (1988: 393–403).

57 *Ślokavārttika* (1977) *Nirālambanavāda* 187–8 [p. 188].

58 *Ślokavārttika* (1977) *Nirālambanavāda* 198cd–199ab [p. 190].

59 For a discussion of Parfit's view of personal identity in relation to Kumārila's and Udayana's proofs for the existence of a self based on 'recollection' (*pratyabhijñā*), see Ram-Prasad's Chapter 8 in this volume.

60 Cf., however, Matilal (1977: 86).

61 See again Matilal's comments in ibid.

Chapter 7
The Abode of Recognition: Memory and the Continuity of Selfhood in Classical Nyāya Thought

Douglas L. Berger

This chapter will attempt to demonstrate that the strongest defence of the continuity of self-consciousness given by classical (*prācīna*) Naiyāyikas against Buddhist critiques can be found in what are effectively phenomenological arguments that connect the capacities of recognition and memory with the notion of *ātman*. In brief, the predominant Buddhist accounts of memory insist that its conditions and influence on experience can be described without recourse to a continuous and unitary self-consciousness, and it will be argued that these accounts are insufficient as explanatory models. What classical Nyāya philosophers call recognition (*pratyabhijñā*) and recollection (*pratisaṇdhāna*) provide us with a much more convincing model of how both epistemic recognition and what is referred to in modern psychology as 'autobiographical memory' are made possible. This finding will hardly secure the entire fund of classical Nyāya ontological and soteriological commitments regarding *ātman*. But it will, if successful, buttress the notion that a continuity and unity of the subjective apprehension capacities of self-consciousness, whatever its nature and tale of emergence, makes better sense in describing our experience than a Buddhist theory that analytically denies the reality of any such self-consciousness.

Allow me first to briefly locate my position in the context of classical Nyāya-Buddhist debate. The Naiyāyikas offer a variety of arguments attempting to establish their particular conception of the self against various brahmanical schools as well as the denials of Cārvāka (Materialists) on the

one hand and Buddhism on the other. Their individual arguments have differing degrees of strength, and I think that the more closely Naiyāyikas tended to espouse epistemic and what I am here dubbing 'phenomenological' arguments, the better they fared, while more strictly ontological arguments proved to be far weaker. Hence, when classical Nyāya insisted against the Materialists that the presence of *ātman* made the difference between a living and dead body, or when they maintained against the Buddhists that psychological qualities must inhere in selves just as properties inhere in metaphysical substances, I think these defences of *ātman* were their weakest and the most susceptible to refutation. If the reality of selves can only be established in a substance ontology akin to that of classical Nyāya, then such arguments pointing to a predication regress in relating qualities to substances as were given by the Madhyamika Candrakīrti or the Advaitin Śrīharṣa will always cast a considerable pall of doubt over that ontology. If the only defences against the argument that the inherence (*samavāya*) that glues a quality to a substance must inhere in another level of inherence *adinfinitum* are the ones Gaṅgeśa offers, namely that qualities can be known as self-characterised (*svalakṣana*) before they are located in a substance and that inherence relations are autonomous (*svabhāva*), these represent, as Stephen Phillips has pointed out, significant concessions and susceptibilities in relation to the Buddhist arguments (1999: 208). However, the brahmanical Logicians were on stronger ground when they insisted, rebutting the Materialists, that we are primarily aware that we are having cognitions not just by observing our body, but through self-conscious awareness, and when they turn back the Buddhist doctrine of the auto-apprehension (*svasaṃvedana*) of awarenesses by pointing to evidence that not all awareness-events are apprehended, and whether such apprehension takes place depends on the dispositions and agency of selfconsciousness. I highlight the arguments surrounding memory, recognition and continuity here because I believe they are philosophically the strongest of Nyāya defences of *ātman* against both the Buddhist critiques and their rival depictions, and my aim here is to demonstrate why this is so.

What I think the Buddhist-Nyāya arguments on this issue point up is what it means for an awareness-event to be experienced as a memory, what sorts of phenomena an experience presents to us in order for us to regard it and treat it as a memory and not some other kind of experience. The

ontological status of the self, as well as what is remembered, are, within the confines of this restricted argument, less important than what sorts of experiences memory requires in order for it to be the kind of experience we take it to be. On examination, it will be found that the scholastic Buddhist representations of memory and its relation to selfconsciousness – given that the latter has not only no causal role in remembering, but only a quasi-logical and not really any phenomenological status – render their descriptions unsatisfying. On the other hand, Nyāya portrayals insist that selfconsciousness can be found to play both phenomenological and causal roles in our experiences of memory. In fact, I take the latter characterisation to apply to Nyāya explanations of consciousness in general, namely that they give credence to everyday phenomenological experience, and insist at the same time that there is no such thing as a 'qualitative' experience that lacks a causal explanation.[1] Understood in this light, I believe what we will find is that the mainstream Buddhist models simply do not provide us with an adequate description of those experiences we call memories, and this precisely because these accounts lack what the classical Nyāya depiction offers, namely an actual and not just a fictive self that experiences and owns the recollection and an 'abode' (*saṇdhāna*) in which a memory lives its life. The latter feature of their theory of memory and its relation to self-consciousness lends, it will be seen, a special vivacity to the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika portrayal of the embodied and individuated *ātman*.

In the *Ātmavādapratiṣedha* section of his monumental *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, Vasubandhu devotes a chapter to refuting the Tirthika (probably Vaiśeṣika) conception of *ātman*, during which he deals with Nyāya objections to the theory he defends. In the Sautrāntika model he advocates, Vasubandhu enumerates the causal conditions necessary to make a mental event (*citta*) a memory. A memory occurs when a mental event is (i) causally connected to a previously experienced object, (ii) inclined toward a previously experienced object, (iii) found to discern an object similar in form to the previously experienced object, (iv) accompanied by some resolve or habit in relation to the previously experienced object, and (v) not inhibited by any intervening emotion that would change the nature of the psychophysical factors that support it, thus occluding the memory (*Ātmavādapratiṣedha* 4.1 [Duerlinger 2003: 96]). One of the first notable aspects of this causal itinerary of a memory, and one which Vasubandhu spends a good portion of the chapter defending, is the relative passivity of

the process. A memory ‘occurs’ (*vartate*) as a mental event in a certain causal series, and when we speak as if a mental event exercises some agency in ‘cognising’ (*vijānāti*) a previous experience, that agency only applies to its own capacity to causally pass some similar (*sādṛśya*) impression of an originally experienced object onto a succeeding cognition in the stream, like one echo of a bell causing the next or one flame of a fire giving rise to another (*Ātmavādapratiṣedha* 4.3.5–6 [Duerlinger 2003: 97–98, 99–100]). Cognitions become distinct from one another because their causal factors are complex and varied, different formations (*saṃskāra*) are impressed onto each cognition by its specific outer and inner causal antecedents, and this explains in a general way why one cognition may be a perception and the next a memory, as well as why, when a monk remembers a woman, he will feel revulsion, while when a layman remembers one, he will be filled with various kinds of delight (*Ātmavādapratiṣedha* 4.7 [Duerlinger 2003: 101]). That means that memories are distinct from other kinds of cognitions by virtue of their causal antecedents, and the subjective variation in qualities of memories depends not merely on the thing initially experienced, but on previously accreted personality factors that make their impressions on the memory. The only agency ascribed to a memory on this view is its ability, once made, to affect other successive cognitions. But each memory is only momentary, that causal influence is at best indirect. The passivity of memories is underlined by Vasubandhu when he argues in detail against the Vaiśeṣika contention that a self must own his memories or be the agent that actively recalls something from his past. Vasubandhu replies that the notion of self as ‘owner’ or ‘sender’ of a cognition can just as well be replaced by the notion of the memory’s cognitive cause. Inasmuch as the cause of a memory – a cognition that originally apprehended and experienced the object – serves as the initial basis of that memory’s taking place, along with the other factors enumerated above, it was that originary cause that ‘sent’ the impression the memory holds, and thus, to wit, ‘owns’ it (*Ātmavādapratiṣedha* 4.3 [Duerlinger 2003: 98]).

But even metaphorically referring to an initial apprehension of an object as the ‘owner’ or ‘sender’ of a succeeding memory of it, though it is fairly consistent with the notion of mental causality the Buddhist espouses here, strains credulity. Let us track a conscious continuum of a very familiar sort through Vasubandhu’s route. A previous temporal state and position of the aggregate ‘person’ that became ‘me’, at a very young age, learned to play a

musical piece on a given instrument. In subsequent performances of this piece, the succeeding ‘persons’ in the stream do not experience the exact same tones that resounded when the piece was first played correctly nor the exact way the fingers moved on the instrument on that initial occasion, but similar impressions of those tones produce a mostly latent inclination to play the piece with different instruments. When I might happen to see the same type of instrument I have learned to play in subsequent experiences, this latent inclination is, given the causal history of my collective aggregates, activated. Well, we can see how conditions (i), and to some extent (iii) and (iv) outlined by Vasubandhu have been met. We may also include (v) in this list if there happen at the present moment to be no experiential factors overwhelming recall of the initial experience, if attention is not occupied or distracted. But what of the Buddhist account of what inclines the current state of the aggregated configuration I label ‘myself’ to recall the original piece? Naiyāyikas also acknowledge the role played by the accretion of mental formations that build our habits and dispositions, but in the Nyāya account, such formations can remain latent in the first place because they are enduring features of an enduring self. In the Buddhist view, the original performance itself, the inclination to replay the piece it created, and the causal power of each episode, according to the ‘theory of the momentariness’ (*kṣaṇavāda*) of experiences Vasubandhu adheres to, disappear even before the very next mental event occurs. Such momentary and self-enclosed cognitions explain little of how a disposition like the inclination to play previously learned music on an instrument can in fact leave any imprints (*vāsanā*) on any succeeding cognitions, because the causal history that is being relied on to explain our experience is for all intents and purposes cancelled at the very instant it arises with each new cognition. But, more problematically, it makes no metaphorical sense to say that this original moment of performing a learned musical piece ‘owns’ my successive memories nor ‘sends’ them to me, for, since that moment is gone for ever, it has the capacity neither to possess nor to send anything. Memories may be initiated by first experiences, but the original experience does not in any intelligible sense ‘own’ the memory, the memory is instead owned by the person I am now who remembers it. A more likely scenario of remembering a childhood experience of learning and playing a piece of music must involve some levels of agency and interest in the recollection that have some intentional continuity with the past. In such rememberings,

an active effort is made by a consciousness with both a past and a set of accreted interests to retrieve past experiences. The ‘needs’ and ‘interests’ of a person who experiences himself as the delimited centre of a specific narrative history, and not the original event or a set of isolable latent inclinations which are automatically triggered, like lights in a pinball machine, seem behind an effort to actively retrieve past experiences and relate them to the present.[2] The Naiyāyikas were most avid about such examples of active learning, and even understanding the utterances of others, having already learned a language, to illustrate such continuity and agency. Now, pointing this out is not a denial of the facts that memories have their beginnings in originary experiences nor that the Buddhist framework we find in Vasubandhu’s arguments does explain certain kinds of memories referred to in contemporary discussions as ‘episodic’, or even reflexive memories that allow me to avoid painful sensations like touching hot pans in the kitchen as a child. It is the retrieval of memories in recollection, and what circumstances ‘incline’ us to retrieve them, that are at issue here, and Vasubandhu’s passive architectonic seems ill equipped as it stands to describe the lives of memories and the agency persons exercise in accessing them.

One possible defence of Vasubandhu’s portrayal has been offered by his translator, James Duerlinger. He emphasises that Vasubandhu’s causal model of memory is not meant to serve as a means to ‘translate sentences, without loss of meaning’ from the personal level of memory description into an objective causal explanation (and neither is the alternative Nyāya model so intended); instead, the issue is whether some notion of a continuous and unitary metaphysical *ātman* is required for an objective causal description of memory (Duerlinger 2003: 240–41). This approach also permits Vasubandhu, according to Duerlinger, to ‘explain away’ memories in which the Naiyāyikas insist one remembers oneself having an experience and not merely the object content of that experience (2003: 243–4). The problem is that such attempts to reduce self-consciousness by ‘explaining it away’ only end up reducing the putative value of the explanation being offered. Vasubandhu himself, as Duerlinger admits, does not deny that we construct personal narratives and conceptually relate those narratives to memory experience within our conventional activities (*saṃvṛti*) and daily business (*vyavahāra*), and so Vasubandhu agrees that the phenomenological fact of our experience of memories requires some

account. In Duerlinger's interpretation of Vasubandhu, as well as in the interpretation provided in Chapter 4 of this volume by Ganeri, our experience of personhood is a conceptual product. In Duerlinger's formulation, our phenomenological sense of self comes from, or is a product of, our conceptual activity.[3] In Ganeri's representation, Vasubandhu may qualify as something of a 'cautious reductionist' in so far as he recognises that our sense of self is, while surely not any irreducible real, 'a structural element of the stream' of consciousness.[4] But what Vasubandhu actually goes about showing is that this finished product of self-conscious narrative is not itself in any way a causal support of the experience of memory, and thus the self-consciousness we experience ourselves as having in memories does not really play any role in them, but is only a contingent by-product; Vasubandhu's arguments, that is, demonstrate that we can have memories, and explain them, without having self-consciousness.[5] But it is the phenomenological actualities of our experience that the reductive explanation was intended to account for in the first place. That is to say, the Buddhist reductive explanation of memory is parasitic on our actually experiencing ourselves as persons with autobiographically significant memories, and it is precisely this experiencing that should be findable somewhere, in whatever transformed way, in the causal story. That means that the phenomenological experience of memory is only causally explained when all of its attendant features have too been causally explained. Were the debate about the self merely one of when it plays a role in a causal account of memory, either at the beginning or the end of the process, then it would not be the reality of selfconsciousness that presented the problem, but only its order of emergence and how it is constituted. But Vasubandhu and the Buddhists go farther by positing that the autobiographical significance of our memories and the self-consciousness for which they seem to be meaningful are false constructions: they are neither the cause nor the effect of the phenomenal or experiential process, and so are not real in any way. But in this event, it is not just the case, as Duerlinger believes, that sentences about our personal memories and experiences suffer 'loss of some meaning' when an attempt is made to 'translate' them into causal sentences, but rather that narrative memories and self-consciousness do not translate into the causal story at all. The implication of this would seem to be that the reductive causal explanation of memory we find in Vasubandhu is not in fact an explanation of our experience of memory and putative

selfhood, but instead renders what we sought at first to explain in our experience, and what indeed first prompted us to seek for an explanation, to be merely illusory. If there is no translatability of causally connected states to those recollective and autobiographical experiences that are being reduced whatsoever, then the causal explanation has lost its very status as an explanation of the latter, and is instead a story unto itself. Even if one wants to argue that autobiographical memory and self-consciousness are 'constructions' as the Buddhists do, such arguments do not themselves imply that such constructions are always erroneous, and if Vasubandhu wishes to call selfconsciousness an experienced construction, an account of how it is constructed would seem to be in order.[6]

Of course, the Buddhists could and did deny that even the seemingly most familiar of our experiences, even ones with phenomenological currency and the ability to motivate our actions, needed to be acknowledged any existential status so long as they could be subjected to conceptual analysis. In the works of the eleventh-century Yogācāra logician Ratnakīrti, we find both an ingeniously argued denial that a purported continuous self can actually exercise any causal efficacy and a refutation of the Nyāya conception of recognition. The aim of Ratnakīrti's fascinating *Kṣaṇabhaṅgasiddhiḥ Vyatirekātmika*, operating with the time-honoured Buddhist definition of existence as the causal capacity of a thing to bring about an effect (*arthakrīyakāritva*), is to defend the contropositive thesis that no non-momentary (*akṣaṇika*) – that is, for him, a permanent (*sthira*) – entity can bring about either successive or non-successive (*kramākrama*) events. That is to say, it is impossible for the permanent *ātman* to be a cause of anything. Nevertheless, it is possible for us to conceive of a permanent *ātman* without thereby giving some tacit acknowledgment to the existence of any such self. The arguments proffered for the first proposition are relatively standard Buddhist fare for Ratnakīrti's time. The supposed causal power of a non-momentary or permanent entity, especially when such causal power can be attributed to that entity's 'autonomous essence', cannot itself be temporalised, and this leads to the consequence that the causal power of a permanent entity must either continue to produce a single effect at all times without being interrupted, or its causal power must always be held in abeyance (*Kṣaṇabhaṅgasiddhiḥ Vyatirekātmika* (1970) 83.20; 84.11 [pp. 20–21]). In the former case, the effects would not be successive, but themselves eternal, and in the latter, no effects would be produced, both

eventualities proving Ratnkakīrti's thesis. To the Naiyāyika rejoinder that the self only produces effects in co-operation with other accompanying factors, Ratnakīrti responds that, since the occurrence of accompanying impermanent factors is required for the permanent *ātman* to be efficacious, this only proves that causal powers really belong to those impermanent factors, rendering the causal power of the self nil (*Kṣaṇabhaṅgasiddhiḥ Vyatirekātmika* (1970) 83.22–9 [p. 21]).

At this point, in the debate dramatised by Ratnakīrti's text, Nyāya logicians invoke their axiom that, if something is found to be 'non-existent' (*abhāva*), no affirmation or denial of properties in it can be true, since nothing can be asserted or denied of a non-existent entity. That is to say, a non-existent entity cannot even come to awareness (*buddhi*) in order to be negated. My argument about why a sufficient causal explanation has to account for all the phenomenological data in experience above very much follows along such lines. Therefore, Ratnakīrti's thesis that 'no non-momentary entity produces subsequent or non-subsequent effects' commits the fallacy of *āśrayāsiddhi*, or 'unestablished support', since an entirely non-existent entity could not causally produce a concept of itself in thought.

From here on, Ratnakīrti spends much logical effort to actually deny that we can conceive of the illusory spectre of the self when we attribute actually experienced qualities to it, qualities that are supposedly analytically contrary to the former's nature. In other words, when we think of what causal productivity entails, we realise that, by definition, causal productivity requires change, and this implies that causation cannot be predicated of any unchanging substance, which is precisely what the supposed 'self' would be. This means that we can form a conceptual awareness (*vikalpabuddha*) of an unreal self, but only under two very restricted conditions: when real attributes are denied to inhere in it, or when unreal attributes are affirmed of it. However, as Ratnakīrti insists, an unreal entity like the self cannot serve as the subject term of any sentence that predicates real attributes to it (*Kṣaṇabhaṅgasiddhiḥ Vyatirekātmika* (1970) 81.23 [p. 18]). This latter, seemingly overly radical consequence, was one Ratnakīrti apparently felt forced into by the textual Nyāya opponent, who tries to demonstrate in the course of the debate that a non-momentary entity must have at least one causal capacity, that of causing awareness of itself by being the *pratiyogin* or object of negation in a proposition denying its reality and causal efficacy (*Kṣaṇabhaṅgasiddhiḥ Vyatirekātmika* (1970)

81.8 [p. 18]). Ratnakīrti is adamant that permanent entities cannot be objects of knowledge (*pratitiviṣaya*) in the logical sense that, while they can under the restricted propositional conditions outlined above be conceptualised, they cannot be even the potential loci of real attribution, and so are not even potentially knowable or determinable in that way (*Kṣaṇabhaṅgasiddhiḥ Vyatirekātmika* (1970) 81.18 [p. 18]). Therefore, to propositionally affirm that an unreal entity possesses real attributes would garner for the unreal entity a kind of thinghood and capacity to influence real things (*vastubala*), and unlike conceptual constructions that do possess such capacities and so might actually be usable, a 'non-momentary entity' does not have these (*Kṣaṇabhaṅgasiddhiḥ Vyatirekātmika* (1970) 82.22 [pp. 19–20]). All this logical subtlety reveals that we do not even become conceptually aware of self-consciousness by wrongly associating actually experienced attributes or activities to it, but only by rightly denying its reality or by engaging in manifest sophistry by associating other unreal qualities with it. And so it is here, in one of the great Buddhist treatises meant to establish momentariness and with it the falsity of enduring subjectivity and recollection, that we have actually wandered about as far away from experience as we can possibly get. For what is most presciently to be denied – the self – turns out not to be a misinterpretation of our actual experience in the world, but only a rather elementary logical error.

This obliteration of even our phenomenological sense of selfhood also erases our sense of recognition. Ratnakīrti invokes precisely the very unintelligibility of permanence, or non-momentariness, the two terms being precariously treated by him as equivalent, to reject any relation between the two. In order for there to be recognitive synthesis (*pratyabhijñā*) of a particular cognition by a unitary (*ekatva*) self-consciousness, that self-consciousness must be non-momentary. But since Ratnakīrti believes he has both positively and negatively established that permanent entities are incapable of serving as causes and are thus by definition unreal, not only is the supposedly permanent, unitary self-consciousness a nonentity, but so is the supposed identity that attaches to the recollected object, the impressions of which actually change through time. Therefore, since the unity and identity of both the self and the recognised object fail the reality test, no such thing as the recognitive synthesis that requires them both in order to take place ever occurs either (*Kṣaṇabhaṅgasiddhiḥ Vyatirekātmika* (1970) 84.3 [p. 21]). We have now reached a stage of Buddhist argumentation far

more extreme than what we find in Vasubandhu, in which not only is self-consciousness a fabricated construct, but the recognition and memory we believe ourselves to experience do not correspond to anything that actually happens in the world either.

Ratnakīrti's treatment takes up standard Buddhist lines of attack against the most vulnerable feature of the brahmanical conception of the self, namely the belief that it is permanent and thus itself unchanging. The unchanging nature of permanent entities, and the willingness of a number of Naiyāyikas to defend the isolated causal capacities of an unchanging substance, did provide the Buddhists a legitimate target, and we will return to this issue in our direct discussion of the Nyāya position below. But even so, there is at least one fairly obvious questionable equivocation in Ratnakīrti's polemic. This equivocation is connected to a fundamental characteristic of the Buddhists' own ontological picture that renders even the reductive explanations they prize highly problematic. As has already been mentioned, Ratnakīrti seems to consistently treat the terms 'non-momentary' and 'permanent' or 'unchangingly stable' as synonymous, but it is far from clear that these terms should be held as such. One can surely attribute some temporal continuity or stasis to phenomena without thereby insisting that such phenomena never change. So reluctant were most of the Sautrāntika-influenced schools of Buddhist thought to regard continuity as having any sense of temporal endurance out of fear that it would covertly sneak the notion of *ātman* back into ontological discourse, they too quickly embraced the metaphysics of momentariness without appreciating the kinds of problems momentariness saddled their own views with. As one very powerful Nyāya counter-argument would run, even in order to transmit memory traces that bore some features similar to the original experience onto the succeeding moment, a cognition would have to retain qualities sufficiently redolent of the initial experience in order to evoke a memory of the latter, and this itself seems to witness to some stasis rather than thoroughgoing momentariness. Furthermore, even if the Buddhists insist on maintaining that memory changes every moment, at least some of the presented content must change in ways so minute as to be phenomenologically indistinguishable from previous cognitions so that a memory trace can be said to 'resemble' in any meaningful way an original cognition, and such indistinguishability also calls the utter uniqueness of each moment seriously into question. Now, to some degree, this outcome

may be attributed to contingent features in the evolution of Buddhist thought. Rospatt (1995: 110) has demonstrated that the term *kṣaṇa* in early Buddhist commentaries probably meant at most only ‘a very short time’, as the literal sense of the word suggests, but as it was elaborated upon by Buddhist scholastics, it came to mean more and more ‘the duration of mental entities’ which was thought to be ‘the briefest conceivable event’. I thus very much agree with Tao Jiang (2006: 41–6), who, following Paul Griffiths and Lambert Schmithausen, argues that this Sautrāntika-Vaibhāṣika conception of momentariness beset their explanations of experience with a ‘problem of continuity’ which, at least within the Buddhist context, was only effectively dealt with by the Vijñānavāda notions of the ‘egocreating’ and ‘storehouse’ consciousnesses (*manonāmavijñāna* and *ālayavijñāna*), which served as a basis wherein a seemingly stable identity could be manufactured and where the seeds of experience could be both stored and transformed. But since, historically, the momentariness–continuity debate was the most prominent one between the Buddhists and Naiyāyikas, it is the contours and details of that debate we take up here, and we find the Buddhists’ own model on this accord faring rather poorly as a recounting of our experience. Ratnakīrti’s pointed critique of the Nyāya depiction of permanent selfhood does not make his own portrayal of momentariness of memory any more credible.

Let us turn at this point to the account of the connection between memory and self-consciousness given by the classical Naiyāyikas. In the *Nyāyasūtra* of Gautama, contact between the organ of internal sensation and the self is said to have six signs or marks, which are states of awareness and disposition: desire, aversion, will, pleasure, pain and cognition (*Nyāyasūtra* 1913: 3.1.17). Vātsyāyana elaborates by pointing out that memory always accompanies desire, aversion and will, since these all are affects regarding an object already cognised, while memory contingently accompanies pleasure, pain and cognition, for these may also be about the present (*Nyāyasūtrabhāṣya* 1967: 3.1.17). I will return below to the significance of the assertion being made here that psychological states are properties of the self and not the body, as this is most important in ascertaining precisely what kind of self is being presented by the Naiyāyikas. Since, at any rate, it is the case that in the Nyāya view cognitions belong to the self, a cognition that we recognise as a memory, whether it is about real experiences or illusory ones, must be some kind of synthesis of experiential content such

that both the content and the experiencer exhibit some continuity with the original experience. This, according to Nyāya, is precisely where the early Buddhist conceptions akin to those we find in Vasubandhu fall short. In Vasubandhu's framework, all that appears to be constitutively required for us to call an experience a memory is its reception of causal capacity (*sāmārthya*) of an initial cognition to effect succeeding cognitions, the mediation to it of object content that bears some similar features to the object first encountered, the influence upon it of latent, accreted dispositions to react to the object in some way, and the auto-apprehension of the cognition to identify itself as a memory cognition rather than a directly visual, auditory, volitional or sensory one. But under these limited conditions, the sixth-century Naiyāyika Uddyotakara argues, such a cognition will not be able to ascertain whether the object content to which it refers is similar to the object initially experienced, for which a comparative judgment would be required, nor whether the memory content had been caused by the initial cognition, which would again require an additional act of judgment, nor whether the self-consciousness that now remembers is the same selfconsciousness that underwent the original experience, for which is required an act of self-apprehension (*Nyāyavārttika* 1915: 64). In other words, in Vasubandhu's framework, a putative memory might be aware of content similar to that of the previous experience, but would not be aware of the originary experience, nor that it was caused by the initial experience, nor that the memory belongs to anyone. For distinct cognitions, such as perceptual and memory cognitions, to simply succeed one another in a causally connected series cannot elucidate how the comparison of originally experienced content with presently remembered content, adducing their similarity, occurs, nor does it even attempt in the Buddhist recounting, according to Vācaspati Miśra, to tell us how self-consciousness is even falsely attributed to both experiences (*Nyāyavārttikatātparyaṭīkā* 1925: 211). Now, I think it can be conceded to the Buddhists that some memories may simply occur to one out of the blue given the right environments, and therefore an agent is not required to explain their active retrieval. However, even in such cases, the apprehension of the cognition as a memory would seem to require the recognition, however brief, that the content experienced is from the past, and that this very content relates to my own experience in a narrative continuity in some fashion. The virtue of the Nyāya account on this score lies in its insistence that if apprehension of the similarity of past

experience to present experience and a continuous self-consciousness are part of our experiential recounting of memories, then they also must be part of the causal story, however dramatic their retranslation into causal terms may in fact be (*Nyāyavārttikatātparyaṭīkā* 1925: 213). The Buddhist portrayals we get in Vasubandhu, and certainly in Ratnakīrti, write such experiential products out of the causal story entirely, suggesting that the bare-bones causal account is reality, and the experiential one is a conspicuously arbitrary logical fiction with no explicable connection to reality, even if it might be indirect.

In view of this, what sorts of synthetic acts, rather than merely passive receptions, factor into our experiences of memory? Most pertinent for our discussion is what is referred to in the *Nyāyasūtra* as recognition, and what Vātsyāyana and other commentators label recollection. There are two factors that enable the recognition that we associate with experiences of memory. The first is the aforementioned recognition that the object first experienced and the object being represented now are similar, or are of the same kind, and that the object now recalled was in fact caused by the original perception of it. The two image-experiences still need to be not merely temporally and causally connected, but also recognised or apprehended as being so connected. Thus, whether the two experiences being apprehended here are perceptual or conceptual, their apprehension, as Vātsyāyana points out, requires one witness (*śākṣin*) of the various perceptions (*Nyāyasūtrabhāṣya* 1967: 3.1.14). And this brings us to the second component of recognition, namely the apprehension that the self that originally experienced something is the same self that now remembers it. Vātsyāyana here uses the locution ‘recognition of memory’ (*smṛtasyapratyabhijñā*) to describe a process through which the distinct cognitions ‘this was seen’ and ‘I saw this’ are synthesised in the present awareness that ‘what I saw before I am seeing now’, and it is only with this second act of synthesis that we have a robust memory, since an unexperienced memory is not what we refer to when we report instances of remembering (*Nyāyasūtrabhāṣya* 1967: 3.1.14). Structurally speaking, in memories, it is not merely the content of the original experience that is remembered, but also the ‘I’ that was aware of the original experience, and it is that very ‘I’ which is also identified as the one having the memory. Otherwise, the memory itself will remain unconscious. Now, while there are memories that remain unattended and of which we may for long spells

remain unconscious, just as surely as there are perceptual experiences that are not apprehended, the recognition that we experience in a conscious remembrance requires awareness of the temporally distinct contents of experience and memory, and the self-consciousness that undergoes them both. Indeed, Naiyāyikas would eventually insist that the awareness of the self in recollective experiences is itself perceptual, and not just inferred, where the inner sense is in direct contact with the self and its attendant qualities.[7] The examples Nyāya philosophers often use to buttress these characterisations of what is required for robust conscious memories are ones that most directly implicate self-suggested or self-determined acts of remembering, such as ardent study in which a purposeful effort is made to clarify a previous perplexity that a learner now wishes to understand more thoroughly. But such examples do serve a distinct purpose in their debate with the Buddhists, who, as was seen above in Vasubandhu's case, offer a mechanical and passive construal of memory in which agency is merely metaphorical – and oddly metaphorical at that.

Of course, none of this detracts from the fact that the Achilles' heel of the Nyāya position is their insistence that *ātman* is permanent. The Naiyāyikas may be more or less on a better footing in defending the unity or numerical identity of the self *vis-à-vis* memories of originary experiences, but the permanence of the self seems much more vulnerable to the Buddhist critiques. There is something undeniably compelling about the Buddhists' pressing rejection of the idea that we experience in either everyday activities or mystical pursuits anything permanent, including most of all a permanent soul. Ratnakīrti also makes a weighty point about the implications of the Nyāya *ātman* being an eternal and changeless substance in its own right, for it is immensely difficult, at best, to defend the idea that such a self, considered in isolation, plays a causal role in the bodily and experiential life. A self that can be both analytically and substantially separated from the body and assumed to be in itself changeless throughout all the transformations of its experiences and contingently attendant (*agāntuka*) qualities, including consciousness itself, does at least raise the spectres of dualism and the so-called inner, conscious 'homunculus' that rules over the unconscious body. In fact, to me, such a self does not even appear to be consistent with much else in Nyāyas' own larger ontology. For example, *ātman* was believed to be akin to other nonmaterial substances like 'ether' (*ākāśa*) which pervaded all of space but did not impede material

objects within it from contact with one another. Thus, the Nyāya self was said to be pervasive of (*vyāpnuvān*) the entire body of an individual, which would imply that the space that the self-substance occupies grows as the body grows. Furthermore, although cognitions and dispositions like pleasure, pain, desire, memory and will were asserted to be properties of the self and not the unconscious body, these qualities undergo constant change in the interaction that takes place between the embodied self and the world in which it lives. The fact that the self's extension and dispositions change in accordance with physical changes of the body renders Nyāyas' essentially religious conviction that the self is immaterial or non-physical at least questionable, even on their own terms. But the Buddhist contention that there is no continuity to self-consciousness at all, that the only really-existent phenomena of awareness are causally connected momentary bursts of cognition, veers off in an equally untenable direction. Therefore, I have always thought that the most defensible position regarding self-consciousness lies somewhere in the middle of these opposites, with self-consciousness being a biologically, psychologically and socially emergent, but causally explicable, phenomenon of embodied existence, subject to change and cultivation, but also, in terms of its capacity for *prakāśatva* or subjective luminosity, enduring under favourable circumstances.

However, all these drawbacks having been admitted, the comments above at the same time highlight one of the most important strengths of the Nyāya conception of self. While the Buddhists are presented with a target when Naiyāyikas speak of the permanent, changeless self considered on its own, the fact of the matter is that Naiyāyikas far more often articulate a conception of self in relation to its qualities and situated, embodied experience. In Chapter 8 of this volume, Ram-Prasad observes that the Nyāya arguments regarding the relation of the self to memory, serving as a constitutive condition of the latter, reveal that their notion of *ātman* is decidedly 'thin', much like the Kantian 'I think' which must possibly attend all my experiences. For him, this 'thinness' of the self in the Nyāya arguments demonstrates that their conception of self cannot be deployed in any sort of Western analysis of personhood. While I do agree that the references to self in the Nyāya arguments about memory are confined to its constitutive role and are thus thin, I would argue that the Nyāya notion of self is, in the larger context of their philosophy, far more robust, and much closer the Mimāṭsa views, than the Kantian. After all, Kant's self is never

known in itself, but only as it appears, and while it is a constitutive condition of the conceivability of experience, we do not know exactly what relation it 'really' has to its experiences. The same is true of the self's relation to its acts, for in Kant's ethical thought, the self is the condition for the possibility of freedom, but that same self is not the body that moves or the aspect of the empirical character affected by motives. We are dealing in Nyāya, on the other hand, with not merely a thin conception that involves only formal epistemic subjective unity or pristine spiritual identity. Naiyāyikas surely do deny that the self can be identified with the body, but they also emphatically assert that the self's pleasures, pains, attractions, aversions, desires and cognitions belong to it, are located in it, and not in the physical body. The Nyāya self is a self with cognitions, a self with desires, aversions, pleasures, pains and will, a self with sensations, a self with body, indeed a self which cannot be conscious at all but for embodiment. In its correspondingly thick relation to memory, it is the selfconsciousness spoken of by the fifth-century Vaiśeṣika Praśastapāda as well as Gautama. In their definitions, memory results from the uniquely occasioned contacts (*samyogaviśeṣa*) between self-consciousness and inner sensation which are caused by the perception of associated signs (*liṅgadarśana*) bearing similar features to the originary experience, and in which there is concentration (*pranidhāna*) of the mind on the originally experienced object and its context (*nibandha*), strengthened by the intensity (*atipratyāya*) of the original experience, the will (*icchā*) to remember, and often repetition (*abhyāsa*) which reinforces earlier sedimented impressions (*Nyāyasūtrabhāṣya* 1967: 3.2.41, and *Padārthadharmasaṭgraha* 1963: 656–7). If self-consciousness is tied to memories, it is tied to them through its dynamic engagement with a rich, varied and living past, present and future. And for their part, memories are not only momentary mental explosions in the ever-flowing causal stream of bundled pieces of personality, but also have lives, and live those lives, in the creatures that are their homes.

[1] I believe that this is one of the most significant contributions Nyāya has to make to modern theories of consciousness. Modern phenomenologists, since Husserl, attempt to envelop causal arguments within phenomenological ones, while contemporary reductionist philosophers of mind try to get rid of first-person qualitative explanations in favour of thirdperson causal ones. Partly because Nyāya thought originated in a philosophical framework quite different from the current one with its lingering Cartesian legacies, Nyāya is one model that, to me, clearly demonstrates the virtues of retaining and interconnecting both phenomenological and causal accounts of consciousness.

[2] I have in mind here the work of recent developmental psychologists such as Susan Engle (1999) and earlier observations by Frederick Bartlett (1932: 211–12). Engle's work, of course, is committed to distributive bodily models of memory combined with environmental and social context, but does require the agency of the self in a robust sense as contributing to recollection.

[3] In a pivotal section of *Ātmavādapratiṣedha* 2.1, Duerlinger argues that when Vasubandhu says of the self that it is *prajñaptitasasti*, this means that it is 'real by way of a conception' rather than that it is 'real as a conception' (2003: 30). The implication of this for Duerlinger is that our notion of the self, while based on the aggregates, is a real result of conceptual activity, and so does play a role in the causal process of producing our experiences of ourselves.

[4] It must be noted here that Ganeri blends the account of the *Ātmavādapratiṣedha* with the arguments of the *Triṃśatikā* invoking storehouse consciousness and *manonāmavijñāna* to defend this representation. Leaving aside the thorny issue of whether or not the same historical Vasubandhu wrote both texts, it must at least be conceded that these two treatises offer different views of consciousness. While I would agree that the Vijñānavāda position on memory and self-consciousness fares better than the Sautrāntika view found in the *Ātmavādapratiṣedha* or the *Abhidharma Treasury* as a whole (and I will return to this briefly below), the model of consciousness found in the former text cannot, in my view, be used to defend the arguments of the latter text being considered here. Therefore, when Ganeri argues in Chapter 4 of this volume that Vasubandhu holds an unconscious theory of the ownership of self-consciousness, while that is a perfectly fair description of the views defended in the *Triṃśatikā*, it is not what we find being argued about ownership in the relevant parts of the *Ātmavādapratiṣedha*.

[5] We see in the larger context of the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* 9 how Vasubandhu argues against the Pudgalavādins that the self can be derived neither from a substance (*dravyataḥ*) nor from a concept (*prajñaptitaḥ*). Duerlinger's reconstruction of Vasubandhu turns out to be more defensible than the latter's actual position. In my estimation, for Vasubandhu, in this treatise, self-consciousness is simply a false construction, and plays no role in the causal process of cognitions, which makes him, as mentioned, a more strict Sautrāntika. This is especially apparent in the way Vasubandhu argues against the Naiyāyikas.

[6] This point is made also in the context of modern discussions by Campbell (2003).

[7] Udayana argues for knowledge of the self through direct internal perception. We thus find Udayana positing that our immediate awareness of the self is incontestable (*atiprakṣepa*) since it is not derived by other means of knowledge and bears no relation of a feature to that which it qualifies; see *Ātmatattvaviveka* (1989) 743.

Chapter 8
Self and Memory: Personal Identity and Unified Consciousness in Comparative Perspective[1]

Chakravarthi Ram-Prasad

I will first write quite generally about the comparison between the concept of the 'person' and the question of personal identity in early modern and contemporary Western philosophy and the debates over *ātman* in ancient and classical Indian thought. I will suggest that, while the largely psychological (and secondarily, physical and relational) notion of the 'person' is indeed found in the Indian material, it does not quite map on to that of the *ātman*, usually translated as 'self'. I will then look more particularly at the role of arguments from memory and recognition in support of theories of personal identity in Western philosophy, and raise the question of whether the problem of implanted memories faced by such arguments has a philosophical bearing on Hindu theories of *ātman* invoking memory/recognition against Buddhist critiques. Thereafter, by looking closely at specific uses of memory/recognition in the schools of Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṃsā and Nyāya, I will agree that any Hindu school, such as Mīmāṃsā, which uses memory/recognition for a personality-involving theory of *ātman* faces precisely the problems faced by Western memory theories of personal identity; this rich conception of *ātman* is consistent with Freschi's account in Chapter 9 of this volume. But, by contrast, Nyāya distinguishes the *ātman*-self from personhood (or personality-involving senses of self), and uses memory/recognition in a quite different way – one not vulnerable to that problem. Naiyāyikas, when they invoke memory/recognition, do so in support of a minimal self phenomenally present in a stream of consciousness, which they take to establish the

persistence of the *ātman*. Recent Western ideas about the diachronic unity of consciousness are compatible with such a use of memory/recognition. This culminating conception of self in classical Nyāya accords with other arguments for *ātman* made in this volume by Taber (Chapter 6) and Berger (Chapter 7).

Comparing ‘Person’ and the *Ātman*-self: Some Historical Points

From Early Buddhism onwards, there is a sustained effort in the Indian traditions to analyse the many things that might be thought to be the self, in order to demonstrate that it is in fact a construct, and not some truly irreducible entity. But what is it that prompts clinging and desire in us? There is a great deal that we take to be the make-up of ourselves. Our desires implicate our body, our mind and its various states and activities, our dispositions, character and other traits, and our very awareness of ourselves. So the Buddhists developed a detailed taxonomy of who we are, as in the doctrine of the five *skandha*s, the complex of physical and psychological elements that constitute the sentient being: the body, feelings, perceptions, volitions, and awareness.[2]

Buddhist teaching, both early and later, therefore sought to challenge our sense of who we are and what makes us up at a variety of levels. If the Buddhist position is translated as the claim that persons are only useful fictions, then many Hindu schools will not disagree with that. In the Upaniṣads themselves, the essence of subjective presence that the seers strive to talk about is usually not the specific, individuated person. So (1) the *ātman* as self is in some way the essence of a person; yet, (2) this is not realised as what individuates a person. When talking about the person, brahmanical schools talk of ‘the man’ (*nara* or *puṃs*, singular nominative, *pumān*) or ‘person’ (*pudgala*), or a named individual (‘Devadatta’).

In Nyāya, *ātman* is clearly not about personhood. To the extent that Buddhists argue that the psychophysical complex is a construct and the identity it provides a fiction, Naiyāyikas will accept the argument. Nyāya claims that the *ahaṃkāra* or ‘I-formation’ is a metaphysical error, in which some more fundamental subjective essence (the ātmanic self) is wrongly identified with the psychophysical complex that makes up the person. Since they maintain that the *ātman* (howsoever construed) is an ultimate entity, to say that the psychological formation of personal identity is reducible is to say that personhood is a fiction and different from the core, irreducible *ātman*-self. Of course, this does not mean that any Hindu school will accept

Buddhist arguments against the *ātman*. But we should be careful about taking all Buddhist critiques of all senses of who we are as applying *tout court* to all Hindu philosophical positions.

The core conception of the *ātman* that Hindus of different schools would defend is that there is a diachronically unified consciousness,[3] whose persistence is marked by consciousness of its own persistent presence. Hindu schools take this to be attacked at all times by all Buddhist schools.[4] In this chapter, I will argue that Nyāya defends a formal and minimal *ātman* via this notion of unified consciousness, whereas Mīmāṃsā includes a great deal of the psychological features of personhood in its conception of *ātman*. This has a major impact on the argument from memory and recognition, which will concern us now.

Memory Theory and Personal Identity in Western Philosophy

This chapter will be concerned with the use of memory (*sṃrti*) or recollection (*pratisaṃdhāna*) or recognition (*pratyabhijñā*) in Indian philosophy, and the apparent parallels and some intriguing differences between that use and the role memory has played in modern Western philosophy. A note: while many examples seem to concern recognition – 'The cow I saw yesterday, I see now' – they are assumed to be basically about memory, in that the important point is to remember that the cow was seen yesterday. Indeed, *pratyabhijña* can be translated both as recognition and remembrance; and conversely, the Nyāya philosopher Udayana uses examples of recognition while talking of *smṛti*. So nothing should be taken to turn on this difference.

In Western philosophy, Locke famously linked memory to personal identity by saying that (especially for securing moral responsibility) what makes a person A the same as a later person B is B being able to remember the experiences of A.[5] Locke argued, primarily, that there was a distinction between personal identity (provided by memory) and biological identity (provided by being the same man – the same member of the same species). He also argued that what makes person A and person B the same is memory rather than sameness of immaterial substance.

Sydney Shoemaker talked of q-remembering (quasi-remembering) being the holding of an appropriate causal link between the event q-remembered by B and B's memory of it.[6] Quasi-memory differs from memory in not presupposing personal identity; so B's q-remembering something does not presuppose that it was B who had the experience being remembered. Parfit developed the notion of q-memory further. First, there should be a continuity of such q-memories; second, in order to face the threat of transplanted memories, q-memories should be strongly connected – they should have significant numbers of connections.[7]

In giving his criteria for a neo-Lockean theory of personal identity based on memory, Parfit also wanted to give a reductionist view of persons. His view in *Reasons and Persons* is that as long as the required psychological continuity is preserved, that is just what personal identity consists in. In other words, while there are persons (Parfit strives to prove that he is not an eliminativist about persons), a person's existence simply consists in a set of psychophysical facts (body, brain, physical and mental events). Parfitian requirements for q-memories work as long as the account they support of persons is reducible to memories and other facts; all they need to do is give non-circular and connective criteria for constituting a person. However, non-reductionists about persons, who hold that a person is more than just those connections, are equally threatened by transplanted memories, but there is no non-circular way in which they can help themselves to Parfitian criteria for q-memories. Reductionists can hold that as long as the criteria are met, there are persons; absent the criteria being met, the complexes concerned would not be persons any more (since persons simply consist of complexes that meet the criteria). But non-reductionists want persons to be irreducible, and therefore cannot tolerate criteria under which they might cease to exist if the criteria are not met. Put another way, irreducible personhood cannot be dependent on the Parfitian criteria for q-memories, because being a person must precede the having of memories. If that is the case, then transplanted memories do threaten non-reductionist accounts of persons as rich bearers of psychological properties. (It would not threaten a theory in which selves were not individuated by psychological content, which includes memory; but it is difficult to see how such a minimal self was a person. The individuation of *ātman* in Nyāya is formal – there just is a plurality of such entities, but they are not distinguishable through any of the properties of personhood. I cannot here offer a critique of some

contemporary Western dualist theories in which there are minimal persons.) This will have a significant bearing on our study of the Hindu arguments from memory.

In his book, Parfit contrasted his view with Buddhists, whom he took to be eliminativists; although he later recognised that they too might be reductionists like him. It was this initial comparison between reductionism of persons in Western philosophy and Buddhism[8] that led to a wider general view amongst Western philosophers that Buddhism offered a parallel to Parfitian reductionism. The most sustained exploration of the possible parallel, and the consequent implication that reductionism of personal identity is a critique of Hindu theories of *ātman*, is possibly Mark Siderits's *Personal Identity and Buddhist Philosophy: Empty Persons* (2003). A consideration of some of his arguments allows us to move on to a closer look at the use of memory in support of their respective theories of *ātman* by two Hindu schools.

Self, Person and the Memory Argument: Comparing Mīmāṃsā and Nyāya in the Western Philosophical Context

Mark Siderits tackles the relationship between self and person[9] by saying that a psychophysical complex as a whole is the person, and the one extra part of it that constitutes the core or essence of the system is the self. If that is the case, then 'the self is what, in some sense, "makes me who I am, *me*"'. His view is that 'the theory of the self is meant to serve as a theory about the existence of persons'. He takes this to apply as much to Cartesian non-reductionism as to Nyāya or Advaita.[10] Although he does not mention *ātman*, it is clear that this is what he is referring to when talking of these Hindu theories of self.

Siderits appeals to Parfit's argument that diachronic unification of experiences and memories can be seen as states of information appropriately handed on from one impermanent mental component to another, in order to conclude that Hindu uses of recognition on behalf a permanent self do not work.[11] Memory transplants cannot be blocked by non-reductionist theories about persons. Parfitian reductionism about

persons uses criteria for q-memories and other robust causal connections that non-circularly explain the ordinary stability of persons. If such criteria are not met, a psychophysical complex will simply not be seen to constitute a person; for, after all, persons are reducible constructs out of facts regarding a psychophysical complex, when that complex meets certain criteria. The Parfitian account constructs persons out of q-memories (and other appropriate causal connections), and therefore holds that persons are simply such constructs and not any further fact about entities. The Parifitian account therefore rejects the view that claims that there must be a pre-existent person who ties memories together.

It seems reasonably clear that Buddhists are reductionists about persons. By interpreting the *ātman*-self as the essence of a person and suggesting that the Buddhist reduction of person therefore extends to the *ātman*-self, Siderits in effect reads the Buddhist reduction of persons as the Buddhist refutation of *ātman*.

Since this characterisation of the relationship between self and person is the foundation of his utilisation of Parfitian person-reductionism for the Buddhist critique of *ātman*, we should first check whether it applies to the Indian schools discussed in this chapter.

It seems to me that this is a fair description of Kumārila Bhaṭṭa's exposition of the Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṃsā position. Kumārila subscribes to the notion of an eternal *ātman*, but poses a question to himself: if the *ātman* were eternal, it would not be liable to change (*vikārya*) through happiness and sorrow, but then how could it be an agent (*kartṛtva*) or enjoyer (subject of experience) (*bhoktṛtva*)? And if agency and the appearance of experiences such as pain did change it, how could it be eternal?[12] His reply is that the *ātman* is not eternal, in the sense that it is indeed marked by change or modification. The link between action and the enjoyment of its result is due to the persistence of self across such changes as from childhood to youth. His definition of the *ātman* is as follows: 'According to me, a man, while going through the states of happiness, sorrow and the like, never gives up the character as a conscious, substantive existent.'[13] He goes on to say that agency and experience do not belong to the transient states or stages (*avasthā*) of a life, but to the person (*pumān*), who is the underlying reality or substrate (*tattva*) of those states. Any particular state does not then completely get destroyed with the passage of its time; instead, 'in qualitative accordance' (*anuguṇatvāt*) – that is, in keeping with causal

regularity – with succeeding states, it adheres (*līyate*) to the *ātman* that is common to all the states.[14] So it seems right to take his *ātman*-self to be the core of what makes a person that person. The continuous essence of the transient states of the psychophysical complex is the self; the self carries the individuating features of the person.

But it is not so clear that Nyāya fits Siderits's description. And if it does not, then his rejection of its use of memory in support of a non-reductionist theory of self will not look so well motivated. Siderits might, of course, have other ways of establishing that the Buddhist could explain recognition and the like without resorting to any diachronically unified core, whether it be richly individuated persons or a minimal *ātman*-self; but my point here is that the criticism in his book of such a position as Nyāya's crucially requires the use of Parfitian arguments, and I will argue that Nyāya's theory of *ātman* cannot be refuted by simply applying a Parifitian strategy. Furthermore, it will enable me to make the case that the Nyāya use of memory, while certainly anti-reductionist about *ātman*, does not concern personhood, and is therefore not vulnerable to transplanted memory and the like. What it establishes is a diachronic continuity too minimal for personhood but robust enough for *ātman*. A Buddhist reductionist explanation for experience of recognition and the like without *ātman* is then put under pressure. Let us recall the argument at the beginning of this chapter: at least in Nyāya, but not Mīmāṃsā, the self is distinguished from the person. Given Siderits's characterisation of the former as the essence of the latter in the specific sense that a theory of the former is a theory of the latter, such that the individuation of the latter is given by the terms in which the former is described, let us assess whether this way of looking at self and person applies to Nyāya.

The *locus classicus* for the Nyāya statement of the difference between person and self is given by Vātsyāyana, when he says:

> 'I am (x)' is the delusion of the I-formation (*ahaṃkāra*). When what is not self is seen as what 'I truly am', that is called the I-formation. What then is the collection of things that forms the content of the I-formation? The body, the senses, the mind, feelings and intellect.[15]

Udayana is certainly in agreement with this view.[16] He states that the self which is 'conditioned' (*sopādhi*) by body, senses, mind and feelings should be discriminated from the unconditioned (*nirupādhi*) self, because the

former is the causal ground (*hetu*) of suffering.[17] So, for Nyāya, it is clear that while there is an intimate connection, the theory of self is precisely not a theory of person; rather, personhood must be analysed so that the truths of the theory of self – including its fundamental metaphysical difference from all the phenomena of personhood – can be realised. The *ātman* that is left over in analysis is a purely formal entity, individuated just through the fact of being a separate non-physical substance with the capacity for unifying all states of consciousness that it undergoes, with all actual individuating features coming only through the specificity of the psychophysical complex and its social relationality. (The *ātman* is never found except as a person; but being a person is not what the *ātman* ultimately is.) Incidentally, in the analysis (although, of course, not the gnoseological framing), it resembles Zahavi's interpretation of Husserl's distinction between every possible subject that has only a peculiar mineness (*Meinheit*) and the proper individuality of the person found in social life. The former is a self but not a person as such, while the latter is the personal self.[18]

It should be noted that what has been described here is not akin to the Featureless Cartesian View described by Parfit.[19] On this view – indeed, like Nyāya – who I really am is an immaterial substance. But this substance that is free of psychology is supposed to provide my essential identity as a person. From this flow many problems, the chief of which is that personal identity can be tracked only through body and psychological states, by identifying continuity between one state and another; without these states, it becomes impossible to see how personal identity is located in a non-physical substance. But it should be clear that Naiyāyikas deny precisely that personal identity belongs to *ātman*; they are emphatic that personal identity requires the psychophysical complex and relationality. (For Descartes, the soul or mind is the essential Descartes; for Nyāya, Udayana's *ātman* is certainly not Udayana, for Udayana can only be, when alive, the psychophysical complex animated by the *ātman*.) The Nyāya *ātman* has a purely formal – non-personal – identity; it is not phenomenologically accessible, and is the remainder left from an analysis of our subjectivity. So when Siderits argues against the Cartesian nonreductionist claim that the *cogito* is a particular perceptual awareness of a self by saying, 'the awareness of particular mental states is too thin an inferential base for proving a self',[20] it will depend on what kind of a self is sought to be proven thus. No person – no being with an experientially available individuality –

can indeed be found. But Nyāya would not seek to prove such an entity. All the *cogito* argument can do is show that there is a conscious presence here. It requires another argument for that presence being non-momentary, for being persistent. The argument from recognition is meant to fulfil that task. In short, only a non-personal *ātman* could possibly be established in this way, and it would indeed be too thin for personhood.

The much better parallel would be Kant, at least on an interpretation with which I am sympathetic. Pierre Keller has argued that:

> the key to a proper understanding of the thesis [held by Kant] that our experience is subject to the demands of self-consciousness is a proper understanding of the fundamentally impersonal character of our representation of self. We have an impersonal or transpersonal representation of self which is expressed in our use of the expression 'I' to refer to ourselves. When each of us refers to him- or herself by means off the expression 'I', each of us refers to him- or herself in a way that could, in principle, apply to any one of us. This is the basic, minimal, idea that Kant tries to express with his notion of transcendental consciousness.[21]

Kant distinguishes this 'I think' as pure or original apperception, a notion he contrasts with empirical apperception:

> The capacity to say 'I think' with respect to diverse possible representations that I could regard as mine is the basis of our consciousness of self-identity .... It is only on the basis of that general representation of self-identity that we are then able to represent our individual identity.[22]

This means that, for Kant, the accompanying 'I think' is what provides diachronic unity between what he calls representations. This formal unity can exist even in the absence of personal identity, which latter is given by empirical apperceptions. Of course, Kant does not then claim that the identity found in empirical apperception is gnoseologically misleading, as Nyāya does.

We can say that the *cogito* only provides the presence of the 'I think' in a way that is simply not sufficient for personal identity. Despite the many differences of concern, such a Kantian view does resemble the Nyāya notion of *ātman*. (Incidentally, contemporary interpreters have tried to preserve a Kantian account stripped of his commitment to a noumenal self, the self-in-itself that is required for the unity of the 'I think' but is never available in experience. This noumenon bears some resemblance to the

Nyāya notion of an *ātman* that is the substratum of self-consciousness, the 'I think' (*ahaṃpratyaya*), but is never experienced on its own, since all experience is through the empirical conditions provided by the psychophysical complex that forms personal identity.)

My claim that at least Nyāya is not so vulnerable has to be looked at in the context of Siderits's development of the Parfitian rejection of memory as an argument for a pre-existing person. Siderits maintains that Buddhists go beyond Parfit to claim that this 'felt need for an observer self that fuels the diachronic unification argument is the product of a powerful illusion fostered by our use of the convenient designator "person"'.[23] Since we have seen that Nyāya itself emphasises that 'person' is indeed only a designator (an inconvenient one, gnoseologically speaking), this diagnosis does not seem right. Siderits also says that for the Buddhist, '"person" is a mere convenient designator for a complex causal series of impermanent, psychophysical elements'.[24] But Nyāya does not disagree, so clearly the latter's use of the memory/recognition argument cannot be the same as that of the Western anti-reductionist about persons.

Kumārila Bhaṭṭa on the Personal Self and Recognition

John Taber has demonstrated how Kumārila's argument is that a persistent self is recognised in memory; he does this by drawing on the Mīmāṃsā theory of selfrecognition. He has also pointed out how Kumārila's position is similar to Butler and Reid: self-recognition is a criterion for ascertaining whether two person stages are of one person. (This is in contrast to Locke, who thought that remembering makes one person stage the same person as another stage.[25]) It is precisely this argument for person (or at least, a personality-laden *ātman*) that I want to examine now.

Let us start with Kumārila's initial concern: 'While, with regard to other objects, memory and recognition may be due to impressions [that is, just appropriate connections between prior and later psychological states], recognition of the cognising subject is difficult to be got [through impressions alone].'[26] The objective side of recognition can be explained: the content of a cognition of a mango at t1 can recur in a cognition at t2 if

the sensory impression of it is sufficiently causally connected with the cognition at t2. In other words, appropriate linkages through impressions can connect the cognition of the mango at t1 with the cognition of the mango at t2. But these connections are not sufficient to explain the way the subject of the cognitions is recognised, as in 'I saw the mango at t1 and I see it again now, at t2.' There is no impression of 'I' at t1 that can perform the task of being causally connected to the 'I' at t2 in such a way as to permit that very 'I' to attribute identity between itself at t1 and at t2. What is the cogniser involved diachronically? Kumārila thinks that the 'I' in the 'I know' (for example, that I see at t2 the mango I saw at t1) must refer to a knower, and epistemic subject (*jñātṛ*), and although he concedes that it could be just a momentary cognitive state (*vijñāna*), he says it must in fact be the substrate (*ādhāra*), which, for him, is the person (*pumān*).[27] He argues that momentary states cannot add up to a person because, in order to say truthfully 'I knew x' at t2, the same 'I' must have been able to say 'I know x' at t1. If the 'I' at t1 and t2 are not the same, then 'I knew x', which identifies the 'I' at t2 with the 'I' at t1, would be false. This makes no headway against a Buddhist who wants to say that 'I'-usage is indeed false since the 'I' is an illusion, but it does illustrate the anti-revisionary commitment that motivates Kumārila's anti-reductionism. As he maintains later, the sense of 'I' (*ahaṃpratyaya*) is never mistaken, because it is never corrected by some subsequent cognition.[28]

Kumārila considers what would happen if the 'I' at t1 and the 'I' at t2 were not taken as referring to the same person, but linked merely by having the common character of being knowers (*jñātṛtvasāmānya*): then, 'even within other embodied persons, in the cognitions of all, we would remember the "I"'.[29] Here, Kumārila contemplates what would happen if the past and present cognitions – 'I knew (at t1) x', 'I, who knew (at t1) x, know now (at t2) x' and 'I, who knew (at t1) x, know (at t2) y' – were not cognitions of the same subject, but simply causally connected first-person cognitions. He decides that without the prior commitment to a single subject of these cognition, if the cognitions themselves were to construct the subject through some causal connections, those connections could cut across persons as we know them. My cognition, at t2, 'I saw x at t1,' might actually relate to your cognition at t1, 'I see x.' He acknowledges that the connections between the two cognitions could be strengthened by saying they have to occur within a phenomenal stream (*saṃtānā*); but that would

still only relate x at t1 with x at t2 without showing why the first-person ascription is experienced as of the same 'I'; for it would not capture the difference between my cognition, 'I see x,' and the cognition 'inside' another embodied being (*dehāntarajñāne*) of 'I saw x.'[30] In other words, if no prior appeal is made to persons and their capacity to recognise themselves as the subjects of memories, there is the threat that memories could jump across entities constructed impersonally, and play havoc with our normal experience of persons. This line of reasoning is striking. There are two ways of looking at it.

One is to think that Kumārila is saying that if the connection between cognitions is what constitutes an 'I', that recognition could promiscuously connect what we normally take to be different people. But this is precisely what a Parfitian reductionist (or a neo-Lockean theorist of personal identity) would see as a possibility that has to be entertained (for example, with massive memory transplants or fission or other forms of survival in which normal intuitions about persons are violated); indeed, this is exactly why metaphysical theories of presupposed persons are problematic. Presumably, so would a Buddhist momentarist. In effect, Kumārila supports his view by saying that the alternative is a consequence that threatens his view! This might be due to the anti-modal thinking of the classical Indians, where the fact that persons are the way they are is protected against how they might be, rather than the modality of thought-experiments in which how persons might be is meant to inform how we think of persons as they are. In any case, it seems clear that Kumārila's position is constrained by his commitment to persons as the actual realisation of *ātman*s, for he makes no attempt whatsoever to suggest that persons are mistaken 'I'-formations. As such, he himself appears to suggest the very possibility (transplanted or non-q-memories) that threatens his theory of self!

Quite another way of approaching this matter is to say, with John Taber: 'For Kumārila, at least, it is not trivial and uninformative to say that you are the person whose experiences you remember.'[31] Remembering an experience entails that it is your own, because a self-recognition is involved in having that memory. From this perspective, it is Parfit who begs the question, since, while it is formally conceivable that a memory can be transplanted, it is not clear how he can assume that that will then result in the person with the transplanted memory remembering it as another person (and thereby losing purchase on personal identity). If memory requires the

recognition of who is having it, then it must be psychologically impossible for Parfitian transplants to take place. Seen in this way, Kumārila's clinching argument is right. It is simply absurd to think that one person can become another through having the latter's memories: not because they would not become the other person through transplants, but because the very idea of a transplant is incoherent in supposing that memories can be detached from the self-recognition of the person who has them.

Udayana and the Formal Self that is to be Established in Recognition

So it may be the case that Kumārila can defend himself through strongly tying memories with self-recognition (that is, recognition as to who is having the memory being intrinsic to the memory occurring).[32] But in any case, Udayana takes a different line because, I contend, Udayana's theory of *ātman* is not about personal identity. He takes consciousness of the self to take the form of the 'I think' (*ahaṃpratyaya*) or the '"I"-notion' (*aham iti vikalpa*).[33] He will argue – from recognition – that simply interconnected impressions (*vāsanā*s) cannot explain the connection between cognition at t1 ('I see x') and cognition at t2 ('I saw x') that constitutes recognition. But what can? Udayana says: 'perception or its [mere] appearance' (*pratyakṣa tatābhāsau vā*)[34] – that is, either through veridical or erroneous perception:

> If it [the consciousness of the self, the 'I'] arises through perception of the self, then it is immediately of its object [the self]; if it is through erroneous perception, then, as it has somewhere its object [the self] as its basis, [it is consciousness of the self] intermediately.[35]

It would not matter if what is remembered is erroneous, for example through a memory transplant. Clearly, what is got at through such erroneous states cannot be the person: if an old Maitra did not climb mountains in his youth but (through a wide set of causally connected transplants, say) remembers that he did, then his identity as a mountain-climber is mistaken, and he is, literally, not the person he thinks he is. So what sense of self is involved such that the erroneousness is not the point?

Udayana's point goes to a deeper and less obvious sense of self. To get at it, let us ask ourselves a question: what is it to say that a memory is transplanted from Caitra (who climbed the mountains) to Maitra? It comes into the phenomenal range of some other consciousness. That other consciousness cannot be determined as having a personal identity, since either (1) that identity is being constituted by memories, so there is no non-circular way of making a difference between Caitra and Maitra; or (2) personal identity determines what is remembered, which means personal identity is rendered incoherent (or, as Kumārila might say, impossible to be messed with by transplants). So, what makes it intuitively obvious (for us, although it would not for Kumārila) that a transplant has occurred is that some other unified consciousness takes the memory of mountain-climbing into its contents. If the transplant was such that Caitra has it taken out of his memory and no longer remembers his exploits, then, again, we can only say that another unified consciousness has lost that memory from its contents. In one case, a subject connection is gained, and in another, lost. This is coherent; indeed, without it, it makes little sense to even say that a memory has been transplanted, if we take memory as having intrinsic phenomenality. (An eliminativist could say that transplants are mere physical movements, like kidneys, and therefore merely movement of some neural set from one body to another.) Maitra's personal identity will be radically altered by 'remembering' something that did not actually happen to the bodily being called Maitra. False memories are indeed relevant for personal identity, as they can alter them. But, for the identity that Udayana is talking about – the unity provided by being in the consciousness of an *ātman* – error is irrelevant. What has happened is that the memory has been put into one unified consciousness and taken out of another.

In order to see what is happening here, let us draw on the powerful lessons of a science-fiction scenario imagined by Barry Dainton, which can disentangle two different sorts of continuities. Someone enters a virtual environment in which their original psychology, down to memories, beliefs, intentions, personality traits and so on, is removed and instantaneously (without experience of pause) replaced with a completely new psychology (a Second World War submarine commander). Dainton suggests that without interrupting the flow of experience, the previous life would disappear and all the phenomenal novelty of fighting in the ocean would carry on. After being that person, when the adventure ends, there is a

reverse replacement and the experience of being the original (or actual) person lying on the bed at the start of the trip resumes. In Nyāya, the gamer could be Caitra and the submarine commander Maitra. The parallel now becomes clearer.

Setting aside its plausibility, Dainton argues that the point is that it seems intuitively clear that there is continuity to consciousness across the experiences, despite the absence of psychological continuity. He concludes that it is the continuity of consciousness that makes for the self or subject, rather than continuity of psychology.[36] This is a point as much against a non-reductionist as a Parfitian reductionist of persons, for personal identity is interrupted on either account. Whether persons are real or only fictions, psychological connections using (even q-) memory have problems in delivering on our intuitions of continuity.

It seems to me that persons do not survive when their psychologies are changed thus; but if the self is understood as the diachronic subject of the phenomenal flow, that self does. Any recognisable notion of personal identity would cease to exist when the virtual gamer ‘becomes’ the submarine commander, but the continuity of the phenomenal flow, that is the mark of the consubjectivity of consciousness under the different psychologies, points to some other unity; Udayana would say that was the unity of the *ātman*. If what is important for diachronic persistence is not personal identity but the persistence of a formal subject, the ‘I think’ that accompanies a stream of consciousness and thus phenomenally unifies it, the phenomenal continuity between past and present suffices to present this more minimal unity. It is the fact of diachronic persistence rather than its memorycontent that is relevant to this conscious self, because personal identity is disrupted through changes in content, but the only way of making sense of continuity is through phenomenal unity.

I would like to suggest that Nyāya uses recognition only to show phenomenal continuity and the consubjectivity of the subject of the original experience and the subject of recognition. If *ātman* is not about the psychological concept of personal identity (and personal identity cannot be anything else, contra the Featureless Cartesian View), if, too, for Nyāya, the constructed nature of person is not in question, then we have to ask how it could be using recognition to establish personal identity against the Buddhists. Buddhists have to offer further analyses of how the unity of consciousness can also be broken down, and equally, Nyāya has to offer

inferential arguments about continuity through any phenomenal gaps – but that is not about memory, and therefore outside the remit of this chapter.

Note that we have to bracket the Nyāya claims for a particular non-physical self that is the metaphysical substrate of such unified consciousness. Udayana recognises that there has to be a separate argument for the existence of such a single self as has the unified consciousness as its quality. His first concern is to show the persistence of a unified consciousness against the momentarist theory of specious instants of awareness, by drawing on recognition. In other places in this chapter of the *Ātmatattvaviveka*, Udayana strives to distinguish his view from Advaita, by saying that an *ātman* cannot be just the unity of consciousness, as Advaita claims, but a substratum which possesses the quality of consciousness. The unity provided by the persistence of 'I think' across cognitions (what Kant would call original apperception), according to Nyāya, is possible only because there is a formal self who is the 'I'. But that further argument is not the concern of this chapter. Here, Udayana simply assumes that the unity of consciousness is given by consciousness being that of a substratum self, the 'basis' of perceptions and other cognitions, veridical or erroneous; but we will only concentrate on his argument that there is a unified consciousness in the first place.

Udayana states that recognition (*pratisaṃdhāna/pratyabhijñā*) is proof of this *ātman*-self. But he acknowledges his Buddhist opponent's point that 'mere recognition' (*pratyabhijñānamātraṃ*) is insufficient, as there can be illusions of continuity as with a single flame being seen as a continuous circle when it is swiftly moved in that shape. Rather, recognition should be understood as 'a strict regulation of cause and consequence within a stream of consciousness'.[37] In short, a recognition (it should be remembered, even erroneous ones) holds between what, to follow Dainton and others, we can aptly translate as 'co-streamal' (belonging to the same *saṃtānā*) as long as there is a regularity to it. Udayana explains that recognition is provided by 'the certitude of the prior and later cognitions having the same agent'.[38] There must therefore be a phenomenal tie between the cognition at t1 and the cognition at t2. We can call it the consubjectivity of the two cognitions, and that is what constitutes recognition. When two cognitions belong to the same stream of consciousness, they are united by a phenomenality that includes the sense (the certitude) of belonging to the same agent, the 'I' that accompanies the cognitions of that stream.

Udayana argues that recognition cannot be replicated by just stipulating material causal connections (*upādāna*) between the cognition at t1 and the cognition at t2. Without presuming that there are two distinct consubjective streams, each with its own unity of consciousness, there is no non-circular way of saying why the cognitions of a teacher cannot be remembered by the student, for after all, there may be causal connections between them; that is to say, there is no way of saying that some causal connections – such as those between teacher and student – are not sufficient without referring to the distinct subjective streams of each.[39] He goes on to argue that consubjectivity cannot be delivered just by material bodily connections, as bodily conditions change over time: in this he is focusing on the sense of self being something about consciousness, rather than about bodily continuity. In the Indian equivalent of Dainton's virtual lives, Udayana considers such radical disjunctions of experience as happen between lives (as his Buddhist opponents also accept a cycle of lives, although disagreeing on what goes through different births). He points out that the unity of streams of consciousness cannot be delivered through psychological connections, as a baby would then remember the taste of mother's milk from a previous life, whereas we know that it does not.[40] (This example, by the way, drives home the possibility that the presupposition of rebirth allowed philosophers such as the Naiyāyikas to peel away the formal identity of the *ātman* from the psychological connections of personal identity.)

Let us see the Nyāya position as a whole. The *ātman* is the 'I' of the formal 'I think' (*ahaṃpratyaya*). This 'I think' is unconditioned (*nirupādhi*) in that it is simply what is present in all self-consciousness, across all cognitions. That is to say, it is the consciousness present in all the states that are experienced (seen, felt, willed). This 'I' is also inferred from such experience as recognition, in that it is noticed in consciousness that the 'I' is persistent from 'I see x' at t1 to 'I saw x' at t2, howsoever short the interval between t1 and t2. The content of experience, however, is always 'I think (feel/will) that x' – that is, not the formal unity of presence described above, but the 'I' in relation to specific phenomena: the seeing of the apple, the liking of apples, the will to buy some, and so on. In experience, the 'I' is always conditioned (*upādhi*), and those conditions, over long periods of time, are what constitute the 'I-formation' (*ahaṃkāra*) – that is, together they form who 'I' takes itself to be, a person (a self with a personality). This

formation is characterised by its own specific features, which individuates it from any other I-formation.

Recognition for Nyāya is not about establishing that there is a person who links past and present, because Nyāya grants that those links are constructed out of contingent events – what I saw, desire, remember, the bodily changes that occur to me (and, in common with Buddhists, the dispositions formed of traces from previous lives). Instead, recognition is meant to make clear that whatever is actually remembered (even if erroneously, even if across very short periods of time), the link between cognition at t1 and cognition at t2 is possible only because the 'I think' persists between the two. In short, it is the unity of consciousness between contingent cognitions that renders recognition possible at all. For Udayana, this connection between cognitions through the 'I think' requires an 'I' that refers to a substratum self which has consciousness as a quality. It is this self which has the capacity to think 'I'-thoughts, in each of which a persistent 'I' provides the diachronic unity to a phenomenal stream. In this chapter, I do not seek to defend this further claim; indeed, I think it cannot be defended. I only want to say that if the argument for the diachronic unity of consciousness in recognition works, it can, at most, be tied to such a minimal and formal self of such consciousness as Nyāya's *ātman*, and not a richer sense of self, a self with personal identity. If phenomenal unity points to subject unity,[41] then that subject is at most an abstract, formal *ātman*, and not a person.

We can use Udayana's line of thought to address Galen Strawson's recent argument that brain-lesion patients show that no self persists diachronically.[42] Strawson argues that subjects who suffer thus have only short-term memory, which breaks psychological continuity with their past, but at each moment they show self-experience – that is, experience of themselves as a locus of consciousness. It is just that this sense of self does not persist. Interestingly, Udayana first argues that there is a self, but says that it is still to be determined whether such a self is of the nature of a series of cognitions (*saṃtanyamānajñānarūpaḥ*) or something more.[43] Strawson says of such people that they 'lack any significant sense of themselves ... as persisting, as having long-term diachronic continuity', although 'they use "I" as well as any of us, and there is no reason to think that they must lack self-experience'.[44] But suppose we thought of these patients as akin to Dainton's gamers, who clearly have phenomenal continuity within some set

of cognitions (Strawson talks of examples where patients converse with visitors or play checkers), but utter ruptures of memory. Udayana's argument applies only to the fact of recognition (such as – to use one of Strawson's examples – moves within a game of checkers) – that is, the usage of the 'I', which Strawson admits the patients use as well as anyone else. The very fact that we can talk of these subjects lacking the memory of the past (as opposed to our lacking a memory of their past) indicates that there is some persistence across the phenomenality of these subjects. While it may be true that some sense of themselves is indeed missing, we could say that what is missing is a great deal of personal identity. But it seems much more difficult, in the light of our considerations and Strawson's own account of what the patients do retain, to deny that the minimal, phenomenal, 'I'-indexed sense of self does indeed persist. For Udayana, that would be enough.

There is much more to Udayana's arguments in this chapter of the *Ātmatattvaviveka*, but I have concentrated on just those moves that illustrate my general point, that the debate over *ātman* is largely one about an austere conception of unified consciousness, in the case of Nyāya, associated with a formal and minimal conception of selfhood. Consequently, the argument from recognition cannot be about personal identity, but about this unified consciousness. In this chapter, I have not tried to show how Nyāya argues, further, for the claim that unified consciousness is a quality of a formal self, for that takes us away from the use of recognition towards a debate with Advaita Vedānta, which also uses the argument from recognition for the unity of consciousness but denies that there is an individual and formal self which is the bearer of such consciousness. And, of course, within the Nyāya-Buddhist debate itself, Udayana has more to say about how causal connections between cognitions alone cannot deliver the appropriate sense of consubjectivity between different instances of 'I think' and how a single self as the substratum of the phenomenal self presents itself in streams of consciousness. What I have done is to argue that whatever such unified consciousness as Nyāya supports through appeal to recognition is, it has to be some much more formal and minimal self than the richer, individuated person about whom the Western debates over memory are concerned.

[1] Apart from the participants in the ‘Self: Hindu Responses to Buddhist Critiques’ conference, I would like to thank Mark Siderits for his comments on this chapter. Needless to say, we continue to disagree on the strengths of our respective arguments.

[2] See *Visuddhimagga* (2003) ch. XIV on the ‘aggregates’ – although written in the fifth century CE, it develops much earlier doctrines.

[3] I do not deal with synchronic unity in Nyāya, as dealt with by Ganeri (2000).

[4] Miri Albahari’s interpretation of consciousness in Early Buddhism does not accept this. According to her, while a single substantial subject is of course denied in the Pāli canon, a unified consciousness or persistent subjectivity, a witness-consciousness, is affirmed. She agrees that this looks remarkably like the later Advaitic interpretation of the Upaniṣadic *ātman*; see Albahari (2006).

[5] John Locke (1694), ‘Of Identity and Diversity’, in *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, reprinted in Perry (1975: 33–52, 39ff).

[6] Shoemaker (1970).

[7] See Parfit (1984): for the first requirement, pp. 205–6, for the second, pp. 219–23.

[8] Giles (1997) appears to have developed the same idea independently.

[9] Siderits (2003: 17–18).

[10] Nyāya: ibid., p. 19; Advaita: ibid., p. 22.

[11] Ibid., pp. 22–4.

[12] *Ślokavārttika* (1993) 5.18 (*ātmavāda*) 20–21. All verses refer to this section.

[13] ‘sukhaduḥkhādyavasthāśca gaccannapi naro mama / caitanyadravyasattādirūpaṃ naiva vimuñcati’.

[14] Verse 29.

[15] ‘aham asmīti moho’haṃkāreti. anātmānaṃ khalv aham asmīti paṣyato dṛṣṭir ahaṃkāreti. kiṃ punas tadarthajātaṃ yadviṣayo ’haṃkāraḥ. śarirendriyamanovedanābudd hayaḥ’; *Nyāyabhāṣya* (1939), introduction to *Nyāyasūtra* 4.2.1 [p. 288].

[16] However, Vātsyāyana is much less careful than Udayana about the relationship between memory and self, and I will therefore look only at the latter when considering the recognition argument later.

[17] *Ātmatattvaviveka* (1995) 377. Translations in this chapter are mine.

[18] Zahavi (2009).

[19] Parfit (1984: 228).

[20] Siderits (2003: 22).

[21] Keller (1998: 2–3).

[22] Ibid.: 72.

[23] Siderits (2003: 24).

[24] Ibid.

[25] Taber (1990).

[26] ‘smaraṇapratyabhijñāne bhavetāṃ vāsanāvaśāt / anyārthaviṣaye jñātuḥ pratyabhijñā tu durlabhā’; *ātmavāda*, v. 109.

[27] Verse 110.

[28] Verse 126b.

[29] ‘syād dehāntareṣv api tatra sarveṇa vijñāte bhavedaham iti smṛtiḥ’; vv. 122b–123a.

[30] Verses 123b–124a.

[31] Personal communication. I thank Taber for making this argument.

[32] This appears to be the thrust of Taber’s argument in Taber (1990).

[33] This is standard Nyāya practice: see Taber’s Chapter 6 in this volume.

[34] *Ātmatattvaviveka* (1995) 345.

[35] ‘tatrāyaṃ pratyakṣapṛṣṭabhāvitve sākṣāteva savastukaḥ tatābhāse tu mūle ’sya pāraṃparyāt savastutā iti’.

[36] Dainton (2008: 14–27).

[37] ‘kāryakāraṇyor eva saṃtānapratiniyamaḥ’: 348.

[38] ‘pūrva’paradhīyām ekakartṛtayā viniścayaḥ’: 349.

[39] ‘Even on the momentarist’s view, cause and effect cannot consist in some sortal identity between cognitions. If that were so, unfortunately, the cognitions of a teacher and student would not be different’ (‘kṣaṇikatver api na ekajātīyatve sati tadupapattir evaupādānaupādeya bhāvaḥ. śiṣyācāryadhīyām api tathābhāvaprasaṅgāt’): 349.

[40] Ibid.: 350.

[41] As argued by Bayne (2007: 207).

[42] Strawson (2009).

[43] *Ātmatattvaviveka* (1995) 357.

[44] Strawson (2009: 203).

Chapter 9
Action, Desire and Subjectivity in Prābhākara Mīmāṃsā[1]

Elisa Freschi

1. Introduction

What was the real content of Prābhākara Mīmāṃsā theories about the subject? In some sense, presenting the discussion as regarding a 'subject', a 'self', a 'person', a 'soul' and so on tends to influence one's appraisal of it even before one starts reading the texts.[2] At the end of this chapter, I will claim that Prābhākaras meant to establish one's phenomenological perception of oneself as a (moral, active, desiring and individual) person. For the time being and in order to avoid misunderstandings, I can begin by saying that the Prābhākara concept of subjectivity (in its broadest possible sense) seems distant from the *ātman* as consciousness discussed in Advaita Vedānta (see Fasching's Chapter 10 of this volume). Instead, the Prābhākara 'subject' bears individual character and is, therefore, closer to what we would call a 'person' (see Ram-Prasad's Chapter 8 in this volume). However, in contemporary analytic philosophy, the word 'person' is often employed to describe the subject without implying its distinction from the body. On this point in Prābhākara Mīmāṃsā, see the end of Section 4.1.

Prābhākara Mīmāṃsakas started their enquiry on the self out of concerns derived from their primary focus, the Veda, and then extended the scope of enquiry to the sphere of ordinary experience. At a later stage, they adopted and adapted views about the subject developed by other schools, for example Nyāya, but I will not deal primarily with them, since they may be better examined by specialists of these schools, while Mīmāṃsā (especially

Prābhākara) theories have until now received little attention from contemporary scholars. Interestingly, already Mīmāṃsā (both Bhāṭṭa and Prābhākara) authors did not focus primarily on the group of theories about the subject first elaborated by Nyāya and so on, as can be seen by the marginal position or absence (as far as I know) of such theories in most Mīmāṃsā works, from Śabara's to Pārthasārathi's, and from Maṇḍana's to Āpadeva's. Kumārila may constitute an exception, since he engaged in debates with his contemporaries and, hence, had to face them also on *their* own terms.

I will first present a short sketch of Prābhākara Mīmāṃsā views about the self, according to their historical origin, traceable in the enquiries on the Veda ('hermeneutical part', Section 2), and then try to read these views using the framework of Western philosophy (Section 3), and especially of the difference between an ontological (Section 4) and a phenomenological (that is, concerning the character of the experience, without ontological commitment) or practical (in Kant's sense) approach (Section 5). My main source in Prābhākara Mīmāṃsā is the work of Rāmānujācārya (fourteenth century CE?).[3]

Since Rāmānujācārya's exegesis of the Veda does not explicitly point to a phenomenology (or ontology) of the subject, at some points I will have to supply details in order to try to address further related points, and I will use the principle of charity – that is, I will try to build a coherent view out of his remarks. In order to do that, I will use whenever possible Rāmānujācārya's own works, and alternatively those of Rāmānujācārya's predecessor (and main source) Śālikanātha Miśra (eighth–ninth century CE?), of Prabhākara (seventh–eighth century CE?) himself, or of other Mīmāṃsā authors, such as Someśvara Bhaṭṭa (tenth century CE?).

2. Emergence of the Topic

Mīmāṃsakas began to look at the subject because of Vedic statements dealing with the agent of sacrifice (*yajamāna*).

From the Mīmāṃsā point of view, The subject enters the scene as a sacrificer. Mīmāṃsakas spent time and energy to identify him/her.[4] What did they have at their disposal to identify the *adhikārin* – the one who has

the right and who ought to sacrifice? Vedic statements dealing with desire, such as: ‘The one who is desirous of heaven should sacrifice’ (*svargakāmo yajeta*).

Hence, desire was the first candidate as the distinctive mark (*lakṣaṇa*) of the subject. Within their ritual hermeneutics, Mīmāṃsakas further speculated on the link between desire and initiation of action.

A significant step in this process is a statement by Śabara (before the fifth century CE), the author of the first extant commentary on the *Mīmāṃsāsūtra*:

> After [the prescription ‘The one who is desirous of heaven should sacrifice’] has made the one who is desirous of heaven responsible [for the sacrifice], it (the prescription) says ‘He should sacrifice’. In this way this distinctive mark of the responsibility is established.[5]

So there is a double condition – desire and Vedic injunction – which jointly make one responsible for the sacrifice.

Kiyotaka Yoshimizu correspondingly stresses the role of this statement in the process of identifying desire as the prerequisite of responsibility (*adhikāra*).[6] Prābhākara Mīmāṃsakas also linked desire with the fact of recognising oneself. In the case of the Veda, this amounts to recognising oneself as the one who has been enjoined (*niyojya*), and is linked with responsibility. Lastly, they regard the fact of being responsible for an act as the cause for one’s undertaking an action.[7] Hence the (indirect) link between desire and agent. According to Rāmānujācārya, whenever a Vedic passage says, for example, ‘The one who is desirous of heaven should sacrifice with the Full and New Moon Sacrifices’, whoever desires heaven feels addressed by that injunction (Stage 1: desirous subject) and cannot avoid identifying him- or herself as the subject to whom the injunction refers (Stage 2: enjoined subject). Hence, he/she understands that he/she is the one who is entitled to perform the sacrifice (Stage 3: responsible subject). Finally, he/she engages in the performance of the prescribed sacrifice (Final Stage: agent subject):[8]

> [Objection:] But how is it that there is no other way [besides using it as a specification for the prompted person[9]] to connect the result [to the prescription]? [Answer:] It must be replied:

> for instance, the one who is desirous of heaven (*svargakāma*) is firstly connected [to the prescription] as the enjoined one, insofar as he understands (*boddhṛ*) that 'I have to do (*kārya*) something I did not know about before [hearing this Vedic prescription] (*apūrva*)'. Thereafter, [he is connected] as the responsible one (*adhikārin*) since [he realises:] 'As the ritual act (*karman*) is an instrument to realise it (heaven), this act has to be performed by me for the sake of realising that'. The responsibility is the cognition of one's purpose in relation to the act [to be performed]. It corresponds to competence (*aiśvarya*). [Finally, one is connected] as an agent (*kartṛ*) when one performs it (the ritual act).
>
> Thus, the three stages (enjoined, responsible and agent) are the sequential [conditions] of only one [person] (i.e., the one who is desirous of heaven).[10]

So desire is the motive of (ritual) action. Indeed, there cannot be (ritual) action without desire. Moreover, desire operates directly on the (ritual) agent to be. In the following lines, Rāmānujācārya explains how a ritual agent is inconceivable without desire and how desire must necessarily be present in order to undertake an action. This is not just a restatement of Kumārila's well-known motto 'Without a motive, even a fool does not act' (*Ślokavārttika* (1978) *sambandhā* 55 ab), since desire is not just (as will be seen below) the motive of action, but rather the identificatory mark (*viśeṣaṇa*) of the agent. Without desire, the agent is not only inactive, but does not even exist as a subject.

Rāmānujācārya also elaborates further on the four stages mentioned above by considering them in reverse order, from the viewpoint of what is prescribed by the Veda. The core meaning of the Veda, according to Prābhākaras, is not something established (as in Vedānta), but rather something to be brought about. Since the Veda is an independent instrument of knowledge, it gives information which cannot be ascertained through any other instrument of knowledge.[11] Hence it is non-precedented (*apūrva*) by any of them. But even from the non-human point of view of the Veda, desire is necessary, because nothing can be brought about by itself. The Veda needs an agent for the realisation of its rituals; conversely, being an agent means being responsible towards an act, and in order to take responsibility for an act, one has to be enjoined to undertake it. And one feels enjoined because he/she desires the result mentioned in the enjoining prescription (see TR (1956) 4.10.4–5 [p. 58]).

2.1. The Role of Desire

All of this could have nothing to do with the general and Upaniṣadic concept of *ātman* if Mīmāṃsakas had not used their ritual categories to interpret also Upaniṣadic statements about *ātman*. This is a typical Mīmāṃsaka move, since Mīmāṃsakas were always keen to interpret Upaniṣadic statements in a ritual way. Hence, they maintained that the *ātman* the Upaniṣads refer to is nothing but the sacrificial agent.

Rāmānujācārya[12] also uses worldly examples of enjoined persons, such as 'The one who is desirous of a well-nourished condition should drink milk' and 'Devadatta, cook!'[13] Even in the realm of Vedic prescriptions, the kind of desire used by Mīmāṃsakas as a tool to identify the responsible subject, is a worldly passion (*rāga*), such as the desire for rain, cattle, a son.

However, the presence of desire is not directly responsible for the undertaking of action. Instead, in Prābhākāra Mīmāṃsā texts, desire is used just to identify the subject to which the injunction refers, while the main emphasis is on the injunction's content as something to be done.

The concept of injunction is, in fact, crucial to Prābhākara Mīmāṃsā hermeneutics. According to this school, the Veda is an instrument of knowledge (*pramāṇa*) because it imparts an injunction.[14] This injunction is called *niyoga*, and its content is called *apūrva* or *kārya*.

These terms refer to the fact that the Veda imparts a duty (*kārya*, 'something to be done'), which is altogether new (*apūrva*, 'non-precedented [through any other instrument of knowledge]') and has a deontic form (*niyoga*, 'injunction'). Hence, the duty does not exist unless in this prescriptive form.

The centrality of the injunction as the *artha* ('meaning' and 'purpose') of the Veda entails that the Veda is basically an order directed to its listeners, the enjoined ones. These are not merely listeners since, for the process from (Vedic) order to action to take place, one has to recognise the duty as one's own (this recognition is expressed with formulas such as '*mama idaṃ kāryam*'). This can only happen if the order speaks to the listener personally. This happens, Prābhākaras continue, if it concerns his/her desires. One feels that one ought to sacrifice, that the duty to sacrifice has been stated directly for oneself, only because one recognises oneself as the one for whom the injunction has been formulated.

Desire is therefore a necessary element for a human being to get involved in Vedic actions, as well as in worldly ones, since Vedic action is for

Prābhākaras the paradigm of all action.

2.2. Summing up the Prābhākara Mīmāṃsā View of the Self

The elements hinted at in Mīmāṃsā discussions about the subject can be broadly distinguished into two groups, namely statements about what the subject is, and statements about how it is known. To the first group (viewing the subject as a knowledge-content, a *prameya*) belong, for instance:

1. The subject desires (against Advaita Vedānta, Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika ...).
2. The subject is active (knowledge is considered as a kind of action[15]).
3. The subject is a continuously lasting entity, ensuring memory, self-recognition and so on.
4. The body is the instrument through which the subject experiences, therefore bodily movements are just a consequence of the subject's 'actions'.

To the second group (discussing the means of knowledge, the *pramāṇa*s, to know the subject) belong, for instance:

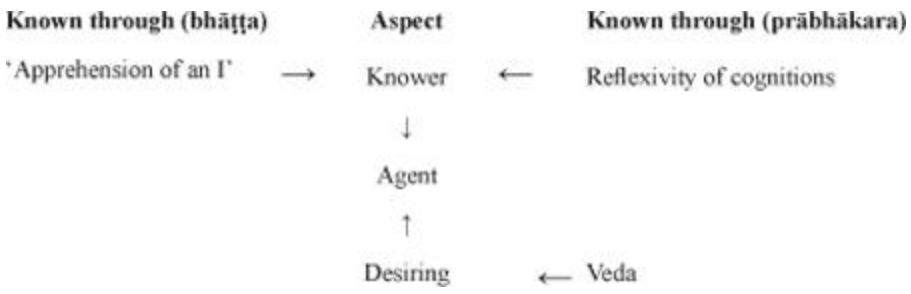
1. The subject becomes aware of itself through its desires.
2. The process of self-awareness is initiated by a Vedic statement (that is, through linguistic communication as an instrument of knowledge, *śabdapramāṇa*).
3. According to Kumārila, the subject is identical to the referent of 'I' and is hence grasped through the 'apprehension of an I' (*ahaṃpratyaya*) in every cognition linguistically expressed and featuring an 'I'.[16]
4. According to the Prābhākara Mīmāṃsā, the subject is known in every cognitive act through the act's reflexivity[17] (*saṃvitsvaprakāśa*).

Such statements refer to different aspects of the subject: the subject as knower, as agent and as emotional being. By 'knower', I mean the subject in so far as it undertakes an epistemological act (such as inferring,

pondering upon and so on), while I am excluding from it the subject in so far as it is aware of itself or of a component of itself, as it is the case when the desiring subject becomes aware of itself as a subject – a moment labelled as *boddhṛ* by Śālikanātha (see also the TR passage quoted in Section 2 above).

I am including in the emotional aspect both desire and experience – which could be further distinguished – since Prabhākara distinguishes between the condition of agent (*kartṛtā*) and that of experiencer (*bhoktṛtā*) with regard to *ātman*,[18] but does not further add desire as a distinct element.[19]

Let me now try to connect the two groups according to the two sub-schools of Mīmāṃsā:



The link of the desiring subject to the agent presupposes the intermediate step of the responsible subject. More importantly, here the agent aspect is seen by Prabhākara not as the core element, but as the result of a process initiated through the fact that one desires, and through his/her being enjoined and being responsible for the act. A mere doer (for instance, the sacrificer according to whose size the sacrificial *audumbarī* pillar is cut) is not a responsible person, and hence does not become aware of him/herself as a subject.[20]

2.3. Integration of the Three Aspects of Subjectivity

To sum up: the Prābhākara Mīmāṃsā subject did not emerge from an ontological discussion, but rather from hermeneutic concerns. More specifically, it emerged as the one referred to in prescriptions such as'The one who is desirous of heaven should sacrifice.' It owns desires and is

responsible for actions. Both desire and the undertaking of an action are directly grasped through one's inner awareness,[21] and one becomes aware of them once being enjoined. In other words, the subject becomes aware of him- or herself as a subject through an injunction which makes him/her aware of what he/she already was (a desirous one). Prior to the injunction the subject was not aware of him- or herself as a subject (we could compare her/him to a young child, who acts without being aware of her- or himself as an agent).

Hence, I think that this concept of a self does *not* describe a trascendental self, like Immanuel Kant's 'I think'. It is not postulated as a prerequisite to ground our theoretic approach. Rather, it gradually emerges out of one's perception of actions or desires in a process which is initiated by an injunction, and can rather be compared to Kant's concept of a person as linked to – or perhaps grounded by – the categorical imperative.

Rāmānujācārya's hermeneutic description of the process may be sketched as follows:



That is, the injunction causes one to become aware of one's desire. Here 'mine' or 'my' are not to be interpreted as possessive pronouns, since the substrate they stand for is still not established. They rather indicate a loose reference to a still indeterminate 'oneself': 'this desire is connected to /me/'.

In line with his overall approach, Rāmānujācārya did not insert the epistemological self within this process. However, one might speculate further: in order to study the Veda, one needs to acquire a specialist education. Since in any process of knowledge the cognitive act (*saṃvid*) is, according to the Prābhākaras, self-revealing, and since it reveals at the same time also the object known and the knower, one may imagine that the Vedic student is already acquainted with this knower-aspect when he/she first listens to a Vedic injunction – although he/she is probably not aware of it as co-referential with the subject's emotional and active aspects. Later, then, he/she becomes aware of him- or herself as an enjoined person, and eventually as responsible for the ritual action enjoined. In order to be

responsible for an action, one needs training (children, strangers, servants – *śūdra*s – and so on would never be held responsible for ritual actions, even if they overheard a prescription). Hence, the Vedic student is now in the position to integrate the knower-aspect he/she experienced already within his/her experience of him- or herself as an agent and a moral subject.

In sum, the knower-aspect, experienced while studying the Veda, is later integrated within one's experience of oneself as a desiring agent, since this experience presupposes the study of the Veda. Hence, one is reminded of one's experience of learning it and integrates the knower-aspect in the picture of the desiring-agent.

3. Two Readings of the Prābhākara Concept of the Subject: Ontological and Phenomenological

Now the problem is: how to interpret the above? In order to evaluate a theory, we need to know what kind of problems it addresses. Were the Prābhākara Mīmāṃsā views devised in order to build also an ontology, or just a phenomemology of the subject? Do they aim at the constitution of a practical 'person' as the bearer of a moral role?

As a matter of fact, a non-ontological approach represents the fundamental orientation in Prābhākāra philosophy, as shown by the Prābhākara account of the prescriptive character of the Veda. Prābhākaras say that the content of the Veda is always something to be realised and never something which is already there. Hence, it would not be correct to interpret Vedic statements along the lines of our descriptive (and realist) reading of language.

4. The Ontological Reading

In Prābhākara texts there are certainly several passages dedicated to the ontology of the subject (for instance, Śālikanātha Miśra's *Tattvāloka*, a chapter of his Prakaraṇa Pañcikā, PrP), but they are hardly original, and rather repeat (or adapt) arguments found in Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika and Bhāṭṭa

Mīmāṃsā texts about the distinction between body, mind, senses and *ātman*, about the way to know *ātman* and about its status once liberated.

But what about the concept of an active, desiring subject I highlighted above? Is this an ontological category or not?

In order to understand whether an ontology of the subject is meant, one could check whether the concept is able to address problems such as reductionism or the 'bundle of perceptions' theory. Against objections raised from these standpoints, one might have recourse to several classical Indian arguments in favour of the existence of a subject, most of which are endorsed also by Prābhākara authors. As for the role of the agent-desire argument within ontology, it may be used against physicalism if this is understood as a reduction of psychological states and properties to corresponding physical states and properties. In fact, it is relatively easier to identify a sensation with its physical correlate than to identify desire with a physical state. Moreover, the feeling of 'ownness' in desire represents a further challenge to the attempt to reduce the first-person experience to a third-person perspective (see Section 5.1 below).

4.1. Body and Subject: Embodiment as the Ontological Presupposition for a Phenomenological Self?

The body is an essential instrument of the subject, which can have experiences only through it. The link between the subject and the body is based on the former's *karman*. This link is, hence, necessary. The body is not a mass of material substances, but is the abode of experience.[22] Hence, Śālikanātha and Rāmānujācārya state that nothing like plant bodies exist, since plants are not able to experience anything.[23] Moreover, they also deny supernatural bodies (*ayonija*, literally 'not born from a womb'), since they are nowhere to be seen.[24] In a footnote to the PrP text, its learned editor explains that *ayonija* bodies are described in the Vaiśeṣika system (Vaiśeṣika Sūtra 4.2.5) and attributed to gods and *ṛṣi*s (superhuman creatures).

Whatever our contemporary view about that, it is noteworthy that in Prābhākara Mīmāṃsā the body, although sharply separated from the subject, does not exist independently of it. In short, Prābhākara Mīmāṃsakas hold a view akin to what Brian Garrett labels the

‘Intermediary view’ (between Cartesianism and reductionism) and attributes to John Locke. This view ‘holds that persons are psychophysical substances, which are necessarily embodied’ (Garrett 1998: 320).[25] In this connection it is worth remembering that Rāmānujācārya criticises the belief in a God exactly because in order to be omnipotent and omniscient, He must be able to act and experience. Hence, He *needs* to have a body, but His having a body leads to further logical problems (TR (1956) 4.9.4.5 [p. 55]). Moreover, the Veda is said to be *apauruṣeya* – that is, ‘not [the work] of a person’ – thus denying both a human author and God as its author. Hence, the nexus between personhood and embodiment is not contradicted by the existence of superhuman beings, because these are nowhere to be seen.

5. The Phenomenological Interpretation

I have stated above that the Prābhākara account of the prescriptive character of the Veda (Section 3) hints at a non-ontological orientation in the Prābhākāra philosophy.

Similarly, the link between subject and desire emerges not out of investigations into the ontology of the subject, but as the pragmatic consequence of its *Dasein* in the world (in this world, and not in all possible worlds).

In sum, a non-ontological approach to the topic of the ‘subject’ is plausible within the Prābhākara philosophy, although one hardly finds incontrovertible evidence for it.

In the present case, it might be suggested that the use of the term *ātman* tends to mark ontological argumentation, whereas the term *puruṣa* is employed in the more general sense of a ‘person’ – that is, in reference to the kind of beings we all identify with, without taking directly into account ontological issues such as their duration.

Moreover, the characteristics of activeness and desire seem interesting phenomenological marks to identify someone as a subject, and hence as someone who potentially has the right and also the responsibility (I am using both terms to translate *adhikāra*) to act. They seem even more phenomenologically oriented when one considers them from the point of view of what a subject thinks of itself. Indeed, for a subject, its being desirous is evident (that is, empirically certain[26]), whereas its ontological

structure (as distinct from mind and sense-faculties, to name just one example) is not.

Furthermore, the emphasis on the initiation of action and on desire may help to reframe in a phenomenological way the conundrum of the link between an immaterial subject and 'its' body, by showing that neither the former nor the latter exists separately. There is indeed nothing like a 'dead body'. A body exists, according to the Prābhākaras, only as the abode of experience. Similarly, experience is only possible in so far as one is embodied (see Section 4.1 above). Hence, experience is the threshold from which both are understood.

5.1. Is Desire Better than Cognition for Grounding a Phenomenological Subject?

But in what respect can desire and action be more suitable to connect one to one's body and to one's awareness of oneself as a subject than, for instance, consciousness and knowledge? 'Knowledge' can designate either the act of knowing something (and in this case it is included in action by Mīmāṃsakas, see Freschi forthcoming) or a general state of awareness (and in this case it is included in consciousness). This consciousness (*cit* or *sākṣijñāna*), abstracted from the act of knowledge and from its contents, is considered by many authors (both Indian and contemporary; see Fasching's Chapter 10 in this volume) as the inner nature of the self. It is, however, unsuitable as a connective link to a body, to a social world and to an individual subjectivity exactly because this consciousness is not intrinsically intentional (in Brentano's sense of 'directed to something else').

Knowledge as the act of knowing seems to be a better candidate. In fact, one might claim that the same opposition that holds between 'a desire' and 'my desire' could also distinguish 'a cognition' from 'my cognition'. Dan Zahavi argues in a similar vein:

> In contrast to physical objects which can exist regardless of whether or not they *de facto* appear for a subject, experiences are essentially characterised by having a subjective 'feel' to them, i.e., a certain (phenomenal) quality of 'what it is like' or what it 'feels' to have them (Nagel 1986: 15–16; Jackson 1982; James 1890: I/478). Whereas the object of my perceptual

> experience is intersubjectively accessible in the sense that it can in principle be given to others in the same way that it is given to me, my perceptual experience itself is only given directly to me. It is this first-personal givenness of the experience which makes it *subjective*. (Zahavi 2000: 60)

Within the Buddhist–Hindu polemics, Prābhākaras further contend (see *Tattvāloka*, PrP (1961) [p. 329]) that a knower separate from knowledge is (also ontologically?) necessary in order to distinguish various cognitive acts (with different knowers and contents). But a Buddhist Epistemologist might argue, it is enough to specify the time and space where this cognitive act takes place, instead of postulating the existence of the knowing subject.

The specification of time and space may not be as satisfactory in the case of desire, where different time and space still cannot explain the difference between ‘hunger’ and ‘my hunger’. In other words, the intentional contents of desire and effort seem to more directly involve the fact that one perceives them as related to oneself. In the case of cognition, one might abstract from one’s perception of a patch of blue the patch of blue as such and imagine it as not necessarily affected by the fact that *I* am perceiving it. In other words, although each cognition of mine is also affected in my experience by its having been experienced by me, the content of it could be abstracted from me as its cogniser.

One could go further and even imagine that a certain cognition’s content exists as an external object, independently of any cogniser whatsoever. Desire (and action?), on the other hand, is necessarily felt as one’s own, and its contents cannot have an external, subject-independent, existence. The content of desire cannot be conceived independently of a desirous one. To that, Prābhākaras add the (in their opinion) unavoidable transition from desire to the awareness of *oneself* as a desiring one, described above in Section 2.3.

Buddhist Epistemologists and Yogācāra authors speak, in this regard, of a ‘grasped-’ (*grāhya*) and a ‘grasper-’ (*grāhaka*) aspect of the act of desiring – that is, the desired object and the desiring one. The latter, however, is ultimately not distinguished from desire (and ultimately from consciousness) itself, thus divesting the awareness of *oneself* as the desirous one of any ultimate value.

In short, it is probably not by chance that on the one hand Buddhist Epistemologists (like Galen Strawson; see Strawson 1999: 14, and Strawson 2000) started with knowledge, deconstructing the necessity of a

knower independent of the act of knowing, and then expanded the argument to the field of desire, action and so on, where analogously only the act is deemed to exist. Rāmānujācārya, on the other hand, starts with desire, where the first-person perspective imposes itself as unavoidable on a phenomenological level, and then generalises the existence of a subject in action and knowledge (as a kind of action), arguing that there is something extra (*atiśaya*, TR II, p. 17) in 'my knowledge', which distinguishes it from 'a knowledge'. In fact, although it might be argued that 'mineness' comes in degrees (see Metzinger 2003: 302) or that it is delusory, it is hard to deny that there is a fundamental phenomenological difference between 'a desire' and 'my desire'. Consequently, it is hard to accept phenomenologically that nothing but the action of desire exists (and that the 'mine' part is just one of its components).

Lastly, desire has the peculiarity of involving a subject in the sequence referred to above (from desire to action, Section 2.3 above) and thus making him/her aware of his/her status of an active subject. In this respect, desire seems to occupy a crucial position in the Prābhākara account, since it is through desire that one becomes aware of being a subject according to the Prābhākara concept of the subject (active, desirous and so on).

5.2. What Kind of Awareness of Oneself Arises through a Vedic Prescription?

In sum, the Prābhākara account may primarily point to:

1. one's awareness of oneself as desiring, active, and so on;
2. the emergence of one's conception of oneself through the fact that one has been enjoined to do something;
3. the emergence of a social concept of the subject through its social role in sacrifice.

Points (2) and (3) explicitly echo the titles of two books on Emmanuel Lévinas.[27] No comparison to Lévinas has been attempted here, but from a Prābhākara standpoint his stress on God's command and on the second-person perspective as constitutive of the first-person perspective is indeed thought-provoking.

My underlying assumption is that the Prābhākara account of the subject as the enjoined one highlights, on a personal level, one's recognition of one's own desiring nature. On the other hand, on an external level, one's nature as a subject in its ethical and social dimension is constituted through one's being enjoined to sacrifice, and does not exist prior to hearing the injunction. As explained by Ian Kaplow, one's feeling of oneself (and even more so, of oneself as a subject) is not innate (Kaplow 2006: 72).

I am suggesting that according to Prābhākara Mīmāṃsā, this awareness of oneself as a subject first occurs through Vedic injunctions enjoining a desirous one to act.

Several authors, especially in the literature on phenomenology, have stressed the primitive character of intersubjectivity.[28] The world we experience, they argue, is not made of monads that later connect to each other. Rather, our *Dasein* in the world consists in an inter-subjective experience, out of which one can, at a later stage, isolate a single 'I' or 'Thou'. In this sense, the fact that the Prābhākara agent does not become aware of itself on its own is significant. It becomes aware of itself in so far as he/she is enjoined.[29] The Vedic prescriptions do not single him/her out of many with a 'Thou', but they identify him/her with his/her salient characteristic, namely, his/her desire for something. The Prābhākara agent is therefore, from its very beginning, part of a complex world of relations, with a text (as authority), with desired goals, and with its own desiring nature. Immediately thereafter, the whole world of pragmatic relationships intervenes with sacrificial roles and acts. Elaborating on the passage from *what* to *who* and going much further than I am proposing here, M.M. Olivetti argues that the imperative (the Kantian 'du sollst') constitutes one as a *person*, and hence, as a subject. However, since one has been constituted as such by a command, one's being an 'I' is subordinate to one's being a 'Thou'. Olivetti then suggests that exactly because one is first a 'Thou' can one be aware of the Others as 'I's.[30]

5.3. Can One Enjoin a 'Not-yet-subject'? Is Pre-reflective Awareness of Oneself Required?

The principal objection to the theory depicted above lies in the fact that it seems counterintuitive to postulate that an injunction *constitutes* its

addressee as a subject. One could object that the subject must pre-exist the injunction in order for it to address her/him.

The issue can be solved, in my opinion, by clearly distinguishing a phenomenological perspective from an ontological one. Ontologically, there may or may not exist a substance 'self' (and Prābhākara Mīmāṃsā authors do not deny the existence of the *ātman*) prior to the injunction, but this is of minor phenomenological concern. The problem is rather whether, *phenomenologically* speaking, a subject aware of him- or herself pre-exists the injunction. The Prābhākara theory seems to imply that he/she does not. Rather, he/she gains the sense of his/her being a subject through the fact that an Other (the Vedic text in the standard Prābhākara examples) addresses him/her as if he/she were one, thus making him/her aware of him- or herself.

But how can an injunction be uttered if it does not yet address any subject? A Vedic injunction does not concern a specific person since it lacks any temporal dimension and hence any possible link with specific individuals. Rather, the injunction constitutes one as a subject in so far as it makes one aware of him- or herself as being so-and-so (in the Prābhākara account: as being desirous).

Prābhākara thinkers are mainly concerned with Vedic injunctions, but one could add that in a similar way, a child acquires awareness of him- or herself as a person gradually, through the injunctions of his/her parents. Injunctions to children start to be uttered well before they can be conceived of as subjects (and consequently, as able to understand the order addressed to them). By hearing them, the child recognises her- or himself as the enjoined one, and, hence, as *one which can be enjoined*, a person.

The Prābhākara literature does not further elaborate on the *ontological* existence of subjectivity prior to the injunction. Apparently, Prābhākaras were not concerned with a pre-public stage of subjectivity, which is a sort of psychological *noumenon*. They focused on the full-blown personhood, which entails being aware of oneself as oneself and being part of an intersubjective net of relationships, and which is only possible upon being enjoined. From an ontological point of view, however, one might admit the existence of a basic subject, with 'subject' in the medieval sense of what is the *locus* for the action of something else (in this case, for the predication of the prescription). Such a subject would not be aware of him- or herself as a person, but would have some sort of basic intentional consciousness. In the

Prābhākara terminology, this stage could be identified with the consciousness of oneself as knower that is involved in every cognitive act. As explained above in Section 2.3, every cognitive act is thought to be reflexive, and hence, to necessarily entail a knower.

Thus, turning back to the child's awareness from an ontological point of view, one might suggest that a young child starts becoming aware of things around her/him, and hence, implicitly, of the fact that he/she is experiencing them. It is only through other people's injunctions, however, that he/she becomes aware of that experiencer as being him- or herself. This awareness of him- or herself, in summary, embeds the cognitive capacity within an intersubjectively shared personhood.[31]

5.4. Back to the Text: Is Rāmānujācārya's a Phenomenological Interpretation?

Rāmānujācārya seems to presuppose a subject (called *ātman* or *puruṣa*) which is active (cf. TR (1956) 4.11.6.2 [p. 60]) and includes knowledge among its possible activities (cf. TR (1956) 4.3.11.1 [p. 46]). The passages dealt with in the present chapter seem to allow the conclusion that for Rāmānujācārya, the subject outlined above is also intrinsically desiring.

None the less, in the chapter of TR dedicated to ontology (TR 2), Rāmānujācārya does not explicitly make use of the defence of the subject outlined above. However, the chapter is the shortest, and seems to be nothing more than a summary of earlier views on disparate themes (from universals to obscurity, from Brahminhood to plants' bodies). Rāmānujācārya seems indeed mostly interested in hermeneutical and epistemological matters,[32] and if my interpretation is correct, dealt even with 'ontological' problems, such as the existence of a subject, from these points of view. In this sense, Rāmānujācārya's approach diverges from that of Śālikanātha, who deals directly with the defence of *ātman* in his *Tattvāloka*. Śālikanātha's view seems, in fact, more ontologically grounded. For instance, the inner sense-faculty (*manas*) is analysed, it is distinguished from *ātman*, and the qualities of the latter are said to arise due to the contact of the eternal *ātman* with the inner sense-faculty (*Tattvāloka*, PrP (1961) [p. 330]).

6. Conclusion

The Prābhākara Mīmāṃsā subject did not emerge out of an ontological discussion, but rather out of hermeneutic concerns. More specifically, it emerged as the enjoined person referred to in ‘The one who is desirous of heaven should sacrifice.’ He/she owns desires and is responsible for actions. Both desires and actions are grasped directly through one’s inner awareness, and they make the subject directly aware of the body without which he/she can have no experience of the world. On the ontological level, the Prābhākara metaphysics may not improve much on the general brahmanical account of a subject different from its body but linked to it through *karman*. However, a phenomenological interpretation of the Prābhākara view may shed some light on the link between two distinct and yet connected entities, which both Western and Indian philosophies struggle with. Moreover, the Prābhākara approach does not establish an isolated self, but rather a *person* who becomes aware of him- or herself when a text (the Veda) enjoins him or her to do something, thus connecting him or her from the outset with action, with a social scenario (the sacrifice), with other agents, and above all, with an order imparted by an Other.

[1] I am grateful to Eunyee Choi for many stimulating discussions on Mīmāṃsā versus Buddhist Epistemology authors, to Stefano Bancalari for challenging exchanges on phenomenology and for reading an earlier draft of this chapter, to Alessandro Graheli for reading an earlier draft of this chapter, to Dagmar Wujastyk for improving my English, and to all participants of the 'Self: Hindu Responses to Buddhist Critiques' conference (22–23 September 2010) for several insightful criticisms.

[2] I am grateful to Douglas L. Berger for making me aware of the untranslatability of the Prābhākara concept of a 'desiring [subject]'. For lack of a better solution, I will keep on using the provisional label 'subject', which should be understood in its least loaded meaning and without taking into account its historical connotation.

[3] On Rāmānujācārya's time and personality, see Freschi (2012).

[4] The alternation of genders is not a matter of gender correctness only, as shown in *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* (henceforth MS) 6.1.16–20, about the *adhikāra* of women to sacrifice.

[5] 'svargakāmam adhikṛtya yajeteti vacanam ity adhikāralakṣaṇam idaṃ siddhaṃ bhavati' (*Śābarabhāṣya* ad 6.1.3). Yoshimizu mentions a parallel in *Āpastamba Śrautasūtra*; see Yoshimizu (1997: 151, fn. 5).

[6] *Adhikāra* has been translated as 'eligibility' or 'right' (as expressed through the word *Vollmacht* in Yoshimizu 1997: 150–51). I would like to stress the component of responsibility and duty entailed by the term, since in the Mīmāṃsā context sacrifice is not thought of as a pleasant activity, but rather as something one must do because of a Vedic injunction.

[7] It is noteworthy that Mīmāṃsakas focus on the undertaking of an action, rather than on its actual accomplishment. Hence, in the following pages 'action' should be understood as 'undertaking of an action'. On this topic, see Freschi (forthcoming).

[8] In the following, I will analyse the systematic elaboration of these stages in Rāmānujācārya. They can be traced back in Prabhākara and Śālikanātha too, as shown, although not explicitly stated, in Yoshimizu (1997: ch. III.3), 'Angewiesener (*niyojya*) und Agens (*kartṛ*) bei Prabhākara'.

[9] The shift to 'person' here is not casual, and presupposes Kant's opposition of subject and person (the latter bears a moral meaning).

[10] 'nanu phalasya kathaṃ prakārāntareṇānvayāsambhavaḥ. ucyate. tathā hi prathamam apūrvam eva mamedaṃ kāryam iti boddhṛtayā niyojyatvenānveti svargakāmaḥ puruṣaḥ. sa paścāt tatsiddhaye tatsādhane karmaṇi mayānuṣṭheyam idaṃ karmety adhikāritayā. karmaṇi mādarthyajñānam adhikāraḥ. aiśvaryam iti yāvat. tadanutiṣṭhan kartṛtayā. ity ekasyaiva tisro 'vasthāḥ kramabhāvinyaḥ'; *Tantrarahasya* (henceforth TR) (1956) 4.10.4 [p. 58].

[11] For Prābhākara Mīmāṃsā, only the Veda and direct perception are independent instruments of knowledge, because they are the only ones capable of delivering new information, whereas inference and so on only elaborate on their data. On the Mīmāṃsā definition of an 'instrument of knowledge' as delivering new information, see Kataoka (2003).

[12] Just like Prabhākara and Śālikanātha before him; see *Bṛhatī* (1934) ad 6.1.1 and commentary thereon [p. 37].

[13] TR (1956) 4.9.3.1 (p. 54); *Nāyakaratna* ad *Nyāyaratnamālā* (1937) *aṅganirṇaya* 3, ad 23–5 [pp. 251–2].

[14] It has, therefore, a deontic authority and no epistemic one, according to the distinction proposed by Bocheński (1974). Note that for Bocheński it would not make sense to say that an 'instrument of knowledge' enjoys something other than an epistemic authority. The semantic of *pramāṇa* is, however, also able to accommodate non-descriptive contents.

15 See Freschi (forthcoming).

16 For an interesting discussion of the import of the identity of subject and ‘I’, see Watson (2006: section 3). This way to know the subject also means that it is thought to be the *substratum* of the notion of ‘I’, whereas Prabhākara rather argues, even in regard to the knowing aspect of the subject, that it appears in each cognition as its *subject* – that is, as the agent of cognition; see Section 2.3 below.

17 For ‘reflexivity’ as a synonym of *svaprakāśa*, see: ‘[R]eflexivists hold that conscious states simultaneously disclose both the object of consciousness and (aspects of) the conscious state itself’ (MacKenzie 2008: 246). For the Prābhākara account of reflexivity, see Section 2.3 below.

18 ‘Therefore it has been aptly said: The subject is the fact of being an agent and an experiencer’ (*tasmāt suṣṭūcyate –kartṛbhoktṛtaivātmeti*; *Bṛhatī* (1929) ad 1.1.5, *ātmavāda* [p. 173]).

19 I am extremely grateful to Eunyee Choi for making me aware that the coincidence of these three (or four) aspects of a subject is not obvious. An interesting definition can be found in Perry (2002: 190), who applies it to ‘philosophy’ in general: ‘In philosophy, the self is the person considered as agent, knower, subject of desires and conscious subject of experience. These are philosophically the most central parts of a person’s self-concept: I am the person doing this, wanting this, and having these sensations and thoughts. It is this concept of ourselves that is extended through memory and anticipation and forms the basis of personal identity, I am the person who *did* this and *will* do that; I am the person who *had* this experience and wants to have it again.’

20 See MS 3.1.6 and *Bṛhatī* on MS 3.1.6. I owe this insightful remark on the distinction between agent and responsible person to Yoshimizu; see Yoshimizu (1997: 161–2).

21 More precisely, other people’s movements are only inferable – cf. TR 2 – whereas one’s own initiations of actions are available to inner awareness.

22 *bhogāyātana*, TR 2; *Tattvāloka*, PrP (1961) [p. 331].

23 *bhogānupalambhāt*, TR (1956) 2 [p. 17].

24 Ibid.; *Tattvāloka*, PrP (1961) [p. 332].

25 For a detailed discussion, see Garrett (1991: 62, 69–70).

26 Chisholm summarises his view of what is ‘empirically certain’ as follows: ‘I said that a proposition is *empirically certain* for a given subject S provided that the proposition is one that is (a) contingent, (b) such that accepting it is epistemically preferable for S to withholding it, and (c) there is no contingent proposition i such that accepting i is more reasonable for S than accepting the proposition in question. Then I said: ‘“Propositions that are empirically certain, in this sense, will be propositions about what are traditionally called “states of mind” – propositions about thinking, feeling, and believing. No proposition that is empirically certain for a given subject S will imply the existence of any person other than S. If I am not in pain, then the proposition *someone is in pain* cannot be empirically certain for me”’ (Chisholm 1979: 324). Chisholm’s own quote comes from Chisholm (1978: 410).

27 Ulrich Dickmann, *Subjektivität als Verantwortung*, and Stephan Moebius, *Die soziale Konstituierung des Anderen.*

28 For example, Mohanty (1970: 101).

29 And in so far as he/she is enjoined, he/she is a person and not a thing, therefore the shift from ‘it’ to ‘he/she’, see below and Olivetti (2007: 21–4).

30 ‘[...] io posso scorgere in qualche presenza in carne ed ossa *alter ego*. Io posso vedere l’invisibile – il mio prossimo, il mio simile – non certo perché veda *ego*, ma perché io sono sempre già seconda persona e perché c’è *ego*solo e per la prima volta come seconda persona. C’è persona

solo e per la prima volta come somiglianza, ma la somiglianza della persona non è la somiglianza a un *ti esti*. Non posso ricordarmi a chi assomiglia il mio prossimo, né lo ri-conosco come mio prossimo perché conosco o ricordo il prototipo' (ibid.: 29). Yoshimizu made some insightful remarks on the fact that the Vedic injunctions are not generic prescriptions without an addressee, but are rather interpreted as imperatives directed to oneself (Yoshimizu 1997: 360, fn. 215; Yoshimizu 1994).

31 These paragraphs have been added in order to address some of the issues raised during the conference and after it. I am especially grateful to Jonardon Ganeri, Matthew MacKenzie, Wolfgang Fasching and Chakravarthi Ram-Prasad for their objections and suggestions.

32 As suggested in Section 3 above, a prescriptive interpretation of the Veda is fundamental to Prābhākara Mīmāṃsā philosophy, and informs its epistemology and hermeneutics. A non-ontological stance in other realms is therefore also easily conceivable.

Chapter 10
On the Advaitic Identification of Self and Consciousness[1]

Wolfgang Fasching

As a soteriological tradition, Advaita Vedānta aims to realise a dimension of stillness and contentlessness beneath the constant change we normally experience as our lives. This dimension is assumed to be the core of our own being, our 'self' (*ātman*). However, this 'self' is not something over and above our conscious experiencing, as its 'performer', but simply our consciousness itself.

Being in itself absolutely contentless and changeless, consciousness, as Advaita understands it, is obviously not simply identical to the manifold successive conscious experiences we have. Rather, it is an abiding principle of awareness that underlies all our transitory mental acts and states. This stands in stark contrast to modern Western conceptions of the mental life. Our mental life is usually viewed as merely a series of mental events – perhaps intricately interrelated, maybe forming an integrated whole, a more or less coherent personality instead of just one experiential event after the other flashing up in isolation – but hardly anyone would assume the existence of an absolutely constant element that *underlies* them all. Anything that might be stable about our mental life is viewed as but a result of the way the mental events are interrelated, something like a stable structure into which they are organised. The being-conscious of mental states is usually understood in the sense of the latter having an experiential quality, a 'what-it-is-like-ness', and these experiential qualities are actually dazzlingly manifold and incessantly changing, hence it is hard to see what should be changeless about consciousness, and how it should constitute our abiding 'self'.

In light of this contrast, it might be interesting to reflect on what the Advaitins might mean by their assumption of a contentless and unchanging awareness, and whether we can gain any insight from this idea – which is what I intend to do here. Not being a scholar of Hindu studies, I will not attempt to offer a detailed critical survey of Advaitic theories of consciousness, experience and self. Rather, I will attempt a philosophical assessment of the general Advaitic idea of consciousness as being in some sense distinct from the transitory experiences, and of the equation of the former with our self. I am convinced that this basic Advaitic intuition indeed harbours an important insight, an insight that might prove useful to us in gaining a better understanding of the essence of subjectivity, in particular with regard to the question of the unity of the experiencing self – that is, to what in modern Western philosophy is discussed as the problem of 'personal identity'.

The Problem of the Identity of the Self

The problem of personal identity pertains to the question of what makes it so that I remain the same through time – that while my experiences are permanently changing, it is one and the same *me* who *has* all those changing experiences.

The classical 'Cartesian' view would hold that this is simply due to the fact that it is one and the same ego that has all those experiences. Yet there has always been much scepticism about the existence of such an entity that simply cannot be found in our experience (or so it seems). Consequently, today there is a wide consensus on the so-called 'reductionist' view of personal identity (Parfit 1987: 210–14), on the thesis that the identity of a person over time consists in and is therefore reducible to more fundamental facts, in particular – if we stick to the 'psychological' version of reductionism – to certain relations between the experiences (relations of memory, of continuing intentions, and so on), relations by virtue of which these experiences form one integrated, coherent mental life. According to this default view, there is no such thing as a stable 'self' in addition to the ephemeral physical and mental events that make up the life of a person: there are only these very events and their interrelatedness, and the oneness

of what we call ‘one person’ is *constituted* by these interrelations. There is just the stream of experiences, and no additional I who experiences them.

Now one could ask – however plausible the rejection of an additionally existing spiritual substance might sound – whether such an I-less account of the stream of experiences is fully convincing considering the fact that experiences only exist in being subjectively experienced (and this seems to mean: in being experienced by a respective subject) in the first place. As the phenomenologist Dan Zahavi has convincingly argued and elaborated on in many of his writings, the very being of the experience qua being subjectively experienced involves a basic and essential self- or subject-relatedness of experience (what he terms ‘mineness’) (cf., for example, Zahavi 2005: 124–32). Experiences are always experiences of a subject *for whom* ‘there is something it is like’ to undergo them, which ‘what-it-is-likeness’ – first-person givenness to the respective subject – is widely considered to be constitutive of something being an experience at all. But only rarely is the question raised as to what this subject of experience, which belongs to its very nature, *is*.

The introduction of an ‘owner’ of the experiences not only becomes pertinent with regard to the diachronic identity of the person, but relates to the very essence of subjectivity in general. My present experience has its existence in its being experienced by me, and it is experienced by me completely irrespective of the relations it might have to other experiences. Experiences are subject-related from the start, by virtue of their very essence. I do not ‘have’ my experiences like a whole ‘has’ parts, but rather in the sense that my experiences are given *to me* in a peculiar first-person mode while I experience them (and this is precisely what my experiencing them consists in). Therefore, the ‘I’ in this basic sense cannot simply be the whole continuous stream of experiences, nor somehow constituted by them and their interrelations. Rather, it is presupposed for their very being. So long as we do not understand what the subject of an individual experience is, we cannot sensibly ask what it means that *succeeding* experiences are experienced by the *same* subject.

The Advaitic Suggestion: The Self as Consciousness

So what is this experiencing ‘I’ that constitutes the essential subjectivity of experience?

I conceded above that there is some plausibility in rejecting a metaphysical ego-substance beyond or behind the experiential realm: such an entity would have to remain a purely metaphysical conjecture, unsupported by what is given in our experience. Yet on the other hand it seems that we cannot do *without* an ‘I’ that experiences its experiences, since mineness belongs to the very essence of experience itself.

At this point it might be worthwhile to consider the Advaitic view: the Advaitins, too, reject the idea of an additionally existing self-substance whose *property* consciousness would be (as is, for example, the view of Nyāya). Yet they insist that we also cannot coherently give a *selfless* account of our experiential life (for experience essentially requires a subject who experiences it, as they stress in opposition to the Buddhists: cf., for example, *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* (1896; 1962) 2.2.28 [vol. 1, p. 424]). What the Advaitins suggest is that the self is simply consciousness itself. It *is*, in their view, nothing but the conscious experiencing, and not something that *performs* it.

What is meant by ‘consciousness’ here? Consciousness is, for the Advaitins, the principle of manifestation (*prakāśa* = ‘illumination’): ‘consciousness manifests all things. Just as without the sunlight, the universe would be shrouded in darkness, similarly without consciousness nothing would be known or manifested’ (Gupta 2003: 31–2; cf. 106). Actually, consciousness is nothing but this taking place of manifestation itself, and ‘not a thing or substance which manifests’ (Gupta 2003: 103):

> consciousness has no form, no content; its only function, like that of light, is to show the object on which it is focused.... The Advaitins argue that, that which manifests everything cannot have the form of any particular thing; manifestation is its only function. (Gupta 2003: 119–20)

This means I do not find my consciousness as one of the objects that appear to me, rather it is simply the very coming-to-appearance (being-present-to-me) itself of whatever is present to me (although it is, as Advaita stresses, non-objectively self-revealed, having its very being in its self-luminosity[2]).

The Advaitic thesis is that this consciousness is what I *am* at the most fundamental level, my ‘self’ (the *ātman*). I qua subjectivity *exist* as this

event of manifestation. So the self in the Advaitic sense is not a particular entity I could find – as a realm of ‘inwardness’ – in addition to the things in the world which I experience as being external to me; it is rather the world-experiencing (world-manifestation) itself. Of course I do find – as one of the things that are present to me – the empirical person who I apprehend as being ‘me’: I am aware of myself as a person among persons, a particular psychophysical entity. But the point is: my experiences are not mine (in the sense relevant here) because they are associated with this particular objectively existing person; rather, vice versa, this person is (apprehended as) ‘me’ in so far as it is given *to me* (*in my experiencing*) in a very special way (‘from the inside’, so to speak). Experiencing itself (consciousness) *is* me-ness. Hence, the fact that subjective experience is apprehended as ‘belonging’ to a particular empirical person is secondary and by no means what *constitutes* the subject-relatedness of experience (it is what Advaita Vedānta calls *adhyāsa*: ‘superimposition’, namely of self and non-self). So when Advaita investigates the nature of what it calls the ‘self’, it is not interested in the empirical I given as a particular entity in the world and standing in manifold relations to other entities, but exclusively in the nature of presence as such in which the world and the empirical I (and all their interrelations) gain their disclosedness.[3]

Consciousness and Experience

But if consciousness is the taking place of manifestation, it is unclear how it can be an abiding, changeless self. Manifestation is a permanent process, there are constantly changing manifestations (appearances), in a ceaseless Heraclitean flux. Consequently, it appears that to say the self is nothing but consciousness amounts to collapsing the experiencing subject into the experiences (qua manifestation-events) themselves, so that it is some *agglomeration* of the manifold changing experiences – which would amount to a reductionist view of the self after all.

Therefore, further differentiation is obviously necessary *within* this taking place of manifestation. Actually, the Advaitins do not equate consciousness with the individual experiences (what I called ‘manifestation-events’), but rather understand it as the witness (*sākṣin*) of

the experiences, and thereby also as the witnessing that takes place *in* the experiences. What could this mean?

This might sound as if my definition of consciousness as the taking place of manifestation was premature, consciousness for the Advaitins rather being something that stands apart from the manifestations (appearances), observing them. But this would be a far too reifying reconstruction of what is meant in Advaita Vedānta by 'witness' and its distinctness from the 'witnessed'. The Advaitins indeed claim that the experience of a world of objects comes about by an association of pure consciousness, which is in itself non-intentional, and of the mental states (*vṛttis*), which are 'not intrinsically cognitive – that is, luminous – at all' (Ram-Prasad 2007: 81), and this (in my view infelicitous) way of putting it indeed suggests the idea of two independently existing types of entities that are somehow compounded, together constituting what we know as 'experience of something'. But as a matter of fact, this way of construing it is incompatible with another Advaitin claim, namely that the *vṛttis* do not possess any 'unknown existence' (*ajñātasattā*) (Gupta 2003: 110–13; Gupta 1998: 69–70; Chatterjee 1982: 342–4): for the Advaitins, mental states (experiences) only *exist* in being 'witnessed' by consciousness, so it is not at all the case that they primarily exist outside and independently of consciousness and *additionally* enter the scope of it. Their being manifested in consciousness is intrinsic to their very being. And while the term 'to witness' might suggest the idea of someone looking at something, in Advaita Vedānta there *is* no witness as distinguished from the witnessing, there is only the mere witnessing itself. And mere witnessing consists in nothing but the manifestation of the witnessed. There is no independently existing 'act' of witnessing that is *directed* at what is present; rather, the presence of the witnessed and the witnessing are one and the same happening. Therefore, I would suggest understanding the Advaitic characterisation of consciousness as 'witness' in the sense of its definition as *taking place of presence*.

We are then no longer left with the idea of two separately existing types of entities – consciousness and the mental states – which are somehow 'compounded' without being intrinsically related to each other. Rather, what Advaita tries to point out is the (conceptual) distinction between what has its existence in being present and this very presence itself. And the Advaitic claim is that this presence as such abides through the permanent change of what is present. How is this to be understood?

What do we mean when we speak of the many transient experiences we have? For example: I have a visual experience of the desk in front of me. This means that the presence of a particular content takes place: of the content desk-as-seen-from-there-and-there. Now when one experience is succeeded by another experience – when I turn my gaze and see this chair instead of that desk – this means that presence-of-this-content is succeeded by presence-of-that-content. (Or when I walk around the desk, givenness-of-desk-seen-from-there-and-there is continuously succeeded by givenness-from-there-and-there, and so on; and even if I have an unchanging experience of an unchanging object, presence-of-this-temporal-object-stage is succeeded by presence-of-that-temporal-object-stage.) So when we speak of the many different experiences, these experiences are individuated *by their content*. And while the contents that are respectively present are permanently changing, presence itself is precisely the element that does *not* change (cf. Klawonn 1998: 59)[4] – it is, as Zahavi calls it, an 'abiding dimension of experiencing' (which Erich Klawonn calls the 'I-dimension': cf. Klawonn 1987):

> whereas the act can become past and absent, the dimension of experiencing that allows for presence and absence cannot itself become past and absent (for me). Whereas we live through a number of different experiences, the first-personal experiencing itself remains as an unchanging dimension. (Zahavi 2000: 67; cf. Zahavi 1999: 80)

It is precisely this abiding presence that Advaita calls 'consciousness'.

So, again, when we speak of the manifold experiences we have, the manifoldness lies on the side of the experiential contents. The realm of the experiences is the realm of the experientially given as such, the realm of what has its being in being subjectively given. Pain, for example – frequently used as the paradigm case of an experience – *exists* in feeling painful (that is, in being subjectively present as pain). A pain that is not felt *is* no pain, and when I *feel* pain, I ipso facto *am* in pain. Something analogous to this can be found in intentional experiences, for example in perception. To say that I have a visual experience of the desk means that a visual appearing of the desk takes place; and this appearing as such (the desk's givenness-from-there-and-there) exists by virtue of its being experienced, its being experientially present to me (and it presents itself *as* appearance of a desk, and hence the presence of the appearance is ipso facto the presence of the desk). When I *experience* the appearing of the desk, the

appearing of the desk *takes place*, and when I do *not* experience the appearing of the desk, no desk appears to me (no appearing exists). The desk-appearance (just like my pain) has its existence in its being subjectively experienced.

And this is precisely what the Advaitins mean when they assert that mental states do not possess any unknown existence. An external object I experience could as well exist without being experienced (and it actually always *has* aspects that are not experienced), and it could as well be experienced in a different way than it actually is without being itself different for that reason. In contrast, my experience itself of this object (its experiential appearance) has its *being* in its being experienced – it exists in so far as and precisely in the form it is subjectively present to me. That is to say: while an external thing finds its disclosure in being the object of an experience which is distinct from this object, the experience itself does not first become manifest by becoming the object of a further experience: its being-experientially-present belongs to the very being of the experience. This is expressed in Advaita Vedānta by the idea that a mental state is immediately – without the mediation of a further mental state – manifested by the witness-consciousness: 'by their very existence they [the *vṛttis* (mental states)] stand unconcealed before the witness-consciousness' (Gupta 2003: 113; cf. Gupta 2003: 52, 109; Gupta 1998: 69–70; Ram-Prasad 2007: 82, 94).

What we call 'experiences' is usually equated with the experiential phenomena – with the experiential contents as such – again, with what exists in being subjectively experienced. Now the point is: *consciousness* (in the Advaitic sense) is the very *subjective experiencing itself*. It is, as the Advaitins formulate, the witnessing of the experiences. Hence, when they tell us that the self is identical to consciousness, this is not supposed to mean that the subject consists of the contents of consciousness, that it is composed of the 'experiences' in *this* sense (that is, of the experientially given as such); rather, it is precisely *consciousness* of these contents: their 'primary presence' (or 'givenness-to-me'), as Klawonn calls it (1991: 5 *et passim*).

Hence, what I wish to suggest is that the Advaitic distinction between consciousness and the mental states should not be read as the distinction between two separate existences, but as one between two aspects of one and the same happening in order to abstractly isolate the presence-aspect as

such, which we normally (being totally absorbed by the contents present to us) do not attend to. That the *vṛttis* are not intrinsically luminous means that the experiential contents, as such, are not conscious of anything. That the appearing-of-something takes place in them is due to the fact that they are *experiential* contents – that they are manifested in the medium of consciousness. So the 'power of manifestation' lies in the luminosity of presence (which, in contrast to the experiential contents, never enters the scope of introspection).

To this aspect of presence as such, Western philosophy of mind is strangely blind. It tends to understand conscious experience as something that is only subjectively (privately) present (as an 'object' to which we have a highly 'idiosyncratic' access) (cf. Rowlands 2008). When philosophers today speak of consciousness, they are mainly thinking of mental states which have a certain 'phenomenal' or 'experiential' quality (a certain 'what-it-is-like-ness') – what I called 'experiences' – and the term 'consciousness' is used either as a generic term for the specific phenomenal qualities (the 'qualia'), or (when we speak of 'our consciousness' in the sense of 'our conscious life') as referring to the stream of our conscious states as a whole. But to have an 'experiential quality' means to be *experientially present* to the respective *subject* of the state; so there is much talk about that which has its being in being experientially given (the subjective experiences) and about its reducibility or irreducibility to what exists independently of its respective subjective givenness (the realm of the physical) – but surprisingly little is said about the nature of *givenness itself* and of the *subject* to whom what is given is given (cf. Klawonn 1998: 56). And this is precisely what Advaita Vedānta is concerned with when it speaks of consciousness. When Advaita speaks of consciousness, it refers not to some experiential qualities, but to the experiencing itself in which any qualities come to givenness.

This presence-blindness is strikingly evident, to take an example, in David Chalmers's description of his 'fading qualia' thought experiment which he uses as an argument for his non-reductive functionalism: this imaginary case is about my brain cells being one by one replaced by functionally identical silicon chips, and the question is whether the resulting silicon-based functional isomorph of mine would be conscious or not; in the latter case, the replacement of my brain cells would amount to a gradual

loss of consciousness. This is how Chalmers describes the experiences of ‘a system halfway down the spectrum’:

> Joe is not having bright and yellow experiences [as the original, purely biological system would have] at all. Instead, perhaps he is experiencing tepid pink and murky brown. Perhaps he is having the faintest of red and yellow experiences. Perhaps experiences have darkened almost to black. (Chalmers 1996: 256)

It is quite obvious that there is something deeply inadequate about this description. Note that the thought experiment is supposed to be about a gradual loss of consciousness. Yet a tepid pink is just as present as a bright red, it does not amount to a less of *consciousness*; and even the experience of complete darkness does not mean being unconscious! Actually, consciousness as such is not a matter of degrees at all: either experiential presence takes place or it does not, with no possible in-between (cf. Klawonn 1998: 58). The experiential contents that are present can be more or less differentiated, and this of course affects how distinctly a world of objects presents itself to us; but this does not affect consciousness as such, for all of these differentiations and de-differentiations take place *within* the medium of consciousness.

The Western forgetfulness of presence is highly relevant to our leading question of the nature of the self (the experiencing subject) and its identity across the manifoldness of its experiences. Advaita suggests, as we have seen, equating the self with consciousness. Yet if one conceives of consciousness as somehow consisting of the manifold subjective phenomena (the ‘phenomenal’ or ‘experiential’ contents), the *unity* of consciousness can obviously only consist in the relations between these experiential contents. Advaita, in contrast, calls our attention to the *presence*-element in the full phenomenon presence-of-content (which, due to its elusiveness, usually goes unnoticed): this presence is what Advaita understands by ‘consciousness’, and accordingly the unity of consciousness (the oneness of the self) is not to be sought on the side of the contents and their interrelations, but on the presence-side.

The Unity of Consciousness

Now one could ask whether this talk of one consciousness as one abiding experiential presence in which the many experiences have their manifestation means to unduly hypostasise consciousness. To say that presence is the one thing the manifold experiences have in common simply means that they all have the same *property* of being experientially present (of having an 'experiential quality'). That several succeeding items have the same property does not imply that there is something like an abiding *entity*: there is about as much one 'consciousness' in which the manifold experiences have their being as there is one 'redness' as the common abode of the many red things. Each red thing has its own redness(-trope), and each experience has its own presence.

But is it true that each experience has its own presence? Let us more closely consider the nature of the unity of consciousness (first in a synchronic respect). I have *many* experiences each moment: the presence of this desk I see, the presence of the traffic I hear, and so on – all of this forms *one field of presence*, one presence of many contents. Now, the question is: what is the nature of this oneness of presence across the manifoldness of experiences? If we say that each experience has its own presence – this being a quality each experience as an experience has – then there must be some relations between the experiences that somehow bind them together into one experiential field. But what kind of relation could this possibly be, a relation that is supposed to yield the being-present-together of the experiences?

Physical items form unities, for example, by being close to each other and forming a causally integrated whole. Yet it is obvious that causal relations between experiences do not ipso facto make them present in one consciousness. And when it comes to nearness, it is actually totally unclear what this could mean at all in the case of experiences – except *experiential* nearness, which already *means* that they are co-present (only what is present in one presence can be experienced as being 'close'). Generally speaking, no non-experiential relations can ever, as such, constitute experiential togetherness (co-presence). Now, experiential contents can form *experiential* unities in being associated into unified fields against a background, or in being organised into one coherent phenomenal space, and the like. But quite obviously, all of this already presupposes that the experiential contents are co-present (cf. Dainton 2006: 240–44; Dainton 2007); it pertains to structures that co-present items can assume. It is

incomprehensible how phenomenal contents that are not already co-present could enter into phenomenal relations – the oneness of consciousness is the *medium* of any relations between experiences, and not the *result* of them.

Hence: either relations between experiences are not in themselves experiential (are external to experience, only objectively existing without being themselves experienced) – in which case it is hard to see how they could ever, per se, amount to the co-presence of experiences – or they are experiential relations; but to experience experiences as standing in certain relations to each other naturally presupposes their being-experienced-together, their being present in one presence – and therefore cannot *explain* it.

It might suggest itself to say that the many experiences are united by being the common object of a single higher-order experience (that is, that the unity of the experiences consists in the relation between one encompassing act of introspective awareness and the many experiences it encompasses) (cf., for example, Parfit 1987: 250). But this actually presupposes that many contents can be present in one awareness, which was the explanandum in the first place. Either this higher-order experience is just another experiential content – in which case it is completely unintelligible how it should constitute the experiential togetherness of the other contents – or it is in no way one of the contents, but rather the common experiential presence of the many experiential contents, in which case we are no longer explaining the unity between the experiential contents by their interrelations, but have introduced a distinction between the many experiential contents and their common presence, which is not a further experiential content or the sum of the contents, but their common medium of manifestation. The point is precisely that nothing on the content-side can account for the unity of the contents: the unity consists simply in consciousness as such – as distinguished from the contents of consciousness – in which these contents have their presence. And this presence is nothing other than the being-experienced of the experiences in which the experiences have their very being. Therefore, they do not exist and additionally become somehow unified (by an additional ‘higher-order’ experience, for example). Rather, it is their original being (namely their being experienced) itself wherein they have their unity.

The consideration of the nature of the unity of consciousness across the manifold simultaneous experiences therefore prompts us to distinguish

between the experiences (qua experiential contents) on the one hand, and the consciousness in which they have their (co-)manifestation on the other – which is precisely the distinction drawn by Advaita Vedānta (along with many other Brahmanical schools). The one consciousness in which the many co-conscious experiences have their thereness is not itself an experiential content, or the sum of the experiential contents, or constituted by the relations between them. It is, in itself, an absolute contentlessness (or non-content), which is the abode of all contents; and in this contentlessness, Advaita sees our true self.

It might seem that I have used the term ‘presence’ in two different senses (and quietly shifted my emphasis – led by the consideration of the unity of consciousness – from the one to the other): on the one hand, in the sense of the presentness of what is respectively present; on the other, in the sense of the dimension *in which* what is present has its being-present. Yet there is no real discrepancy here. Comparably, one could speak of the spatiality of spatial objects and of space itself. These are not really two different things: the spatiality of an object *is* its being-in-space, and space has its existence in the spatiality of the objects (it is not to be found anywhere *distinct* from this spatiality). Similarly, the presentness of an experiential content *is* its existing in the presence-field, and the presence-field has its existence in the presentness of what is respectively manifested in it. The point is simply that we have to start from the oneness of presence, instead of from the manifoldness of the contents, which are modifications of the one presence-field rather than independent existences that are subsequently somehow glued together (cf. Searle 2000). If we do not start from the oneness of presence, we will never get there: it is prior to any synthesis (for only co-present items can undergo a synthesis), and is therefore non-constituted.

Is Consciousness a Perdurer?

The question remains as to whether consciousness is really an *abiding* dimension of manifestation. It might be conceded that consciousness is the irreducible being-present-together of many contents at a particular moment – but still it seems that when *other* contents are present at the next moment, a *new* presence-of-contents takes place, so that the succession of contents amounts to a succession of presences – and the diachronic identity of the subject has to be explained reductively (through 'unity relations' between the individual presence-events) after all.

In Chapter 11 of this volume, MacKenzie presents Buddhist views that are quite akin to the Advaitic one I am discussing here, namely a conception of consciousness as 'a constant luminous background or space within which phenomena ... appear and disappear like clouds in the sky'; yet he argues that this does not amount to an implicit acceptance of the Advaitic assumption of an enduring witness-consciousness: for the persistence of consciousness could also be understood as perdurance rather than endurance. This would mean that the persisting consciousness is actually an ongoing process, a continuous succession of consciousness-moments which form the temporal parts – each distinguished from the other – of the stream of consciousness as a whole, and not something that is *wholly* present at each moment. That which changelessly abides, according to MacKenzie, is only the *form* or *structure* of presence.

Is consciousness a perdurer? This is a tricky question indeed, and I do not claim to have a definitive answer to it. Yet I do not think that the perdurance view fully accounts for the phenomenology of presence. I do not experience my experiential life as a succession of structurally isomorphic presences. Rather, I experience the succession of experiential contents – the contents as coming and going, and hence as gaining and losing presence, as 'entering' and 'leaving' the presence-field which is my very being qua abiding subjectivity. I permanently experience the transition of each experiential phase into its having-elapsed – the transition of, in Husserlian terms, being-present in primal impression into being-retained in retention – and it gets retained *as* just-having-been-present, namely as having-been-present in *the very same presence* out of which it is continuously gliding

and in which it becomes present as no longer present (as elapsed). Therefore, the givenness of my experiences as streaming is equi-primordially the givenness of presence as standing.[5] This is not properly described as merely the abidance of a form; it does not mean that the succeeding experiences have some structure in common. Presence is not a form that experiential contents assume – it is precisely the *presentness* of contents together with all their structures. Presence is a 'form' only in the sense that it is not one of the contents.

True, when an experience sinks into the past, one could say that its being-present becomes past. But this does not mean that *presence itself* sinks into the past: it is precisely the being-present – the being-*in-the-presence* – of this content that becomes past. It is then no longer present. It is not experiential presence that has elapsed, but the being-manifest-in-the-presence of this particular experiential content.

If it were the case that one presence succeeded the other (that is, if the succession of contents were a succession of presences), one could raise the question as to what makes it so that one particular presence is present right now, and not another. One presence after another would become 'actual', would enter the actuality of experiencing. We would need a 'point of actuality' that 'wanders' or 'glides' from presence to presence (makes one presence after the other present). But this quite obviously gets things the wrong way around: presence is the very 'point of actuality' itself; it *is* the presentness of what is currently present. It is the contents we experience that are successively present, which become present and sink out of presence. Presence itself does not sink into the past together with the content (otherwise the respective content would *remain* present; yet it sinks into the past precisely by sinking *out* of presence). The contents become actual successively, whereas the actuality of experiencing is an abiding manifestation-dimension, and not something that comes and goes, with one actuality succeeding the previous one (one actuality after another becoming actual). And this abiding actuality of experiencing is the essence of the I in a fundamental sense (the sense that is relevant with regard to the question of what my continued existence consists in) (cf. Fasching forthcoming).

It is along these lines that I would interpret Śaṅkara's dictum, 'the object of knowledge changes ...; but the knowing agent does not change, since his nature is eternal presence' (*Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* (1896; 1962) 2.3.7 [vol. 2, p. 15]). I read this 'eternal presence' as the I's being the standing present

itself. Consequently, the self does not move through time (consisting of 'temporal phases' that become present and absent). Time moves through the self. 'Just as to a man in the boat', Śaṅkara says, 'the trees [appear to] move in a direction opposite [to his movement], so does *Ātman* [appear to] transmigrate' (*Upadeśasāhasrī* (1992) 1.5.3).[6]

So the I qua the standing present is not a temporally extended object with corresponding object-stages. This is why it is so counter-intuitive to conceive of oneself as a perdurer. Each moment I experience something, *I*, qua experiencer, fully exist, and not just a *part* of me. Of course, only a part of my experiential life takes place right now: my experiential life is the succession of the experiences that are present to me one after another, and therefore a process. But this 'I' *to whom* they are present is not itself a process. When one experience succeeds the other – when a new 'temporal part' of my experiential life becomes present – it is not the case that another part of *me* comes into existence: for these new experiences are – vice versa – part of 'my experiential life' only because they are present *to me*. And this 'me' that makes my experiences mine is absolutely singular and does not itself consist of parts.

Mineness and *Ātman*

My emphasis on the 'I' to whom the experiences are present makes it pertinent to address an apparent fundamental inadequacy of my interpretation of the Advaitic notion of the *ātman*: my leading question was what it is that makes my experiences mine, and in my reflections I chiefly drew on Zahavi's discussion of the essential 'mineness' of experience and Klawonn's theory of the 'I-dimension'. Yet in the view of Advaita Vedānta, the appearance that experiences are mine, experienced by an I (*aham*), is an illusion, the result of *adhyāsa* ('superimposition', the erroneous identification of the self with what is not the self, namely with *objects* of the self).[7] The Advaitins reject the idea that presence means presence-*to*-*someone* – the *ātman* is simply this very taking place of presence itself, without needing any further experiencer. What we normally take to be the 'I' *to whom* things are given is really something that has its appearance *within* the field of what is present and is therefore not the bearer or owner of this presence itself (consciousness is *nirāśraya*, 'without locus').

Consequently, the subject–object structure in the usual sense (the encounter of a subject-entity with an object-entity) is not what constitutes presence, but, vice versa, is constituted within presence (it pertains to relations between appearing objects, and not to the relation between the *revelation* of objects and these very objects[8]). So it could be asked whether it might not be more appropriate to just speak anonymously of 'subjectivity' when characterising the *ātman*, instead of 'I' and 'mine'.

However, I would still insist that the *ātman is* about the innermost nature of the I – about the true nature of the subject qua experiencer of the experiences. When the Advaitins deny that the term 'I' stands for the *ātman* (cf. Ram-Prasad 2011), what they are rejecting is the attribution of consciousness to an inner-worldly entity. This does not exclude that the *ātman* is *me* (what *I* really am) in a more fundamental sense, which, on the contrary, is precisely what the Advaitins are trying to say. It is only that a radical reflection reveals that anything I normally take to be 'myself' offers no answer to the question of what constitutes the mineness of experiences, and hence I come to see that what I really am is the pure dimension of manifestation: 'But the real "I" is what witnesses the ego and the rest' (*Vivekacūḍamaṇi* (1982) 294 [p. 112]).

It must be conceded that the terms 'I' and 'mine' are – to say the least – ambiguous here (and Advaita's caution is completely legitimate): of course the normal function of the word 'I' is to refer to oneself as distinct from others – as a person among persons – and it is hard to see what meaning it should have without this distinction. Yet one could reply that my present experience is mine (the experience *I* am experiencing) totally independent of any distinction I draw to what is *not* me (that is, of my having an I-*concept*).

Zahavi uses terms like 'mineness', 'first-personal givenness', and 'minimal self' to indicate the way our own experiential life is given to ourselves prior to any reflective and self-identifying acts. Pre-reflective self-awareness as a whole is itself a multi-layered phenomenon and includes, for example, the implicit distinction between oneself and one's surroundings, which even newborn babies draw (that is, a pre-reflective identification of certain constellations of experience-contents 'as oneself' – which in Advaita is precisely 'superimposition'). But the term 'mineness' refers to something more fundamental, namely the mere immediate givenness of experience which constitutes its very being (and thereby its

being mine) – and this, as such, does *not* involve any differentiation between ‘mine’ and ‘not mine’, which rather *presupposes* the existence of experience and its givenness. As Zahavi stresses, first-personal givenness ‘is not a contrastive phenomenon’, it ‘does not arise thanks to any discrimination between self and the world, but is the condition of possibility of any such discrimination’ (Zahavi 1999: 180). Hence ‘mineness’ in this sense – the sense I have been using in this chapter – refers simply to subjectivity as the mode of existence of experience. Admittedly, Zahavi speaks of the experience’s (implicit) givenness ‘as *mine*’ (see, for example, Zahavi 2005: 124); yet – although he is not fully clear on that point – I would suggest that this should be read in the sense that experiences are *always* (whether we ascribe them ‘to ourselves’ or not) given in a way that the subject, *if* she is in possession of the necessary cognitive capacities, cannot be in doubt about *whose* experiences they are (namely *hers*).

Then why speak of ‘mineness’ and ‘I’, if the issue is precisely not the experiences’ givenness-*as*-*mine*? Well, simply because they nevertheless *are* mine, by virtue of their very givenness. Zahavi’s notion of ‘mineness’ closely corresponds to what Klawonn calls ‘primary presence’. Klawonn introduces his idea of the I-dimension by asking what the difference is between a person being me and her just being herself (‘an I’, but not me). He argues that her being me is not constituted by any objective properties of the person (be they physical or mental), for any properties of a person are logically compatible with both her being me and her not being me (that is, it seems to be perfectly conceivable that the person I actually am could have existed, with all his properties and all his experiences, without being *me*; this – puzzlingly – seems to be a contingent fact) (Klawonn 1987: 50, 59). That which constitutes a person’s being me lies exclusively in his experiences’ ‘primary presence’, that is, in that they are, ‘*seen from my own point of view ... in an absolute or primary sense present*’ (whereby this ‘my point of view’ is *identical* to ‘primary presence’ itself) (Klawonn 1987: 63) – which is precisely what Zahavi calls ‘mineness’. This primary presence (which Klawonn equates with ‘*my consciousness* in a philosophical sense’: Klawonn 1987: 63–4; cf. also Klawonn 1998) has the character of a *dimension* in so far as it is not one of the experiences, but the level of existence of my experiences as mine, and ‘just as the contents of the objective dimension may vary without ceasing to be objective, the subjective experiences may vary without ceasing to be *mine*’ (Klawonn

1987: 62). This I-dimension is in itself ‘completely devoid of properties’, for ‘a pain being *my* pain does not add any extra property to the pain’ (Klawonn 1987: 53; cf. Klawonn 1987: 59) – it simply constitutes the being-experienced-by-me of the pain with all its qualities. This notion of consciousness qua qualityless givenness-dimension shares, I think, quite a remarkable kinship with Advaita’s *ātman*. Now, what I am driving at is that this being-exposed in the ‘I-dimension’ (that is, possessing ‘primary presence’) of an experience is completely independent of any conception I have of myself as a distinct entity – and consequently Klawonn emphasises that it is this I-dimension as such, rather than the ‘ego’ (‘the self-objectification, whereby I conceive of myself as a definite person in a definite situation’: Klawonn 1987: 65), which constitutes ‘the principle of my being’ (Klawonn 1987: 67). For example, it is perfectly conceivable that I could undergo a radical loss of cognitive capacities, rendering me unable to form any conception of myself as distinct from others, without my experiences therefore ceasing to be mine (experienced by me) (Klawonn 1998: 60–1). Whether experiences are mine does not depend on my having any ego-conception, but exclusively on their having their being in being manifested in the I-dimension as which I exist.

Of course, Advaita Vedānta, due to its monistic metaphysics, denies that a plurality of presence-dimensions exists at all, and therefore holds that, ultimately, there *are* no experiences that are not ‘mine’ in the sense outlined above. But this is a *further* question. First one must realise, by reflecting on one’s own being-a-subject, the nature of the I-dimension as pure first-personality (as *me*, and not just as ‘a subjectivity’, which would ultimately amount to conceiving of subjectivity in a third-person way, after all),[9] before one can ask whether seemingly *alien* subjectivity-events ultimately exist in the *same* subjectivity-dimension (on this question, cf. Fasching 2010). The fact that *I* experience my experiences is independent of the existence or non-existence of other I’s, and Advaita’s qualityless consciousness-dimension is precisely what I, qua this experiencer, *am*. This, by the way, is the reason why it is perfectly appropriate for Advaita Vedānta to speak of ‘the self’ (that is, the *subject*) instead of just an anonymous taking place of *subjectivity*: My consciousness is not just ‘*a* subjectivity’. It is *me*.

Conclusion

From a Western perspective, the idea of consciousness as strictly distinguished from all contents of consciousness and therefore in itself completely contentless and qualityless, and unaffected by the change of contents, is one of the most remarkable features of Hindu accounts of subjectivity. (I have focused on Advaita Vedānta in particular, because – in contrast to Nyāya, for example – it gets along without any additional assumptions about a substance *behind* the experiential realm.) In this chapter, I have attempted to argue that this idea indeed makes sense and is actually a prerequisite for an adequate understanding of the synchronic and diachronic unity of subjectivity. Due to its blindness to consciousness as such – which, admittedly, is nothing we could introspectively observe, and in this sense 'is not to be found' – present-day Western philosophy of mind conceives of subjectivity primarily in terms of *conscious states*, that is, the mental phenomena that are subjectively present to us (instead of in terms of this subjective presence itself). It therefore has no alternative to understanding the unity of subjectivity across the experiences other than reductively in terms of unifying relations between these experiences. Yet as soon as one learns to see consciousness as such, the abidance of subjectivity no longer appears to necessarily consist in inter-experiential relations, but rather presents itself as the dimension in which experiences and their interrelations unfold in the first place. And this dimension is the I in a fundamental sense, or, as Advaita puts it, 'the self'.

[1] This chapter was conceived and written in the framework of the FWF (Science Fund) research project *Experiential Presence* (P21327).

[2] To keep to the Advaitic metaphor of light: in illuminating the objects, the light itself is also present – but not as one of the illuminated objects; rather, the luminosity of light is the very medium of the manifestation of the objects. In the case of consciousness, however, the shining and the seeing coincide – it is a pure event of thereness, without any distinction between seer and seen; cf. on this topic Ram-Prasad (2007: 74–83).

[3] The *ātman* is 'the witness of both the seer and the seen' (Śaṅkara, *Ātmajñopadeśavidhi* 3.7, quoted in Gupta 1998: 38). It 'is simply the consciousness itself that does the taking ... of itself as an individual' (Ram-Prasad 2011: 230).

[4] Just as S.K. Saksena characterises the Advaitic position (quoting and paraphrasing Vidyāraṇya): '"[T]he different states of cognition [= consciousness] do not differ qua cognition". The form of cognition is always the same, only the content varies. ... Whenever we talk of the origination and passing away of the cognition, we forget that we mean only the content of cognition and not cognition itself ...'; Saksena (1971: 56–7).

[5] 'Just as a person in a boat does not perceive the motion of the boat as a person on the shore does, so a self who is nondifferent from the intellect could not be the witness of the modifications of intellect'; Vidyāraṇyasvāmī, *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣadbhāṣyavārtikasāra* 115, quoted in Gupta (1998: 126); cf. also Saksena (1971: 157).

[6] Cf. the 'essential nowness/presentness' Klawonn lists as one of the basic characteristics of the I-dimension; Klawonn (1991: 258).

[7] Cf. Ram-Prasad's dissociation of Advaita's *ātman* from Zahavi's 'mineness' in Ram-Prasad (2011).

[8] 'The seer, the seeing, and the object seen do not cognise their own being. Nor are they known by one another. Therefore, whether they become objects depends on something that transcends them'; Sureśvara, *Naiṣkarmyasiddhi* 2.106, quoted in Gupta (1998: 128); cf. also *Upadeśasāhasrī* (1992) 1.14.42.

[9] Just as Śaṅkara's introduction to his *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* famously begins with the radical distinction between 'I' and 'thou' (anything I could ever encounter as an object).

Chapter 11
Luminosity, Subjectivity, and Temporality: An Examination of Buddhist and Advaita Views of Consciousness

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A familiar account of the debate between Buddhists and the brahmanical schools over the nature and existence of the self: the brahmanical schools accept the existence of the *ātman* (the substantial self), while the Buddhists reject the *ātman*, adopting a reductionist or irrealist account of persons. Thus while the Buddhists are similar to Hume, Locke, and Parfit, the *ātmavadins* are, though diverse, basically Cartesian in their approach to the self. Yet, as a number of scholars have pointed out, this view of the debates on the nature of the self is far too simplistic. Indeed, as Chakravarthi Ram-Prasad (2011) argues, there are (at least) two distinct debates going on. The first debate concerns the nature of the empirical person (*pudgala*) and the ego-sense (*ahaṃkāra*), whether the person (or ego) is constructed or ontologically fundamental, as well as questions of synchronic and diachronic personal identity. The second debate concerns the existence and nature of an 'impersonal subjectivity' which may constitute the (formal) ground of empirical personhood. In this debate questions such as the reflexivity, unity, and continuity of consciousness are emphasised.

My concern here is with second type of debate over the nature of consciousness and its relation to *ātman*. In particular, I want to examine the similarities and differences between the Advaitin notion of *ātman* as pure consciousness, or sheer reflexive subjectivity and the Buddhist notion – found in some Yogācāra, Yogācāra-Madhyamaka, and *tathāgatagarbha* texts and well developed in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition – that the deep nature of consciousness is non-dual reflexive awareness. Both traditions, I will argue, recognise the empirical and the transcendental aspects of

consciousness, and both link the inherent reflexivity or luminosity of consciousness to its transcendental aspect. So, have the Buddhists smuggled in the *ātman* through the back door? Or have the Advaitins so separated the *ātman* (as pure consciousness) from the first-person perspective of the individual self that they have become proponents of no-self in all but name? To try to get a better grip on the distinction between these two views, I will discuss Śaṅkara's critique of Buddhist theories of mind, paying special attention to his argument that recognition (*pratyabhijñā*) requires a robust notion of the diachronic unity of consciousness. Finally, drawing on Śāntarakṣita's account of luminous consciousness and Husserl's discussion of the complex temporality of consciousness, I will argue that a Buddhist view, properly modified, has the resources to respond to the Advaita critique. The view of consciousness as ever-present self-luminous awareness does not require a commitment to even the Advaitin's attenuated notion of *ātman*.

Reflexivity and Luminosity

The metaphor of illumination is at the heart of Indian (and Tibetan) discussions of consciousness and subjectivity (Ram-Prasad 2007: 53). Just as light reveals those objects upon which it falls, consciousness has the unique capacity to make experientially present those objects to which it is directed. Thus, as the capacity of consciousness to manifest or present an object, luminosity (*prakāśatā*) is linked to intentionality. As the capacity for *experiential* manifestation, luminosity is linked to the phenomenality of consciousness. As Ram-Prasad puts it:

> Luminosity is the rendering of an event as subjective. It is that by which there is an occurrence, which it is something it is like to undergo. The subjective is the having of the experience (*anubhava*).... The philosophers are agreed on all sides that consciousness is phenomenological; it is luminous. The debate is over the constitution of the phenomenality of consciousness. The debate is about what it is for there to be subjectivity.[1]

The basic divide in Indian accounts of the luminosity of consciousness is between other-illumination (*paraprakāśa*) and self-illumination (*svaprakāśa*) theories. For advocates of other-illumination, the luminosity

of consciousness consists in its capacity to present a distinct object. Thus, transitive, object-directed intentionality is the mark of consciousness. Conscious states, in order to be states the subject is conscious *of*, must be presented by a distinct, higher-order cognition. Hence, consciousness illuminates that which is other than itself, and conscious states themselves are apperceived by another state (MacKenzie 2007). In contrast, for advocates of self-illumination theories, the luminosity of consciousness consists in being reflexive or self-presenting. Consciousness presents itself in the process of presenting its object. Moreover, just as light does not need a second light in order to be revealed, so consciousness does not need a distinct state to present itself. Indeed, according to the Advaitin and Buddhist views I will discuss below, it is because of this reflexivity that consciousness can present its object. Yet, despite their agreement on this point, the Buddhist and Advaita theories of self-luminosity are importantly different.

In the Buddhist tradition, *svasaṃvedana* denotes the self-luminosity or prereflective self-awareness that is an invariant aspect of conscious experience. On this view, individual conscious states simultaneously disclose both the object of consciousness and (aspects of) the conscious state itself. Thus, when a subject is aware of an object, he or she is also (tacitly or pre-reflectively) aware of his or her own experience. The idea that consciousness is reflexive or self-presenting in this way was defended by Yogācārins such as Dharmakīrti and (Yogācāra-) Mādhyamikas such as Śāntarakṣita.

According to Dharmakīrti, perceptual experience involves two components: the representation of an intentional object, and the subjective apprehension of the representation. Dharmakīrti refers to the former component as the *objective aspect* (*grāhyākāra*) of the experience, and the latter as the *subjective aspect* (*grāhakākāra*). The objective aspect of an experience constitutes the intentionality or object-directedness of that awareness. This aspect also involves the particular way in which the awareness represents its object. In contrast, the subjective aspect constitutes one's awareness of how the objective aspect represents the object.

Thus, on Dharmakīrti's view, conscious experience fundamentally involves self-awareness (*svasaṃvedana*), in that one is aware not only of an object, but also *how* that object is given in experience. Further, the subjective aspect is not a separate, second-order experience that takes a

first-order experience as its object. Rather, both aspects form an essential part of a single experience that is reflexive in that the experience reveals both its object and itself at the same time. It is important to note, however, that on the Dharmakīrtian view, self-awareness is still modelled after other-awareness. That is, the subjective aspect's awareness of the objective aspect, though distinctive, is still a form of intentionality or transitive consciousness. Hence, the subjectivity of consciousness is constituted by its builtin self-awareness, but this self-awareness is glossed in terms of an implicitly self-referential intentionality.

Whereas the Buddhist epistemologists recognise both reflexivity and intentionality (viz. the subjective and objective aspects) as fundamental aspects of consciousness, the Advaitins take only reflexivity to be the essence of consciousness.[2] Consciousness (*cit*) in its fundamental nature is pure reflexive subjectivity. What we normally think of as the intentionality of consciousness itself actually arises from the association of pure non-intentional consciousness with certain non-cognitive mental states (*vṛttis*). As Ram-Prasad characterises it:

> This Advaitic conception of consciousness as essentially reflexive in fact is tantamount to saying that it is purely reflexive. Indeed, this is the idea behind the conception of consciousness as 'witness' (*sākṣin* ...). Just as onlookers do not engage in the events they are witnessing, so witnessing-consciousness does not engage with objects. It is present, but it is transparent to content, not itself intentionally directed towards (i.e. 'engaged with') objects.[3]

Moreover, it is important to note that, for the Advaitin, the *ātman* is not a substantial self such as was defended by the Naiyāyikas, but rather, the self is pure reflexive subjectivity.

Thus, in contrast to the Yogācāra theory of reflexive awareness, for the Advaitin it makes no sense to say that individual mental states or events are self-luminous. Conscious mental states are immediately present, not needing an additional second-order mental state to reveal them. But they are not present *to themselves*, as in the Yogācāra view. Rather, conscious states are immediately present to the self as pure witnessing subjectivity. The *ātman*, as pure consciousness, is the source of illumination for any phenomenon whatsoever, 'internal' or 'external', and cannot itself become an object of cognition. As the condition of the possibility of any presentation of an object, consciousness is not one object among others, yet it is indubitably present. So, while the Buddhist view of luminosity focuses

on the internal structure of individual, empirical cognitive events, the Advaita account of luminosity focuses on a strongly transcendental notion of subjectivity.[4]

Returning to the Buddhist tradition, the Yogācāra-Madhyamaka philosopher Śāntarakṣita (eighth century CE) follows the Yogācārins in holding that consciousness is reflexive, but provides a distinct and (within Buddhism) innovative account of reflexivity (Williams 1998). In so doing, Śāntarakṣita moves the Buddhist account of reflexive awareness closer to the Advaita view. There are four features of Śāntarakṣita's theory of reflexive awareness I will highlight here. First, reflexivity is identified with luminosity (*prakāśatā*) and asserted to be the inherent nature or defining characteristic (*svalakṣana*) of consciousness. Second, it is the condition of the possibility of object-directed intentionality, and indeed of any phenomenal appearance. Third, reflexivity provides or is tightly bound up with the synchronic unity of consciousness. Fourth, reflexive awareness is compatible with the emptiness of consciousness – that is, its lack of *svabhāva*.

In *Madhyamakālaṃkāra* 16, Śāntarakṣita addresses the first point. He writes:

> Consciousness rises as the contrary
> Of matter, gross, inanimate.
> By nature, mind is immaterial
> And it is self-aware.[5]

And in *Tattvasaṃgraha* 2,000 he states: 'Cognitive awareness arises as something that is excluded from all insentient objects. This reflexive awareness of that cognition is none other than its non-insentience.'[6] On this view, matter is inherently inanimate and insentient (*jaḍa*), while consciousness is inherently luminous and cognisant – that is, reflexive and intentional. There is nothing it is like to be a stone, and it has no states that are intentionally directed toward an object. In contrast, dynamic sentience is the very mode of being of consciousness, and for Śāntarakṣita, the sentience or phenomenality of consciousness is understood in terms of its reflexivity. As Jamgon Mipham comments in this context:

> Objects like pots, being material, are devoid of clarity [luminosity] and awareness. For them to be cognised, it is necessary to rely on something that is quite different from them, namely, the luminous and knowing mind. The nature of consciousness, on the other hand, is unlike matter. For it to be known, it depends on no condition other than itself. ... In the very instant that consciousness arises, the factors of clarity and knowing are present to it. Although other things are known by it, it is not itself known by something else and is never without self-awareness (it is never 'self-unaware').[7]

The basic phenomenological point here is that one does not need to *check* whether one is undergoing a conscious experience. In presenting the object, the conscious state also presents itself. Indeed, a mental state of which the subject is unaware – a 'self-unaware' state in Mipham's phrase – would not be a *conscious* state at all. It would a state *of* or *in* the subject, but it would be nothing *for* the subject.

These considerations lead to our second point, that reflexivity or luminosity makes possible intentionality. As Dharmakīrti argues: 'If cognition were not itself apprehended, perception of an object is never possible.'[8] Likewise, Śāntarakṣita argues that awareness of objects presupposes reflexive awareness. The idea here is that reflexivity accounts for sentience and sentience is required for any object to be given experientially. Unless consciousness is self-presenting, it cannot present an object. Hence, reflexivity or luminosity constitutes the necessary condition of any phenomenal appearance.

On the third point, Śāntarakṣita writes in *Madhyamakālaṃkāra* 17–18a:

> A mind that is by nature one and without parts
> Cannot possess a threefold character;
> Self-awareness thus does not entail
> An object and an agent as real entities.
>
> Because this is its very nature,
> Consciousness is apt for self-cognition.[9]

Here Śāntarakṣita is responding to the objection that reflexive awareness is incoherent because it implies the conflation of agent (*kartṛ*), object (*karman*), and activity (*krīyā*). Just as a knife does not cut itself and a finger does not point at itself, so a moment of consciousness cannot be conscious of itself. However, for Śāntarakṣita, consciousness has a synchronic unity

that makes inappropriate the usual language of agent, action, and object. Again, Mipham's commentary is helpful:

> By excluding all that it is not (namely, all other things), self-cognising consciousness constitutes a single entity. This being so, it is necessarily without aspects that are different from itself. It is therefore unacceptable to say that it really has a threefold nature .... Therefore, when it is said that consciousness is self-knowing, this is not meant in the sense of an axe chopping wood. It does not mean that consciousness apprehends itself as something really other than itself, or that consciousness as the subject and consciousness as the object of the act of cognition are being considered as real and separate entities. To know is simply the nature of consciousness, and for this reason it is acceptable and correct to consider consciousness autocognising.[10]

On the fourth point, while Śāntarakṣita adopts several key Yogācārin views, his ultimate view is Madhyamika. Thus, luminous reflexive awareness is ultimately empty – it lacks inherent existence (*svabhāva*). Indeed, for Śāntarakṣita, one could say that consciousness is empty in both the Mādhyamaka and the Yogācāra senses: at its deepest level it is empty of inherent existence and empty of subject–object duality.

To sum up, according to the Yogācāra Buddhist epistemologists, the reflexivity of consciousness consists in the subjective aspect of a mental event presenting the objective aspect of the same event. Here the account of reflexivity – and thus luminosity – focuses on the empirical psychological structure of momentary mental events forming a mental continuum (*citta-santāna*).[11] In contrast, both the Advaitins and Śāntarakṣita hold that (a) self-luminosity is the essential nature of consciousness, (b) consciousness is present to itself in a way that is distinct from how any object is present to consciousness, and (c) reflexivity is a necessary condition of the consciousness of objects. In these ways, Śāntarakṣita and the Advaitins are concerned with the subjective condition of the possibility of *any* experiential manifestation – that is, they are concerned with transcendental subjectivity (Husserl 1977, Zahavi 2003).

The Temporality of Consciousness

As William Waldron argues, we may think of Buddhist accounts of consciousness as operating in two distinct but intertwined dimensions. The

first, synchronic or *dharmic* dimension involves 'dissecting experience into its discrete and momentary elements [*dharma*s], [and] understand[ing] the internal relationships within and between these momentary processes'.[12] The second, diachronic or *santāna* (stream) dimension involves 'the indispensable relationship between causal conditioning and temporal continuity, of how the past continues to effect the present'.[13] Both dimensions are necessary, but, as Hindu critics of Buddhist thought are quick to point out, they are in tension with one another.

Most Buddhist discussions of reflexive awareness involve the *dharmic* dimension, since it is each moment of consciousness that is reflexive and these moments constitute the stream of consciousness (*citta-santāna*). But my contention is that reflexive awareness is central to understanding consciousness diachronically as well. To bring this out, I want to focus on the two tightly related problems of objective synthesis and the diachronic continuity of the stream of consciousness itself. The problem of objective synthesis 'has to do with how the mind can perceive the change or persistence of temporal objects'.[14] The succession of consciousness is not consciousness of succession, so how can the stream of consciousness – which is made up of distinct moments of consciousness – be aware of objects through time? How can one hear a melody *as* a melody, and not simply disconnected notes? How can one recognise that it is the same object experienced through time? The problem of diachronic continuity has to do with how the moments of consciousness can be connected so as to constitute an organised and experientially continuous flow. How does one moment flow into the next? How can I recognise that an object is the one previously experienced *by me*? So, while the first problem concerns how the stream of consciousness can be aware of *objects* through time, the second problem concerns how it can be aware of *itself* through time.

We can see both of these problems raised by Śaṅkara in his critique of the Buddhists. In the Buddhist Abhidharma and Yogācāra, the stream of consciousness is constituted by – and indeed reducible to – a causal sequence of discrete mental events. Yet, while it may be the case that the stream is a causally connected process, the appeal to causal connectedness, according to Śaṅkara, is not sufficient to address what I am calling the problems of objective synthesis and diachronic continuity. He writes:

> [U]nless there exists one continuous principle equally connected with the past, the present, and the future, or an absolutely unchangeable (Self) which cognises everything, we are unable to account for remembrance, recognition, and so on, which are subject to mental impressions dependent on place, time, and cause.[15]

The relevance of memory for accounts of diachronic continuity is well known, but what about recognition? Śaṅkara argues that the phenomenon of recognition refutes the momentariness of both object and subject:

> [Śaṅkara]: Your statement that every moment a different jar in contact with light is produced, is wrong, for even at a subsequent moment we recognise the same jar.
>
> [Buddhist]: The recognition may be due to similarity, as in the case of hair, nails, etc. that have been cut and have grown anew.
>
> [Śaṅkara]: No, for even in that case the momentariness is disproved. [...] In the case of a jar etc. we perceive that they are identical. Therefore the two cases are not parallel.
>
> When a thing is directly recognised as identical, it is improper to infer that it is something else, for when an inference contradicts perception, the ground of such inference becomes fallacious. Moreover, the perception of similarity is impossible because of the momentariness of knowledge (held by you). The perception of similarity takes place when one and the same person sees two things at different times. But according to you the person who sees a thing does not exist till the next moment to see another thing, for consciousness, being momentary, ceases to be as soon as it has seen some one thing. To explain: The perception of similarity takes the form of 'This is like that'. 'That' refers to the remembrance of something seen: 'this' to the perception of something present. If after remembering the past experience denoted by 'that', consciousness should linger till the present moment referred to by 'this', then the doctrine of momentariness would be gone. If, however, the remembrance terminates with the notion of 'that', and a different perception relating to the present (arises and) dies with the notion of 'this', then no perception expressed by, 'This is like that', will result, as there will be no single consciousness perceiving more than one thing. Moreover, it will be impossible to describe our experiences. Since consciousness ceases to be just after seeing what was to be seen, we cannot use such expressions as, 'I see this', or 'I saw that', for the person who has seen them will not exist till the moment of making these utterances.[16]

In this dense passage, Śaṅkara is making the following points. First, in the case of a (seemingly) persisting object, such as a jar, we perceive that it is identical, not merely similar. When one looks at a jar, looks away, and then looks at it again, the two perceptions of the jar are given as perceptions of one and the same jar.

When one walks around a jar, each profile is perceived as a profile of the same jar. Second, the Buddhist is faced with a dilemma. Because perception of similarity (or identity) requires comparison between an earlier and a later perception, either there is a single enduring consciousness that has both perceptions and the doctrine of momentariness is false, or there is no enduring consciousness and each perceptual event is locked in the solipsism of the present moment. In the latter case, no perception of similarity is possible. Third, Śaṅkara argues that if consciousness is momentary, then there can be no diachronic continuity of the first-person perspective. Moreover, note that Śaṅkara sees very clearly the deep phenomenological connection between the experience of persisting objects and the experience of oneself as a persisting subject. Thus, on Śaṅkara's view, one must either accept an enduring self or consciousness, or be faced with an experientially disconnected series of mental events.[17]

The fundamental problem here, it seems to me, is the attempt reductively to explain the *santāna* dimension in terms of the *dharma* dimension, thereby reifying the mental events in the stream. In contrast, Śāntarakṣita's Mādhyamika approach, on one interpretation, takes the mental events and the stream to be interdependent. In his commentary on Śāntarakṣita's neither-one-nor-many argument, Kenchen Thrangu Rinpoche makes the point well:

> Examining the successive manner in which consciousness perceives objects, we might be led to believe that each 'flash' of awareness, each moment of consciousness, is a fundamental unit of time, comparable to the indivisible particles of matter already discussed. However, if we could ever isolate such a single unit of time, we would see that it could only occur within a framework of ongoing consciousness, because awareness is never static and hence each moment is linked to a previous and a future moment. That is, such a moment would not be an inseparable whole but rather would consist of three parts: past, present, and future.[18]

The key point here is that moments of consciousness are not simply strung together like pearls on a string. Each moment is inseparably a part of a larger process. Indeed, temporal part and temporal whole are interdependent and mutually specifying. Further, on Thrangu's reading, each moment involves past, present, and future. If this is right, then perhaps Śaṅkara presents us with a false choice – one need not accept an enduring self or consciousness in order to avoid temporal solipsism.[19] But how can a *present* moment of consciousness involve past and future? While the seeds of an

account of the temporal continuity of consciousness are present in Śāntarakṣita's work, I confess I find no determinate answer to this question in it and Śaṅkara's cogent criticisms remain unanswered. Thus, I will turn to the Western phenomenological tradition for some insight.

The basic unit of temporal experience for Husserl is not a durationless point, but rather a moment with temporal thickness. The structure of this 'duration-block' is *protention-primal impression-retention*. As Husserl explains:

> In this way, it becomes evident that concrete perception as original consciousness (original givenness) of a temporally extended object is structured internally as itself a streaming system of momentary perceptions (so-called primal impressions). But each such momentary perception is the nuclear phase of a continuity, a continuity of momentary gradated retentions on the one side, and a horizon of what is coming on the other side: a horizon of 'protention', which is disclosed to be characterised as a constantly gradated coming.[20]

The primal impression is restricted to the now-phase in a sequence. In listening to a melody, the primal impression is directed to the currently sounding note. Retention is directed toward the just-elapsed note. The elapsed note is not actually present in consciousness, but is retained intentionally.[21] Protention is directed toward the future, the next note about to be heard. Whereas the currently sounding note is given in the vivid immediacy of the present, and the just past note is determinately retained, the upcoming note is not given in a fully determinate manner.

This threefold structure forms a unity, the continuous operation of which allows for the experience of temporal continuity. The structure constitutes the *living present* within which temporal experience 'wells up'. Further, on Husserl's view, the primal impression-protention-retention structure of consciousness accounts for the temporal unification of the stream of consciousness itself. Retention retains the prior phases of the stream, while protention reaches out toward future moments of consciousness. It is through this process, which he calls 'longitudinal intentionality', that consciousness is self-affecting or temporally given to itself. Furthermore, longitudinal intentionality makes possible what Husserl calls 'transverse intentionality'. It is the transverse intentionality of time-consciousness that allows for the continuous experience of a temporal object, such as a melody or a persisting jar. Because the now-phase of consciousness takes an object (for example, a note) and is retained in the stream, so too is the object of the

nowphase of consciousness. In sum, the threefold structure of time-consciousness is the condition of the possibility of both the diachronic continuity of the stream of consciousness and the objective synthesis of temporal objects.

Husserl's analysis of time-consciousness also shows that consciousness is recursive. Consciousness takes in its impressions and retains them, marking the impression as past and making the past impression available for the ongoing flow of consciousness. Indeed, the process of retention is iterative in that not only 'pastness', but the degree of 'pastness' is marked within this retentional continuum. The temporal flow of consciousness involves retentions of retentions, thereby allowing the experience of a temporal *sequence*. Moreover, this recursive process is reflexive. As James Mensch observes:

> In retention the subject does not just have the experience of the retained, it experiences itself having this experience, i.e., as retaining the retained. Accordingly, when it grasps an object through a series of retained contents, it prereflectively grasps itself in its action of retention. This grasp is a grasp of itself as having experience, i.e., of itself as a subject. Such self-experience implies that the self-referential character of retention grounds the subject as nonpublic, i.e., as referring (or being present) only to itself.[22]

Thus, on Husserl's view, time-consciousness entails reflexive awareness.[23] When one is aware of the melody, one is pre-reflectively aware of one's ongoing experience of the melody. Like Śāntarakṣita, Husserl views consciousness as a reflexive, object-constituting stream of subjectivity.

External temporal objects are constituted for consciousness through transverse intentional acts that have the threefold structure of time-consciousness. But we also experience those acts of consciousness themselves as unfolding through time. Both the melody and the hearing of the melody are experienced as having duration. How can one be aware of the temporality of one's own stream of thoughts, sensations, and so on? Must one posit a distinct intentional act with its own threefold structure directed toward one's own first-order mental state? And does this second-order act have its own immanent temporality?

To avoid the looming regress, Husserl posits what he calls absolute consciousness or the absolute flow. This is the deepest level of time-consciousness, and every other layer of consciousness presupposes it. It is absolute in that it is not constituted by any deeper layer of consciousness. It

is neither a substance nor an unchanging witness-consciousness, but rather a primordial flux. Husserl writes:

> The flow of consciousness that constitutes immanent time not only *exists* but is so remarkably and yet intelligibly fashioned that a self-appearance of the flow necessarily exists in it, and therefore the flow itself must necessarily be apprehensible in the flowing. The self-appearance of the flow does not require a second flow; on the contrary, it constitutes itself as a phenomenon in itself.[24]

So for Husserl, 'the flowing consciousness ... is necessarily the consciousness of itself as flowing'.[25] Here again, we see the close connection between consciousness as self-presenting – that is, as reflexive or luminous – and its immanent temporality or diachronic continuity. Moreover, note that Husserl's absolute consciousness is not a pure, unchanging witness above the stream of consciousness. Rather, it is a continuum of reflexive awareness, akin to the Buddhist notion of *ālayavijñāna* (Larrabee 1981).

Taking stock, recall that Śaṅkara argues that 'unless there exists one continuous principle equally connected with the past, the present, and the future, or an absolutely unchangeable (Self) which cognises everything, we are unable to account for remembrance, recognition, and so on'. His target is the Buddhist idea that both objects and subjects are reducible to momentary events. But, as he persuasively argues, the diachronic dimension of consciousness – including both object-recognition and self-recognition – cannot be reductively explained in terms of the synchronic dimension of consciousness. Here it seems to me that the Advaitin critique of Buddhist reductionism succeeds. Must the Buddhist therefore admit the existence of an enduring self, the *ātman*? No. Rather, what must be admitted is that a moment of consciousness, in Thrangu's words, 'could only occur within a framework of ongoing consciousness, because awareness is never static and hence each moment is linked to a previous and a future moment'. And how is it linked? Mere causality is not sufficient.[26] In order to be an *experiential* continuum, the stream of consciousness must be a *retentional-protentional* continuum. That is, the moments of consciousness must be knit together by, in Husserl's terms, longitudinal intentionality. If this view is on the right track, then experiential continuity can be explained in processual terms, without appeal to an enduring subject.

The Spacious Present

So far, the discussion of the Buddhist accounts of consciousness and subjectivity have largely concerned features of each moment of awareness, and perhaps of the stream as a whole. That is, we have been presupposing what J.J. Valberg calls ‘the phenomenal conception of mind’ (Valberg 2007: 97). On this conception, the conscious mind is constituted by a series of mental states or events that are ‘in us’ and that are worldly phenomena alongside others. However, the reflexivity or luminosity of awareness also forms a key part of contemplative accounts of consciousness that go beyond the phenomenal conception and take up what Valberg calls ‘the horizonal conception’.[27] The horizonal conception is:

> a conception of mind not as something occurring in us (in our brains, or souls) or anywhere else in the world, but as that from within which the world is present/appears and to which the world is internal, as something that adds nothing to the content of the world.[28]

Clearly, the Advaita view of the *ātman* as pure, luminous witness consciousness is aligned with the horizonal conception. The self is the field of consciousness within which phenomena, ‘inner’ or ‘outer’, may come to presence (see Fasching’s Chapter 10 in this volume). Therefore, witness consciousness (*sākṣin*) must be sharply distinguished from mind (*manas*) and the changing series of mental states (*vṛttis*). For the Advaitin, the mind is necessarily phenomenal, whereas consciousness (*cit*) is necessarily horizonal. Indeed, the phenomenal conception of the conscious mind as a series of cognitive states that have the property of being conscious is a mistaken superimposition (*adhyāsa*) of essentially non-cognitive states onto pure non-intentional consciousness. Interestingly, despite their radical disagreement, some version of the phenomenal conception is the standard view of both the Buddhists and the Naiyāyikas.[29] On the Nyāya view, consciousness is a property of the immaterial self and the mind is a series of states of the self. But the self here is a particular substantial entity in the world, therefore the Nyāya account is an instance of the phenomenal conception. And, as discussed above, the Buddhists see the stream of consciousness as a causal series of worldly mental phenomena. However,

one can also find a version of the horizonal conception in the Buddhist tradition.[30]

On the Buddhist version of the horizonal conception, consciousness is a constant luminous background or space within which phenomena – 'inner' or 'outer', 'mental' or 'physical' – appear and disappear like clouds in the sky. As this formless opening, consciousness cannot be found as one phenomenon among others (thus, it is empty), but because it is reflexive or self-presencing, one can come to realise it (it is luminous or vivid). As Karme Chagme describes it in the context of *dzogchen* meditation instruction:

> When it [awareness] stares at itself, with this observation there is a vividness in which nothing is seen. This awareness is direct, naked, vivid, unestablished, empty, limpid luminosity, unique, non-dual clarity and emptiness. It is not permanent, but unestablished. It is not nihilistic but radiantly vivid. It is not one, but manifoldly aware and clear. It is not manifold but indivisibly of one taste. It is none other than this very self-awareness.[31]

This luminous non-dual consciousness is often described as unchanging or unborn, and as more fundamental than the ever-changing flow of mental and physical events that appear within it. Indeed, in the *Mahāyāna-uttaratantra-śāstra*, a *tathāgatagarbha* text we find:

> Just as at all times worlds arise
> and disintegrate in space,
> the senses arise and disintegrate
> in the uncreated expanse [of mind]
>
> [S]kandhas, elements, and senses
> are based upon karma and mental poisons.
> Karma and poisons are always based
> upon improper conceptual activity.
>
> The improper conceptual activity
> fully abides on the purity of mind.
> Yet, the nature of mind itself
> has no basis in all these phenomena
>
> The nature of mind as the element of space
> does not depend upon causes or conditions,

nor does it depend on a gathering of these.
It has neither arising, cessation, nor abiding.

This clear and luminous nature of mind is as changeless as space. It is not afflicted by desire and so on, the adventitious stains, which are sprung from incoherent thoughts.[32]

Furthermore, in the Tibetan tradition a clear distinction is made between this luminous non-dual space of consciousness (*rigpa*, *yeshe*) and the various momentary mental events that constitute the mind (*sems*, *namshe*).[33]

It may seem that we have left behind the issues of reflexivity and temporality, but it is my contention that it is in the phenomenology of consciousness as a luminous horizon or space that we see the deepest connection between them. To see this, we need to return once more to Husserl's phenomenology of time-consciousness. According to Dan Zahavi's interpretation of Husserl, 'the absolute flow of experiencing simply is the pre-reflective self-manifestation of our experiences'.[34] That is, reflexive awareness and the primordial flow of time-consciousness are one and the same. The absolute flow is what Husserl calls 'the standing-streaming living present'. The living present is *streaming* in that it is the ever-changing flow of phenomenal contents: the about-to-happen flowing into the happening into the just happened. The living present is *standing* in that the threefold structure of time-consciousness is always present and unchanging. It is the space within which temporal experience 'wells up'. As Husserl writes: 'I exist, actually and concretely, as a constant present; this is my concrete being. It is, however, concrete flowing.'[35]

Moreover, the living present is the living now of consciousness, and the mode of being of consciousness for Husserl, like Śāntarakṣita and the Advaitins, is self-presencing or self-givenness. And this self-presencing has (or *is*) the same standing-streaming structure. As Zahavi writes:

Whereas we live through a number of different experiences, our self-awareness remains as an unchanging dimension. It stands – to use the striking metaphor of James – permanent, like the rainbow on the waterfall, with its own quality unchanged by the events that stream through it.[36]

Moreover, one of the most difficult aspects of the phenomenology of time-consciousness is the idea that the living present of consciousness, unlike a temporal object such as a melody or a passing thought, is not *in* objective time – it is primal temporalisation (*Zeitigung*). It is not one temporal phenomenon among others, but rather horizon, the experiential space within which the temporal streaming of contents occurs.

My phenomenological contention, then, is that the Buddhist and Advaitin accounts of consciousness as the luminous, self-presencing horizon or field are pointing out, in Husserlian terms, the standing aspect of the standing-streaming living present (see Fasching's Chapter 10 in this volume). Likewise, the characteristic Buddhist account of consciousness as a dynamic, ever-changing stream of momentary mental events highlights the streaming aspect of the living present. So where is the difference between the Advaitin and the Buddhist accounts of non-dual consciousness? One way to differentiate them is by examining their differing accounts of the standing and streaming, or abiding and flowing, aspects of experience.

The Ābhidharmika, it can be argued, reifies the streaming aspect of experience. The combination of the doctrine of momentariness and austere mereological reductionism yields an atomism that cannot account for the diachronic continuity of experience. Hence, the Ābhidharmika must treat the standing or abiding aspect of experience as an illusion or false construction. Moreover, in so far as the Abhidharma account is based on a phenomenal conception of the stream of consciousness as a series of mental events *in time*, it will be unable to account for the temporality of consciousness as such. For I take it to be one of Husserl's most important insights that the primordial flow of time-consciousness is not itself a temporal object. As he insists:

> *the consciousness of the now is not itself now*. The retention that exists 'together' with the consciousness of the now is not 'now', is *not simultaneous* with the now, and it would make no sense to say that it is.[37]

The broader point here is that we cannot say that the absolute flow of time-consciousness is either momentary or enduring, because it is the condition of the possibility of anything being given as either persisting or changing.

In contrast to the Ābhidharmika, the Advaitin takes the standing aspect – the 'eternal presence' of the self[38] – to be the true nature of consciousness.

Further, the self, as this sheer presence, necessarily transcends any particular moment of experience. With this Husserl is in agreement: ‘In each present, taken as a phase, and hence in the standing, enduring present, I exist in such a way that I transcend my present being.’[39] Yet, from the phenomenological perspective, the problem for the Advaitin is just the converse of the problem for the Ābhidharmika. That is, the Advaitin seems to reify the standing or abiding dimension of experience at the expense of the streaming dimension. Recall that the self is pure consciousness, pure non-intentional reflexivity. The changing mental states that arise within our experience are in fact no part of consciousness itself, but arise from a mistaken superimposition (*adhyāsa*) onto consciousness. Indeed, as Ram-Prasad points out, ‘consciousness ultimately is “pure”, that is, without phenomenal content; for that is the consciousness of *brahman*, in which no object irreducibly exists’.[40] What place is there for the streaming aspect of the living present in this account of consciousness? Furthermore, while Husserl agrees that the subject must transcend the (constituted) present moment, he insists that the primordial dimension of consciousness is not an unchanging witness, but a primordial flowing. ‘I am–I live’, he writes, ‘and my living is an unbroken unity of primal flowing temporalisation’.[41] One reason to prefer the idea of consciousness as a flow to that of the pure witness is that, by not separating the standing from the streaming, this account avoids appeal to the problematic notion of superimposition. Finally, while the phenomenology of time-consciousness reveals the need for an abiding dimension, Husserl argues that ‘What abides, above all, is the formal structure of the flow. That is to say, the flowing is not only flowing throughout, but each phase has one and the same form.’[42] The abiding structure here in the tripartite structure of impression-protention-retention (as well as reflexivity). Therefore, the question is why one should posit an eternal self over and above the flow of experience, when an invariant form of that flow appears sufficient?

Finally, in contrast to both Abhidharma and Advaita, those Buddhist accounts which emphasise non-dual reflexive awareness as the true nature of mind accept both the standing and the streaming aspects of experience. This is especially clear in the contemplative tradition of *mahāmudrā*, which emphasises that non-dual awareness is coemergent (*sahaja*) with phenomenal contents, so that awareness and appearances are of ‘one taste’. As the *mahāmudrā* master Maitripa proclaims:

> Adventitious thoughts arise from the unborn. Thoughts themselves are the essential nature of the expanse. From the beginning these two are not different. The equal taste of the two is my teaching. The coemergent nature of mind is *dharmakāya* [the enlightened state]. Coemergent appearances are the radiance of the *dharmakāya*. Therefore indivisible appearances and mind are coemergent.[43]

On this view, the luminous space of awareness is seen as non-dual with the ever-changing contents of consciousness. Indeed, directly experiencing the non-duality of awareness with its contents is seen as the extremely important contemplative insight of 'coemergent awareness or wisdom' (*sahaja-jñāna*).[44] Phenomenologically, then, this tradition sees the standing and streaming aspects of the living present as inseparable.

Conclusion

I have argued that, despite Śaṅkara's cogent criticisms, the Buddhists are not forced to accept the *ātman*, even in the Advaitin sense of impersonal pure consciousness. On the other hand, as Śaṅkara's discussion of recognition shows, the reductionist atomism of the Abhidharma is unable to account for either object-recognition (objective synthesis) or self-recognition (diachronic continuity of consciousness). The response from the Buddhist, however, is not to accept an enduring self, but to admit the irreducibility of the diachronic or *santāna* dimension of experience to the synchronic or *dharmic* dimension.[45] However, the problems raised by Śaṅkara are not simply problems in the metaphysics of persistence. They concern *experiential* continuity and self-awareness – that is, the very nature of subjectivity. Here again, Śaṅkara forcefully criticises the Buddhist account of reflexive awareness. A mere series of reflexive mental events, he argues, is insufficient to account for the nature of subjectivity. The lamp may not need another lamp to be illuminated, but it does require a witness to be *seen*. Rephrased in the terms introduced above, Śaṅkara's contention is that no merely *phenomenal* account of consciousness or subjectivity – that is, one that takes the subject to be one entity among other in the world – is sufficient. Therefore, the Buddhist is compelled to admit the existence of eternal witness-consciousness, the *ātman*. And yet, as I have argued, we do

find in the Buddhist tradition a more robust, horizonal account of consciousness as a constant luminous space of awareness in which contents come and go. Indeed, this space of consciousness is identified with the reflexivity of awareness that, as Śāntarakṣita argues, is the very nature of consciousness.

But if it is admitted that there is an abiding dimension of consciousness, hasn't the Buddhist simply accepted the Advaitin *ātman*, which is, after all, nothing but sheer reflexive consciousness? No. First, the Buddhist account of non-dual awareness takes it to be inseparable from the ever-changing stream of phenomenal contents, and thus it is not an eternal witness above the flow of consciousness – it is an *aspect* or dimension of the flow itself. Second, despite calling it the nature of mind, luminous non-dual awareness is not an 'I', even in the rarified sense found in Advaita. Finally, the Buddhist advocates of non-dual consciousness can reasonably object to the Advaita view on the grounds that witness-consciousness is a reification of the luminosity of consciousness at the expense of the changing aspect of experience. In Husserlian terms, the Advaitin reifies the standing dimension of the standing-streaming living present. Thus, despite their important and instructive similarities on the nature of luminous consciousness, the Buddhist advocate of non-dual awareness may agree with Śāntarakṣita that Advaita reifies consciousness by treating it as an eternal self.

[1] Ram-Prasad (2007: 54).

[2] Actually, things are a bit more complicated here. Because the Yogācārins hold that, ultimately, there are no objects apart from consciousness, it can be said that reflexivity is more fundamental than intentionality. The point here, though, is that for the Yogācārin, both grasper and grasped are part of consciousness, whereas for the Advaitin, consciousness only appears to be intentional.

[3] Ram-Prasad (2007: 80).

[4] The *ātman* or witness here is the dative, the 'for whom', of any phenomenal manifestation.

[5] Śāntarakṣita (2005) 53.

[6] Śāntarakṣita (1986).

[7] Śāntarakṣita (2005) 202.

[8] Quoted in Mokṣākaragupta (1985) 51 [18.16].

[9] Śāntarakṣita (2005) 53.

[10] Ibid.: 202.

[11] That is, it is an account of how moments of consciousness are in fact structured, but the Dharmakīrtian account is not (primarily) concerned with necessary conditions of subjectivity as such.

[12] Waldron (2003: 55).

[13] Ibid.: 56.

[14] Gallagher (1998: 8).

[15] *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* 2.2.31, Deutsch and Dalvi (2004: 138).

[16] *Bṛhadāranyakopaniṣadbhāṣya* 4.3.7, Deutsch and Dalvi (2004: 138).

[17] As Śaṅkara argues later in the same passage, mere causal connection between mental events is not sufficient to give experiential continuity.

[18] Thrangu (2001: 48).

[19] One may be able to avoid commitment to an *enduring* consciousness, but one will not be able to avoid commitment to a *persisting* consciousness of some kind. That is, one will be committed to an ongoing process of consciousness constituted by a series of events. But processes have temporal parts and thus are not wholly present at each moment of their existence. Therefore, the process of consciousness *perdures*, but does not *endure*.

[20] Hua IX, 202, quoted in Zahavi (1999: 64).

[21] This is an important point. Because it is retained intentionally, rather than actually, the note does not need to exist in order to be retained.

[22] Mensch (2001: 107).

[23] Retention is not the source of reflexive awareness for Husserl, but rather presupposes it. The nature of consciousness involves primordial self-givenness. Moreover, unconscious retention is not possible.

[24] Hua X, 83, quoted in Zahavi (1999: 73).

[25] Hua XXXIII, 48, quoted in Zahavi (1999: 73).

[26] Of course, it may very well be the case that intentional connections supervene on causal connections, but merely pointing out that mental event A causes mental event B will not account for the experiential continuity of A and B.

[27] Some version of the horizonal conception is accepted by the major thinkers in the phenomenological tradition as well.

[28] Valberg (2007: 99).

[29] Here I am particularly referring to the Abhidharmikas and the Buddhist epistemologists.

[30] The notion of consciousness as horizon, arguably, is found implicitly or explicitly in Yogācāra, Yogācāra-Madhyamaka, *tathāgatagarbha* texts, and the contemplative traditions of *mahāmudrā*, *dzogchen*, and Zen.

[31] Quoted in Dreyfus (2011: 121–2).

[32] Gyamsto and Fuchs (2000: 26–7).

[33] Specifically, the Nyingma and Kagyu traditions, both of which are indebted to Śāntarakṣita and the *tathāgatagarbha* tradition.

[34] Zahavi (1999: 80).

[35] Hua Mat VIII, 129, quoted in Brough (2010: 44).

[36] Zahavi (2003: 67).

[37] Hua X, 333, quoted in Zahavi (1999: 68). For instance, if a retained note were simultaneous with the currently sounding note, then a melody would be experienced as a chord.

[38] *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* (1896) 2.3.7 [p. 15].

[39] Hua Mat VIII, 129, quoted in Brough (2010: 44).

[40] Ram-Prasad (2007: 82–3).

[41] Hua Mat VIII, 3, quoted in Brough (2010: 43).

[42] Hua X, 114, quoted in Brough (2010: 46–7).

[43] Brunnhölzl (2007: 133).

[44] *Sahaja-jñāna* also refers to the unity of luminosity and emptiness that, as in Śāntarakṣita's view, is the true nature of consciousness.

[45] One might hold, for instance, that some processes non-reductively supervene on momentary events. In this case, neither the temporal part nor the temporal whole would be an enduring substance.

Chapter 12
Arguing from Synthesis to the Self: Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta Respond to Buddhist No-selfism

Arindam Chakrabarti

> Not just the effect–cause relationship, or the process of remembering, or the cancellation (exposure of erroneousness) of one cognition by another which are common to all practices by which ordinary people's lives go on, even various specific practices such as buying and selling (mixed with defilement), or the interaction between a religious instruction and an instructee (unmixed with defilement), presuppose the existence of a single knower; for, after all, it is synthesis (*samanvaya*) which is the life-breath of any practice whatsoever.[1]

Introduction: Abhinavagupta's Agenda

Buddhist No-selfism is clearly not a descriptive metaphysics. It does not claim to unearth how we *actually* think (or are conceptually constrained to think) of ourselves at a particular moment of time or at the time of recalling a past experience or planning a future activity. Its stance about the subject's 'really being no one' flaunts its revisionary character by committing nearly all sectors of linguistic and practical life – including the practice of Buddhist pedagogy and debates or interactions with others – to a series of edifying or not-so-edifying errors. But Abhinavagupta shows us that even errors and exposures of errors of any kind would not be possible without a connecting and enduring self. It is an argument that goes deeper than the following one-liner by P.T. Geach: 'If only a self can have illusions, then it cannot be an illusion that a self exists.'[2]

In this chapter, after considering briefly the Kashmir Shaiva rehearsal of the Buddhist anti-self arguments (found in ch. 1.2 of *īśvara Pratyabhijñā*

Vimarśinī), I try to reconstruct Abhinavagupta's central counter-arguments – from memory, from non-apprehension, from error, and from cancellation of error – to establish the existence of a self which not only bridges different times, but also different persons. The fundamental idea behind all these 'self'-establishing arguments is the need to explain the possibility of *synthesis*, of the reflexive reconnecting of different moments of cognition. According to Utpaladeva, whose text Abhinavagupta was freely commenting upon, granted the self-confined nature of particular fleeting cognitive episodes, their grasping common or uncommon objects and comparing or contrasting their inner contents would be impossible without an overseeing and synthesising self. This self ultimately turns out not only to be the connector of a single person's experiences at different times, but also the universal basis of interpersonal and pragmatic interactions, ending up in an equally revisionary metaphysics of an all-inclusive synthesising self-consciousness that is unbounded by time or individuality. It is to be 'recognised' as the universal Subject, the only free agent and artist, the great lord who plays out within his consciousness the objective drama of plurality, temporal sequence, and differentiation of particular persons.

The Buddhist does not hold the extreme eliminativist view that the pronoun 'I' is simply meaningless. Besides his avoidance of all extreme views in treading the middle path, this kind of abolition of the use of the word 'I' would make it impossible for him to say 'I have no thesis, so I have no fault,'[3] or even, ritually but sincerely, 'I take refuge in the Buddha'[4] with a verb conjugated in the first-person singular.

However, just because the Buddhist keeps using the first-person singular pronoun and believes that she herself – not someone else – is working towards liberation through the therapy of her own desires, the Nyāya champions of an enduring substantial self/soul should not prematurely celebrate a victory. The Buddhist (or a present-day proto-Buddhist Parfitian) 'self'-denier is not so easily silenced. The very presupposition that only a self can have illusions is easily rejected by an ancient Buddhist or even a contemporary connectionist. A bundle of impermanent factors (*skandha*-s) can keep making mistakes or be in a state of false belief that it is more than a bundle of functional complex systems, just as a soul-less computer program can become delusional and produce the sentence 'I am not a computer, I am an eternal immaterial power.' And in verbal transactions, 'I' could be used by and for what in reality is a group or a

community (Microsoft could tell Apple, ‘I am no worse than you.’). Further, on the more basic question of whether we can get to the structure of reality by studying meanings of words and sentences, at least the Yogācāra Buddhist exclusion (*apoha*)-theorists are very clear: language is no guide to reality. Even our word-occasioned determinate cognitions are, in the ultimate analysis, convenient and conventional errors, and real reality remains untouched by words.

Although we shall consider at the very end an odd Mādhyamika argument against the very semantic cogency of the indexical ‘I’, the thrust of the major Buddhist anti-self arguments was not so much against the first person, but against the first person’s diachronic identity, against staying the same across different times. In response, non-Buddhist, especially orthodox Vedic, philosophers of ninth–tenth-century Kashmir would keep pointing out that solid perceptual and inferential evidence for the existence of an enduring self (or many such selves) is writ large over our practical, social, and mental life:

> In sacred rituals, in religious duties, in agriculture and commerce, people skillfully make deliberations of the form “I did this yesterday and the next day I must do this other thing” only because they can re-identify themselves as the same across times. Therefore, surely, each of them is directly aware of one constant person [*dhruvam puruṣam*] in all the states.[5]

Take, for example, the very process of philosophical debate which the Buddhist is so eager to enter into. One has to listen to and make sense of the opponent’s sometimes prolonged utterances in order to respond to them. The crucial need for a unifier comes from the necessity of what Kant called ‘synthesis’ – holding together in a single self-conscious cognitive embrace what are clearly registered as discrete packets of outer and inner manifolds. Let me take a typical sentence (written at least a century later by Abhinavagupta, also in the context of proving the unity of the self from the fact of memory):

> Only if the external and internal objects such as blue and pleasure, etc. carried forth by the mouths of the rivers of separate episodes of awareness all flow and rest in one single great ocean of consciousness which calls itself ‘I’, can they, then, be mutually synthesised and related to each other, otherwise how can unconscious material things, or discrete awareness-episodes of them which remain spatio-temporally limited and insulated inside their own existence, get connected by themselves, because ... if the earlier flash of awareness and the

> later flash of remembering were simply two events separated from one another then there never would be any recall; hence through memory one unlimited Knower-Reality is proved.[6]

Now, that was an awfully long sentence. Philosophers would often write or utter such long sentences, both in Kashmir and in Königsberg. Long before Abhinavagupta, Jayanta Bhaṭṭa derived an anti-Buddhist argument for the existence of an enduring self from the very experience of comprehending such a long sentence. To translate his elegant verse on this process of understanding a long sentence:

> The phonemes are heard in a sequence. When the traces left behind by the earlier auditory perceptions are all re-awakened at the time of hearing the last phoneme, the partitioning of the total sound-series into words is done along with the activated memory of the learnt conventional meaning of each word. Spontaneously examining the syntactic dove-tailing of the words and the semantic congruence of their meanings, the total sentence meaning is glued together. Now, all of this would be impossible to explain without postulating a single knower.[7]

Śabara in Mīmāṃsā and Vātsyāyana in Nyāya take this phenomenon of recognition (*pratyabhijñā*) to be the strongest evidence for a continued diachronically identical knower-self. Recognition, by the way, is not to be confused with remembering. It is an *experience* of a present object as identical with something perceived in the past.

Recognition Subjected to Medieval Buddhist Dialectic

But the Buddhist subjects this phenomenon to his usual dilemmatic scrutiny.[8] Is this recognition, allegedly of the form ‘This (present Object/Self) is (identical with) THAT (the past Object/Self)’, one piece of awareness or two? If it is a single awareness, then what is its instrumental cause? If it is caused by a sense organ alone, then it could not possibly grasp the past, the THAT-part, for our senses can only grasp the present, and not other times. If it is caused by the memorytraces alone, then the present part will not be accessible, since memory traces are causally irrelevant to our perception of a currently given object. The possibility that the senses and the traces together would produce this single cognition is as absurd as

unlike causes such as a lump of clay and a bunch of threads together producing a hybrid object like a pot-cloth!

So it must be broken up into two distinct pieces of cognition with two distinct objects, neither of which can anticipate, bring back, or have any relation to the object of the other, to judge their objects to be either the same or distinct. (Let us flag and remember this point, which Utpaladeva takes from the Buddhists and then uses against them in *īśvara Pratyabhijñā Vimarśinī* 1.8.3: 'Spatially and temporally separated discrete states which are entirely self-confined cannot get synthesised or connected without a single continuous bridging awareness; how is any connecting or correlating possible otherwise?') If the cognitions are insulated from each other, so must be their objects.

Even if, for argument's sake, we concede that an act of recognition is a single piece of awareness, what would be the nature of its object? Is the pillar or the person that is re-identified a past one or a future one or a present one? If it is a past thing, then the awareness, strictly speaking, is a memory – which, by the way, even the Naiyāyika does not trust as a proper form of knowledge (*pramāṇa*). If it is about the future persistence of the object, then it is almost like a wish or decision (*saṃkalpa-prāyam eva tat*). If the recognition is merely of the object as it stands in the present point-instant, so much for your hope that it is going to prove the existence of an enduring object continuing from the past into the future. Thus, recognition seems to behave like a strange nomadic nun who had come with the promise to prove the permanence of things, but goes away proving their impermanence and momentariness. As for the possibility that the same object could be characterised by both pastness and presentness, the Buddhist (as represented by Jayanta) argues exactly like McTaggart against the A-series: 'is past' and 'is present' are incompatible predicates, one defined in terms of the negation of the other. How can the same thing satisfy both of them?

This last bit of argumentation of course has a long history going back to Vasubandhu's refutation in the *Abhidarmakośabhāṣya* of one of the four Sarvāstivādin views of the reality of past and future (See AKB, *kośa-sthāna* 5).

The Buddhist Attack as Summarised by Utpala

In *īśvara Pratyabhijñā Vimarśinī* 1.2, Utpala anticipates the most serious charges against the idea of a unifying, enduring self. His most intimate enemy seems to be the Yogācāra Buddhist whose standard anti-self arguments are broken down into five broad parts.

First, there is no self because none can be perceived. All perceptions belong to either of two possible types: non-conceptual perception of essenceless particulars (*svalakṣaṇābhāsam*), or conceptually articulated perception, connected to language and practical activities. It is logically impossible for an enduring self (especially one endowed with powers of knowledge, will, and action) to be evidenced by the first sort of perception. Such a perception, according to Dharmakīrti in *Pramāṇavārttika*, does not illuminate any object other than the perception itself, and it perishes instantly. Apart from the fact that the second kind of verbalisable and conceptual perception only gives us access to imaginary abstractions and generalities (*vikalpa*) and the self is not supposed to be an abstract generality, the Buddhist opponent takes all day-to-day linguistic reference to the self as reducible to references to the changing body or a bodily state or a particular mental state, and not to any 'owner' of the body or mental states. What words can refer to is what the second kind of perception can refer to. And those are never real. So no real self can be seen by any kind of perception.

Second, even the alleged inference from the phenomenon of memory fails to prove the self, because the causal linking work that the self was supposed to do is in any case done by residual traces or latent dispositional impressions (*saṃskāra*-s).

Third, even the argument from qualities to quality-possessing substance is shown to be flawed.

Fourth, the activity and voluntary movement of living people from which self was inferred in other bodies, or the so-called power of action of the Kashmir Shaiva self, is shown to be an illusion because there are no actions really in the world. What appears to be a continuous motion or action of a single body or agent is nothing but the successive emergence of distinct entities in distinct yet contiguous places.

Fifth, apart from causal succession, there are no other relations; hence no permanent self needs to exist in order to account for the relatedness of terms

appearing as objects of awareness (‘being an object of’, in particular, is not a real relation).

The most intriguing connection to be noted is between Buddhist No-selfism and the Buddhist attack against relation as incoherent, on the grounds that a relation is at once *in* two terms yet it is one. Utpaladeva must have felt compelled to write an almost word-for-word response to Dharmakīrti’s short text refuting relations because he found this link between denial of self and denial of the reality of relations to be irrefutably strong.

On some other occasion, we need to unravel the exact link between these apparently unlinked anti-realisms of the Buddhist. In this chapter we cannot and need not rehearse Utpaladeva-Abhinavagupta’s long and complicated answer to each of the anti-self arguments summarised in this second (‘Objections from the Buddhist’) chapter of Section One on Cognition (*jñānādhikāra*) of *īśvara Pratyabhijñā Vimarśinī*.

Instead, in order to get to the main troublesome issue of why we need a self at all to explain recognition and memory, let us go back to the standard Nyāya (not Kashmir Shaiva) way of meeting the Buddhist diatribe against ‘recognitive, recollective experience as a proof of the self’. This will lead us into the most fascinating time-straddling phenomenology of the backward-looking ‘that’ which is the heart of the recall aspect of recognition, for example when one discovers in amazement: ‘This old man is *that* friend I had in childhood!’ (or when we discover that we are touching that very object which we saw some time back).

Jayanta had replied to each of the above objections against recognition’s unity of content. Is the recognition ‘This is the same pillar as the one I saw yesterday’ one cognition or two? The answer is clear if we just remain faithful to our introspective report. It is a single identificatory awareness, where sense organs supply one term of the identity and re-activated memory trace supplies the other term. As to how these disparate sources could co-operate causally, the fact that they do is experientially undeniable, unlike the implausible analogy of a pot-cloth which no one has ever perceived. If a time-straddling content is presented to all self-conscious knowers, it needs an explanation in terms of different cognitive capacities working together, which is much more intuitive and unsurprising than clay and cotton threads working together to produce a single effect.

As to the nature of the object of this unitary experience, the accurate description is that it is an object delimited by the present time signalled by ‘this’ and qualified by the past time signalled by the THAT (*Nyāyamañjarī* (1983) 2.7 [p. 333]). There is no incoherence in its being past and present at once. The same entity *was* present in the past and it *is* past in the present. When the two states of the entity at different times are attributed to it, the difference between the states and the times is very much registered, rather than forgotten. Indeed, if the tense-difference is not registered, the two times would collapse into one and the continued endurance of the entity would not be registered. The past figures in this cognition *as past*.

One thing must be noted here. In later Nyāya, a sense organ’s direct access to a past (now perished) phase or quality of an object is explained in terms of an extraordinary connection between our senses and absent objects where another current or recalled awareness itself works as the connector (*jñāna-lakṣaṇāsannikarṣa*). Recognition is one of five or six contexts (including illusory experience, significantly for a Buddhist critic, and synaesthesia) where this kind of extraordinary connection is invoked. But Jayanta does not directly talk about this sort of special link through memory here. Instead, he follows the verdict of his intuitive analysis of recognitive experience as ‘mental’ (*mānasa*) and comes up with this rule:

> That a sense organ does not grasp a past object is not its fault like an ophthalmic disease. It is incapable of catching the past time as an independent object, but it does not have any inherent incapacity to grasp the past as a predicate qualifying a current object which is within its range. The sense organ is not by itself capable of accessing the past, but when it is assisted by a memory-trace it becomes so capable.[9]

Thus recognition is established to be entirely a variety of sense perception. Jayanta does not quite explicitly accept the idea of a non-ordinary contact between the external sense-organ and a remembered past object, perhaps with the assistance of the inner sense. In the next passage he considers the possibility that recognition is an apperceptive mental awareness wherein the continuous identity of the object, and reflexively of the subject, is evidenced in direct experience.

At this point, a nagging difficulty may still be raised by the Buddhist Noselfist. The past is, after all, gone and non-existent. How can it figure, even as a qualifier, in the content of a current cognition? Jayanta meets this worry with an intriguing example of counting consciousness. Suppose a

glutton has been counting as he is eating some berries. When he experiences ‘I have eaten one hundred berries,’ he *recognises* the hundredth one as hundredth only in relation – the relation of succession – to his perception of the previous 99 as previous. He does not have to see and taste all one hundred together in order to have made that perceptual counting judgement. Although those 99 berries are no longer ‘there’, they can ‘ride on the impression’ and thus the bygone past can perfume the present perception of the one hundredth berry. If, at this point, the Buddhist falls back on his general scepticism about all qualificative judgements as mere products of conceptual imagination, and not as knowledge proper (which can be of only pure given particulars), Jayanta would throw up his hands and remark: ‘Great Sir, is there anything on earth that you do not denounce as a mere figment of conceptualisation? But, long live those (realists) who trust in the veridicality of predicative perceptions!’[10]

Not that a Nyāya realist would consider recognitive perception to be infallible. But it is not to be dismissed as error simply because it is necessarily a concept-enriched perception. If someone re-identifies someone’s hair, which has been cut off once and has grown back again, to be that very same hair, such re-identification would be mistaken. Seeing a shaven head in the interval between the earlier and later perceptions would counter or invalidate this sort of re-identification, but in the case of a person’s identity across times, perceived by recognition, there is no counter-evidence of an intervening time when no self was witnessed at all. Intervals of deep sleep and so on are not periods of awareness of absence of self, but periods of absence of all awareness.

Although memory is so crucial for the Nyāya defence of a permanent self, unlike recognition, which is taken as a variety of determinative perception, a simple recollection of the past has always remained epistemically suspect to the Nyāya philosophers, at least since Udayana asked the rhetorical question: ‘But how can we even call any remembering “veridical”?’[11] The reason for this is a double bind they seemed to face: on the one hand they admitted that for the memory-awareness to be correct (unembellished) there should not be anything over and above the content of the past perception whose residual trace (*saṃskāra*) causes the memory; but on the other hand they have to deal with this element of ‘was’ or ‘pastness’ that was absent at the time of the original perception and has to be added to the memory-content in order to adjust it to the moment of

recall, or else a memory of yesterday's experience of eating an apple would figure today as 'I am eating an apple' when one is not eating an apple at all. This is a rather confusing mess for the Nyāya philosophers. In *īśvara Pratyabhijñā Vimarśinī* 1.4.2–4 Abhinavagupta directly addresses the issue of the role of felt pastness of the remembered experience at the time of remembering, while unpacking the rich and complex phenomenology behind the paradigmatic verbalisation of memory: 'That pot which I saw/which was seen by me' or simply 'That pot' with a temporal remoteness, non-current-ness, built into the backward-pointing 'That'. In direct determinate perception, the external pot can occupy centre stage, the 'I see' can recede into the background. When this same perception is recalled, the inward 'I see', adjusted into 'I saw', has to come out saliently because remembering – what Kant significantly calls 'reproductive imagination' – is more of reflective self-consciousness (*vimarśa*), and less prominently a presentation of an object outside, the object being absent at the time of remembering.[12] How can the absent object be presented (not inferentially, but directly) correctly? That was the puzzle for much early Nyāya. Abhinavagupta's subtle analysis here (under *īśvara Pratyabhijñā Vimarśinī* 1.4.2) is beyond the scope of this chapter, but it opens up an avenue for taking memory not as an 'error' of confusing the absent past with the present, but as an exercise of a power of the autonomous self to bring back and 'see as absent, feel as a "had been"' something that is not available at the present time (the time of recall). One form of this power of bringing up the absent is memory, the other form being productive or poetic imagination: 'Thus it is said that the connective experience of "that" is of the nature simultaneously of two opposite connecting experiences of the earlier and the later times.'[13] Indeed, unless the now-ness of the current experiencing time was also somehow reflectively felt, with respect to what would the then-ness (past-ness) be established? So both times, along with their mutual incompatibility, must be wrapped up together within the self's wilful re-enjoyment of its own now-absent past experiences.

From Non-apprehension to Synthesis in Recognition

This talk of absence brings me to Utpaladeva's and Abhinavagupta's subtle transcendental argument from the content of perception of absence to the existence of an abiding self, as against the Yogācāra Buddhist. The Kashmir Shaiva epistemologists openly acknowledge their debt to Dharmakīrti and the Buddhist theory of the reflexive nature of awareness (*sva-saṃvedana*): 'From amidst our opponents I have to accept a lot.'[14] But, using the logic of *reductio ad absurdum* proofs that the Buddhists used so often, Utpaladeva tries to show that if one assumes the theory of momentary self-aware states of consciousness positing their own internal 'objects' within themselves, then one would eventually have to reject the more fundamental Buddhist assumption that there is no unifying self behind this stream of discrete and object-discriminating cognitive states. One would thus be compelled to be committed to a synthesising unifying enduring self for the purpose of explaining the common practice of claiming diachronic self-identity, communication with other people and remembering other times, and so on.

Since the Buddhists, somewhat like Hume, also confess to not finding any directly perceptible self or ego besides the passing mental states, the Kashmir Shaiva epistemologists – known as the school of Recognition – analyse the phenomenon of not-finding or non-apprehension (*anupalabdhi*) rather closely. Of course, this is intimately connected to Dharmakīrti's theory of inference, where establishing the invariable concomitance, especially when it is a causally grounded connection, between prover-sign and property-to-be-inferred runs on the basis of observing co-absences and non-observance of one's presence in a place where the other is absent.

Before I get into the details of their argumentation, I wish to draw attention to an uncanny occurrence of an argument from non-apprehension in Gottlob Frege, the father of twentieth-century Analytical philosophy, where also the immediate context was the proof of a self beyond the mere subjective passing ideas. Frege's passage starts in a very Nyāya-like vein: 'Can there be a pain without someone who has it?'[15] In answer to this insistence on a substantial subject who owns the ideas but is not reducible

to them, Frege imagines that the reductionist Humean would say, ‘Can I be (just a) part of the content of my consciousness while another part is, perhaps, an idea of the moon?’ This comes very close to Dharmakīrti’s account of self-less awareness episodes which, in their reflexivity, create the illusory division within themselves of one part which calls itself the grasper ‘I’ and another part that is felt to be the external object grasped! But Frege quickly rejects this hypothetical error-theory of ‘ego’-concoction. He has a series of interesting arguments which I shall not enter into here. But one of his arguments is from non-apprehension. Here is the crucial line:

> I am not my own idea and if I assert something about myself, e.g. that I do not feel any pain at this moment, then my judgment concerns something which is not a content of my consciousness, is not my idea, that is me myself.[16]

Now, to go back to Utpaladeva’s argument against the Buddhist as explicated by Abhinavagupta. Suppose I have an experience that there is no pot here on the floor. What is the content of my awareness? Ontologically, neither the Buddhist nor the Shaiva admit that there is an additional objective entity characterising the floor called absence-of-pot. Even if we are talking to a Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosopher who does posit such an additional entity, what would be the phenomenological account of what I am seeing? The empty floor, to be sure. But if the empty floor or *only the floor* is no different from the floor, our experience would be the same when we saw the floor with or without other things, for even there the floor is the same. At best, the bare floor is experienced as distinct from the pot, which it was even when the pot was on it. To be distinct from is not necessarily to be devoid of. What, then, makes the experience a ‘non-apprehension of the pot’ possible? Not just an apprehension of the distinction between the pot and the floor, to be sure. The absence pops up as content of cognition only when the previous experience of the floor with an additional object which obstructs partially our sensation of the floor is remembered, compared with, and missed in the current unobstructed experience of the floor. Unless we can somehow demarcate the pot-less floor from the recalled pot-ful floor, we would never have a clear perception that there is no pot on the floor. This demarcation requires a comparing and contrasting of external situations and our experiences of them. Just as in the case of recognition one has to bring back the object of past experience and assert its identity

with the object of current experience, so too in non-apprehension one must recall what it would have been to encounter a floor with a pot, and then find the current experience of the bare floor to be unlike that. Then alone would the floor enter the content of the experience as not just floor-only, but as bare pot-less floor. How would a mere self-contained unowned and un-connected momentary awareness of the floor perform this feat of comparing and contrasting? That, surely, would require re-living a previous experience (with the powers of cognition, remembering, as well as the capacity to keep apart, contrast, or exclude) and recognising the different objectual feel of the current experience. Only a single cogniser that experiences, stores, recalls, and distinguishes could do this work of synthesis.

There is no point insisting that the non-apprehension of the jar is an indirect inferential outcome from the 'prover-sign' (*liṅga*): non-availability of an apprehension of the jar that is fit to be observed. Abhinavagupta shows elaborately how, first, this sort of inference would lead to an infinite regress, for non-availability itself is a kind of non-apprehension; and second, even inferences need a putting together of the perception of the prover-sign, a recall of the invariable concomitance between the sign and what is to be inferred, and a final unified judgement that such a pervaded sign could not be present in the absence of the property to be proved, and so on, which gets us back to the need for an abiding self.

Thus, from all possible escape routes, we are forced back to the requirement of synthesis and demarcation – comparison and unification – of objects (*viṣayamelanam*), which is impossible without a single thread of a self-aware self running through, but not reducible to, this passing flow of percepts and ideas. The self is most starkly not reducible to just the set of percepts or feelings when what is perceived is a mere lack of feeling, because the lack of feeling is no actual mental state or percept. Even if apprehensions can exist without an apprehender, Abhinavagupta shows us that self-conscious non-apprehension cannot. What is true specifically of *not apprehending* a pot is also true of our negative introspective reports of *not feeling* any pain or, as K.C. Bhattacharya poignantly calls it, the feeling of a lack of feeling. And I would suggest that, for the sake of argument, assuming that Hume was honestly reporting his failure to find any self, we could subject even Hume's negative claim that when he searched, he could not find any substantial self within himself to this phenomenology of non-apprehension. As a result (somewhat like the Buddhist critique of

recognition I have quoted above from Jayanta Bhaṭṭa), we could remark that non-apprehension (of a pot, or a feeling, or an impression of a pure ego) which was invoked to prove the non-existence of the self ends up proving the opposite: the existence of a transcendental unifier of experiences.

When generalised about all states of object-directed awareness, not just non-apprehension, the full chain of transcendental arguments would run roughly as follows:

1. There cannot be a state of consciousness which is not self-conscious and intentional, that is to say, which is not aware of itself as grasping a definite object (a basic Yogācāra assumption).
2. Self-consciously grasping a definite object – distinct from or the same as another object – cannot be explained without the capacities of demarcation (from objects of other experiences) and remembering or recognising (as the same object as of another experience).
3. Demarcation and re-identification are impossible without mutual comparing, connecting or synthesis of individual cognitive states. If the states were insulated within themselves, then they would have no inkling of the contents of one another. Mere causal ordering or impact on one another would not explain how two of them could be about the same object or recognised to be of related or distinct objects. Just being temporally ordered or causally connected would not suffice for the sparks of awareness (*saṃvit*) to become 'conscious about something': they would have to be recognitions of relations.
4. No (more than causal) connecting of momentary cognitive states is possible without a stable connector which can run through, know all about, distinguish, and hold together all the different cognitive states across times and places, hence not itself a momentary self-confined cognition or their mere collection. Therefore, to close the chain, there would be no states of consciousness unless there were a permanent single knower-self (and not just because states require a substratum which owns them).

What if this sort of idea of the continuous self was a congenital illusion of these cognition episodes? In every case where the Buddhist resists the idea

of commonness, either of a continuant across times or of a property across instances, his last resort is an error theory, a theory that diagnoses our ineliminable tendency to see sameness in difference as a 'mistake'. The agnostic about the self superciliously turns diagnostic about the common man's use of the concept of an abiding self. Even the above transcendental argument, they may say, rests on an innate error of positing a synthesiser of the series over and above the series.

In response, Abhinavagupta would run the same transcendental argument from the very possibility of an error. Nothing counts as an error unless it could in principle be detected or exposed. The fact that we can even make a correction to an error shows that in us there is more than a mere succession of discrete mental states. Suppose we call a particular perceptual experience an illusion. Could the invalidation of the previous experience (that it is a piece of silver) happen on the basis of an inference? Since at the time of the subsequent, veridical and corrective, experience (that it is merely mother of pearl) the previous cognition is gone and unavailable as a subject-term (*pakṣa*) of the inference ('That cognition was erroneous because ...'), any such inference would suffer from the fallacy of unestablished subject-term (*īśvara Pratyabhijñā Vimarśinī* (1986) 1.7.13).

Suppose, for the sake of argument, that there is simply a causally connected succession of two distinct and un-owned (Yogācāra Buddhist sort of) representational cognitive states of the form 'That is water over there' (C1), and then 'There is just a dry sun-heated surface at a distance' (C2). How is the second going to cancel the first and prove it to have been an error? If the correction or cancellation happens simply because when C2 arises C1 has perished, then every subsequent awareness will count as a correction or falsification of the previous one. But for a cognitive episode to end is not for it to be cancelled as mistaken. Nor is there any natural epistemic enmity or contrariety between a previous awareness and a later one simply because one is earlier and the other later. Unless there is a single knower who owns them both and refers them both to a single object (*ekaviṣayatayā vinā*), recognises that something cannot be both a pool of water and a dry heated surface at the same time, and also evaluates C2 to be more accurate than C1, detection of error would be impossible (*īśvara Pratyabhijñākārikā* 1.7.6–13). Thus, any perceptual error, or any error for that matter, presupposes the existence of a non-momentary perduring self.

Of course, the thread of memory runs through all of the above arguments, from recognition to non-apprehension to error-correction. Of the three powers enriching the self listed by Utpaladeva – the power of awareness, the power of remembering, and the power of distinguishing or excluding – it is the middle one about which Abhinavagupta announced: 'It is in the power of remembering that the self's ultimate freedom consists. I am free because I remember!'[17]

Synthesis Goes Beyond the Individual: From Other Times to Other Subjects

Holding together (*samanvaya*), then, is the lynchpin of the Kashmir Shaiva argument for the existence of the self (*īśvara Pratyabhijñā Vimarśinī* 1.7.2–3 [p. 357], and also 1.7.13). But this unification goes beyond the embodied individual selves. Jayanta was interested only in proving a permanent individual soul, a distinct one in each body. But Abhinavagupta is not content with that alone. Once he has the transcendental argument from synthesis of cognitions to a constant unifier, he uses it to extend that unity beyond a single knower to include the consciousness of so-called other knowers (*santānāntara*, *pramātrantara*). A Nyāya metaphysician would find this outrageously over the top (*atiprasaṅga*). But Abhinavagupta claims that he is simply generalising the same argument from synthesis or reconnecting (*samanvaya* or *anusandhāna*).

Until now we seem to have proven that all that a single person comes to be conscious of must be somehow interconnected with a self-enjoying creative I-consciousness, which weaves them into some sort of oneness that is tolerant of a projected plurality of objects and places and times. But what about the distinction between one knower and another, between myself and others?

Abhinavagupta gives a very subtle argument to overcome even that basic otherness. First, let it be admitted that my own consciousness is known to me directly. I know what it is like to be self-aware and aware of objects. And if, say in the context of an effort at empathy with a friend, I feel acutely that I am *not* quite feeling this friend's own emotions, as a missed

feeling don't I have to subjectively be aware of those emotions, in however inadequate a fashion? (*īśvara Pratyabhijñā Vimarśinī* 1.1.4 [pp. 75–6])

In that sense, could not the unfelt pleasures and pains of another person need to become objects of my direct awareness as what I fail to feel, just as a remembered even is experienced by the same experiencer as what is not now happening? What is it that I ruefully miss when I confess that I cannot feel even my closest friend's own pain as he feels it? Compare me at other times with the other self now. Just as in order to remember (and miss) my past as my past (not as my present), I had to connect and re-live the bygone experience with the present one, so too in order to think of the other person as another subject I have to connect his subjectivity with mine. Notice that even distinguishing requires connecting or relating. If A and B cannot be considered simultaneously, they cannot be distinguished, especially when A is gone whenever B comes or A has absolutely no access to B.

My self-awareness manifests itself through my bodily life-activities, and I notice others' bodily activities just as immediately as I notice my own, though there are differences of clarity of access set up by our habitual walls of individuality. Now, observable actions of sentient beings are quite distinct from mere physical movements. As Abhinavagupta remarks in *īśvara Pratyabhijñā Vivṛti Vimarśinī* (1.1.5. [p. 105]), the observed going of a living being is not like the observed movement of water or the rolling of a stone; neither is the motionless sitting by a person similar to the motionlessness of a stone. It is undeniable that we notice the actions of others as movements or postures enlivened by the self-sentient 'feels', even if they are not 'my feels'. Just as 'He knows' is said as an abbreviation of 'He is in a position to say "I know,"' similarly, 'He walks' is asserted by me to the extent that I can feel what it is for him to make himself aware that 'I am walking.' Thus, even others' actions are observed (not inferred) by us to be tingling with the same subjectivity as I feel behind my voluntary actions. We must reject the suggestion that our knowledge of other minds is merely an analogical inference. The word used by Utpala in the context of our awareness of consciousness in other bodies is *ūhyate* (*īśvara Pratyabhijñākārikā* 1.1.4). And Abhinavagupta clarifies: '*ūhyate*' does not mean that others' sensations are merely inferred. To do '*ūha*' is to intuitively extrapolate or to generalise through substitution (as in the original Mīmāṃsā context of ritual substitution of objects) or to directly postulate from 'otherwise inexplicability' to make it highly likely. Here, the

process is partly a function of our sense-organs: we see that the other is in pain, we feel their pleasure (sometimes more than at other times). Thus, the word *ūha* here signifies 'direct acquaintance'.[18]

When we are thus sensuously aware of the power of activity in others' bodies as something cognitive and conscious, this awareness inside others does not appear to us as a 'this', as a mere inert material property. To be a 'this' is to be not of the nature of light; a mere *this* obstructs the light as non-conscious mere object. Whatever the modern brain-mind identity theorist may say, when I say and *see* that my friend is suffering or my daughter is singing happily, I do not mean thereby that she is undergoing some physical objective, even in her C-fibres or in her amygdala or somewhere else in her body. I mean exactly the same sort of thing as what I mean when I say that I am in pain or I am singing (something as subjectively feelable as that), even if I do not feel it as mine in this instance. If a state of consciousness appears as a 'this thing out there', then it is not appearing as a state of consciousness at all, hence it is as good as not appearing. But others' states of consciousness are 'seen' in their faces and postures and felt through sympathy (to make a Wittgensteinian point, minus Wittgenstein's allergy to the 'inner'). Therefore, even others' mental states appear to us as subjective, as connected to the 'I'. The otherness only belongs to the adjuncts and dividers such as these outer bodies, but the consciousness ascribed to them, qua consciousness, rests on the I-ness of the knower-in-general, as much as my own consciousness rests on the I-ness.

Self-ascription of conscious states may well be dependent upon other-ascription of those states. (I am wittingly reading Strawson into Abhinavagupta here, with no claim of an accurate interpretation of either.) Unless we are interpreters of others' conscious behaviour – both linguistic and non-linguistic – we cannot be self-interpreters. At the very foundation of self-consciousness lie these two kinds of integrative capacities: the capacity to link, compare, and place on a par the subjectivity in others with the subjectivity in myself, and the capacity to integrate the bits of my own states over time into one centre of experience. Thus the argument from the requirement of synthesis, in Abhinavagupta, works for other people as well as for other times.

Here is his final dramatic clinching of the argument:

> That inner vibrant active power – as self-luminous as the power of awareness ..., when it is realised through the medium of another body, etc. makes its own awareness-essence known. An awareness never manifests itself as a 'this' (mere inert object). To be a 'this' is to be un-awareness, to be foreign to illumination or manifestation. Whatever manifests itself has the shape of an 'I'. Hence, even another person's awareness is one's own self, the otherness is only of the adjuncts such as bodies; even that, when examined rationally, is not really outside subjective consciousness. Thus, at the level of ultimate truth, all knowers of the world are only one knower, and he alone exists.[19]

Besides our limited – for him, illusory – individual self, Abhinavagupta 'recognises' a real universal Subject, an infinite 'I', where all self-regarding and other-regarding concerns rest, the stopping place for all reason-seeking and all conscious craving and relishing and marvelling. When the universe is recognised to be contained within this non-individualistic (yet divinely personal) subjectivity of this 'all that I am', divisive egoistic craving and existential suffering cease and life becomes a perpetual festival. The process of arriving at this boundless unified Self through logical analysis of remembering, re-identifying, distinguishing, non-apprehension, inferring, and error-correction is rather complex. And my hunch is that the argumentation process itself is part of the meditation. After all, Abhinavagupta does insist (in *Tantrāloka*, Book 6) that good reasoning (*sattarka*) is the best of all methods of Yoga!

From Rejection of the Individual Indexical 'I' to 'I am My World'

This brings me back to one Mādhyamika Buddhist argument that questions the very idea of the first-person as incoherent. Here is Āryadeva's ingenious argument:

> This is also why the self, essentially, does not exist. Had the self been essentially real, then, just as it is the basis/support of one person's ego-usage [*ahaṃkāra*] it would have been also the basis/support of everyone's. Since in this world, hotness is the essential nature of fire, we do not find some fires which are not hot (but cold). Just like that, if the self essentially existed, then it would be the self for all, and would be the target of everyone's use of 'I' (object of everyone's ego-usage). But it is not so, hence it is said: 'What is your self is my non-self (for me it is an other/not-self), therefore this self is not necessarily (universally, as a rule) a self.'

> Isn't it simply an imaginary super-imposition of titles (such as 'I', 'the self', 'the person', etc.) on impermanent entities?[20]

If we go back to the original metaphysical formulation of the Mādhyamika Buddhist argument, it simply makes the following point. If something is real, it must be the same for all. But the so-called self is not the same for all. So it must be unreal, a figment of imagination. Even after we have exposed some ambiguity or even fallacy in the argument, we cannot get away from the haunting attraction of this metaphysical insight: *If, objectively, there were a self, would it not be a self for everyone?*

Perhaps there are two distinct insights behind this. The first is a general constraint on ontological commitment: only that entity could be said to exist with a real objective nature, which would be recognised to be of that same nature from an impersonal view from nowhere. The second is a phenomenological observation about the sense of self: the self is only a myself from a single person's unshareable egocentric point of view. From every other point of view, it is an other, a non-self.

We could question both these initially appealing claims. It is easier to challenge the first austere criterion of objective existence. A mother does not have to be everyone's mother in order to really be a mother! (Of course the counter-challenge could be that being the first-person is not a relational property like being a mother. Or is it?) But let us try to explore a radical rebuttal of the second, nearly universally accepted, phenomenological claim about the unshareability of the sense of self, in the light of the surprising set of arguments given by Abhinavagupta in order to establish an enduring, relation-enabling, experience-reconnecting, synthesising self, against the Yogācāra Buddhist theory of a mere succession of self-aware but mutually insulated, momentary mental states.

Yes, indeed, if what is the I = Self for you were totally an Other = Non-self for me, then the category of the I = Self would be metaphysically suspect. Let us grant Āryadeva that (though Jayanta or any other Naiyāyika would never concede this premise).

But is it correct that your self is my non-self, that your awareness is something I have no first-person subjective access to? Could we not revisit the question, not just semantically, but phenomenologically, if your 'I' could be my 'I' too? When I directly feel your pain from inside, and even when I register my failure to enter into your experience in that uniquely subjective way (Failure to experience what? Your subjective feel, right?

How do I know that I am missing that?), I have to have an identificatory absence-recognising inkling of that common (but distinction-tolerant) same subjecthood, the same I-ness that you, I, God – or, according to Abhinavagupta, even a worm – feels by virtue of simply feeling alive. (The intricate argumentation from recognition of alive-ness in others to the recognition of their selfhood is rehearsed in *īśvara Pratyabhijñā Vivṛti Vimarśinī* 1.1.5. [vol. 1, pp. 104–9].)

For Abhinavagupta, to think of consciousness or cognition is to think of the 'I' (nothing to do with the limited ego). This 'I' is the same for me and you and others. Its very all-encompassing relation-making self-distinguishing reflexive phenomenal character resists genuine multiplicity or total otherness. Therefore, this all-unifying universal Self exists objectively – that is, for all of us – but not as an object. All of us and all objects that we re-identify and co-perceive exist within this self-conscious Self. Indeed, in all its glory and playfulness of projecting numerous others within and against itself, this universal consciousness makes a small 'I' of each arbitrarily and magically constructed embodied knower, and a 'You' of all the rest. Pretending that all those others are mere 'those living things over there' and then re-identifying them back in oneself, through aesthetic and spiritual experience, this all-encompassing subjectivity may be all that there really is. All the knowers of the world unite in this single wavy ocean of self-awareness.

This metaphysics of Kashmir Shaivism may be just as revisionary as Buddhist No-selfism, extreme denial of the first-person being responded to by an equally extreme all-embracing affirmation. But it is a fascinating philosophical example of using radical cognitive atomism – where everything falls apart into linkless windowless particulars – to swing back dialectically to an opposite extreme of cognitive holism, binding everything with a single thread of synthesis.[21]

[1] *īśvara Pratyabhijñā Vimarśinī* 1.7.13–14.

[2] Geach (1979: 38).

[3] ‘nāsti me pratijñā, tato nāsti me doṣaḥ’; *Vigrahavyāvartanī* by Nāgārjuna (2002) 2.29.

[4] ‘Buddham śaranam gacchāmi’.

[5] *Nyāyamañjarī* (1983) Part 2, p. 295.

[6] *īśvara Pratyabhijñā Vimarśinī* 1.7.2–5.

[7] *Nyāyamañjarī* (1983) Part 2, p. 295.

[8] The following diatribe is my free translation/summary of Jayanta Bhaṭṭa’s dramatisation of standard Buddhist polemic against the Nyāya argument from recognition that seeks to establish the diachronic identity of a permanent self. See ibid.: 308–35.

[9] Ibid.: 334.

[10] Ibid.: 332.

[11] Quoted by Gaṅgeśa in the last sentence of *Savikalpakavāda* of *Tattvacintāmaṇi*, Part One on perception. See the translation in Phillips (2004).

[12] See Torella (1994: 106, fn. 12).

[13] ‘viruddha pūrvāpara parāmarśa svabhāva eva ‘sa’ iti parāmarśa ucyate’; *īśvara Pratyabhijñā Vimarśinī* 1.4.1 [p. 153].

[14] ‘pūrvapakṣamadhyāt mayā bahu angīkartavyam’; ibid.: 1.3.1.

[15] Strawson (1967: 33).

[16] Ibid.

[17] ‘smaraṇa śaktir eva hi paramam svātantryam’; *īśvara Pratyabhijñā Vivṛti Vimarśinī* 1.4.1 [vol. 2, p. 4].

[18] ‘atra aṃśe indriyavayaparaṇam api asti ... tataś ca sākṣātkaram upalakṣayati “uhaḥ”’; *īśvara Pratyabhijñā Vivṛti Vimarśinī* 1.1.5 [vol. 1, p. 101].

[19] ‘āntarī kriyāśaktiḥ sa ca para-śarīrādisāhityena avagatā svaṃ svabhāvaṃ jñānātmakam avagamayati, no ca jñānam idantayā bhāti ... bhāti ca yat tad eva aham ity asya vapuḥ iti para-jñānam svātmā eva ... viśvaḥ pramātṛvargaḥ paramārthataḥ ekaḥ pramātā, sa eva ca asti’;*īśvara Pratyabhijñā Vivṛti Vimarśinī* 1.1.4 [vol. 1, p.76].

[20] *Catuḥśataka* (1974) 10.3.

[21] My understanding of the immensely complex argumentation in *īśvara Pratyabhijñā Vimarśinī* and *īśvara Pratyabhijñā Vivṛti Vimarśinī* is still in the making. But whatever clarity I have reached after my own struggle with the texts is partly thanks to reading Prof. Raffaele Torella’s excellent book and expository papers on this subject and to discussion, with decades-long gaps, with Prof. Navjivan Rastogi.

Chapter 13
Indian Philosophy and the Question of the Self

Ankur Barua

Approaching Indian Philosophy through the Self

The status of ‘Indian philosophy’ as an intellectually acceptable branch of ‘academic philosophy’ continues to be debated, not only in Western institutions, where it appears as a kind of supplement to more mainstream philosophical courses, but also in various Indian circles, where its relation to Western philosophy remains a matter of intense dispute. In the former, dominated significantly over the last hundred years by Anglophone analytic philosophy, Indian philosophy has often been associated with woolly-headed mysticism or irrational leaps to the authority of scriptural texts, and charged with being deficient in rigorous and methodical analysis (Krishna 1991). Perhaps most damning of all is the criticism that Indian philosophy is entangled with ‘religion’, and for analytic philosophers who have sometimes marched under the banner of positivistic empiricism, such metaphysical flights of fantasy were meaningless, unintelligible or nonsensical in a post-Kantian post-Humean world. Even outside analytic circles, figures such as Heidegger were not particularly kind to what they saw as the pretensions of Indian thought to be philosophical, hammering down the thesis that there cannot be philosophy east of Eden. An almost unbroken tradition of European writing, starting from the early nineteenth century down to Edmund Husserl in the last, equated the concept of ‘philosophy’ with the spirit of ‘pure theory’, ‘rejection of *mythos*’ and ‘autonomous thinking’ which were believed to be distinctively Greek and

hence lacking in the Indian and Oriental traditions (Halbfass 1990: 145–59). On the Indian subcontinent, the picture is somewhat more complicated, though almost every intellectual figure has strongly opposed, even if for different reasons, the exclusion of ‘Indian philosophy’ from the European canon. On the one hand, several figures connected with the ‘Hindu Renaissance’ took a robustly nativist line and argued that not only did ‘Indian philosophy’ possess all the technical resources of logic and epistemology that Western philosophers had developed, but also that it was philosophy *par excellence*, for it took the practitioner, the one who possessed *darśana*, to the highest goal of human existence. Some pivotal figures of neo-Hinduism such as Swami Vivekananda and S. Radhakrishnan often presented Indian ‘philosophy’ in oppositional terms to European ‘philosophy’, such that while the latter was evaluated as merely rational, analytic and located on the empirical plane, the former was put forward as essentially spiritual, based on ‘intuitive experience’ and providing an overarching framework synthesising the European manifold of ‘economics’, ‘socio-political existence’ and ‘religion’ (Radhakrishnan 1927). On the other hand, however, such articulations have now been brought under the Said scanner and shown to be yet another European construct which was foisted upon the natives, who, in perpetuating the colonial legacy, continue to reinforce their masters’ view of Indian philosophy as the other of Western philosophy. It is argued that Indian philosophy is mischaracterised as obsessively concerned with spirituality, for it includes rich traditions of debate, analysis and argumentation.

Any comparative philosophical analysis between Western and Indian traditions has to be alive to these historical debates, not least because to the extent that the definition or conception of ‘philosophy’ is itself a philosophical enterprise, they can sensitise us to the twin dangers of regarding Indian philosophy as an appendage of ready-made solutions to the academically recognised problems of Western philosophy, and of consigning Indian philosophy to a zone of radical alterity whose issues and solutions are incomprehensible to the outsider. In a sense, the predicaments of the project of comparative philosophy are ones shared with disciplines such as social anthropology, which also have to grapple with the following dilemma: on the one hand, alerted by colonial discourse, they seek to uncover the voices that they claim were distorted through their inclusion into Eurocentric narratives, but on the other hand, their emphasis on the

centrality of otherness threatens to return indigenous modes of thinking once again to the category of the exotic (Suleri 1992: 12–13). For comparative philosophers who are aware of this methodological wrangling, there are at least two lessons. First, the question ‘Is there *philosophy* in India?’ did not suddenly emerge out of a conceptual vacuum, but gradually through a dynamic transactional process characterised by multiple alliances, intersections, oppositions and adjustments between domestic perspectives and a range of European self-understandings on this matter. In other words, the question was to some extent forced upon the Indian intelligentsia located at the ‘contact zones’ where certain indigenous notions were proposed through a statement of cultural self-affirmation as not only roughly equivalent to the European notions of ‘philosophy’, but also subsuming the latter within their more comprehensive reach. Second, there are formidable problems associated with translating terms, or finding their equivalents, across traditions, and hence we should be wary of constructing too easily ‘family resemblances’ or a Procrustean bed of a ‘common core’ into which these can be compressed (Larson and Deutsch 1988). For example, the semantic range that has been developed in Sanskrit and modern Indian languages to translate ‘philosophy’ encompasses *darśana*, *tattvadarśana*, *tattvajñāna* and *tattvavidyā*, but whether or not these latter are assessed as accurate, or at least adequate, will rely significantly on one’s judgement of how satisfactorily they are able to capture the range of meanings associated with the former within its European contexts.

A full-scale cross-cultural enquiry into the status of ‘Indian philosophy’ of this sort will be a voluminous ‘global history of philosophy’, highlighting thematically and chronologically the various parallels and oppositions between conceptions of ‘philosophy’ East and West. In lieu of such an enquiry, we shall attempt to show here how the centrality of the self in classical Indian thought highlights not only the bits of truth in the perspectives on Indian philosophy noted above, but also the crucial importance of metaphysics, epistemology and ethics in the Indian philosophical traditions. To begin with, now that the boundaries between analytic and Continental philosophy have been softened, and the ‘method of analysis’ is regarded more as one possible style of philosophising and not exhausting the content of ‘philosophy’ itself, the sense of an intrinsic antagonism between analytic philosophy and Indian thought has gradually subsided. Significant work on aspects of Indian intellectual concerns with

reality, mind and language has emerged over recent decades, highlighting the presence of issues, debates and enquiries that parallel those which have come to be accepted as ‘philosophical’ in Western contexts (Matilal and Shaw 1985). To this extent, post-Orientalist scholars are correct in pointing out that the question of liberation, in turn related to the question of the self, which with some exceptions was always in the background of the different Indian traditions, did not act as an impediment to enquiries into logic, ontology, hermeneutics and so on. Even the Vedantic traditions, where the self looms larger than elsewhere, are a rich product of the interplay of revelation, human experience, reason and scriptural exegesis. They are characterised both by the dominant soteriological concern of moving out of the cycles of re-embodiment, and by a high level of systematic reflection in order to clarify the character of human response to the structure of reality and to confront the alternative viewpoints of the rival schools of Vedantic interpretation. Given the centrality of the self in some of the Indian traditions, neo-Hindu proponents of Indian spirituality and Western seekers for liberation who have taken the turn to the East are not entirely off the mark. This ‘self-obsession’ is the basis of the most widely enunciated view of ‘Indian philosophy’, especially in the so-called new religious movements: whereas Western philosophy is a bundle of logical tricks, Indian philosophy is a ‘way of life’, integrating at one stroke the seamless unity that Western materialism has seemingly torn asunder. However, a closer study of the sources of Western philosophy reveals that the turn to the self is not an exclusively Indian concern either, and the notion of philosophy as a therapy for the ailments of the self, often put forward as the distinctive mark of *darśana*, has parallels in the Western tradition. The ancient Greeks developed various technologies of the self, and Epicurus brings out an important aspect of Hellenistic philosophy when he says:

> Empty are the words of the philosopher who offers therapy for no human suffering. For just as there is no use in medical expertise if it does not give therapy for bodily diseases, so too there is no use in philosophy if its does not expel the suffering of the soul. (Long and Sedley 1987: 155)

Further, neo-Platonist spirituality, Catholic mysticism and Montaigne’s scepticism are different variations on the turn to the self even before Descartes arrived on the scene.

The upshot of our discussion so far is that the focal position of the self in the Indian intellectual traditions can be a useful point of departure into a comparative study of the presence or absence of ‘philosophy’ in India. While the concern with the care of the self has often been charged with leading Indians away from more properly ‘philosophical’ tasks, a comprehensive survey of the Western and Indian traditions shows, as we pointed out above, that this criticism is somewhat misguided – Plato, Spinoza, Kierkegaard, Wittgenstein and others who are part of the Western canon of philosophers also brought something of their ‘self anxiety’ into their philosophical ruminations. Further, as we shall note in the following, an analysis of some of the classical Indian approaches to the self reveals that the question of the self is a converging point for various issues that continue to be debated by contemporary Western philosophers.

Metaphysics of the Self in Classical Indian Thought

One of the reasons for the hostility towards ‘Indian philosophy’ has been the acceptance within Western philosophical circles of the Kantian rejection of metaphysics as the illegitimate extrapolations of reason to a domain outside the bounds of sense, and the perception that Indian thought is deeply metaphysical in this sense. However, there is another understanding of metaphysics within the Western tradition as an enquiry into what there is or a delineation of the categories of existence. In this sense, metaphysics has been an honourable enterprise from Aristotle to Leibniz, and has re-emerged as a central concern of analytic philosophers dealing with the issues of possible worlds, necessity and essences. These metaphysical explorations can be seen as an attempt to draw up an inventory of the ‘things’ that constitute the world, whether in terms of bare particulars possessing particulars or bundles of insubstantial entities which are concurrent. In this broader sense, classical Indian thought has two clearly sketched metaphysical positions: the Vedāntic and the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika which holds that the empirical world is composed of ‘substances’, and the Buddhist which decomposes them into insubstantial bundles of ‘events’. The debate is essentially over ontological primacy, for both sides wish to

claim that they respect – even if at least provisionally – our pre-philosophical intuitions about what there is. For instance, the Vedantic thinkers, especially of the Advaitic camp, do not seek to write away the experiences of temporal change as mere illusions grounded in utter nothingness; rather, they claim that a rational analysis of the phenomenon of persistence through time leads to the conclusion that ultimately only pure qualityless Brahman *is* (Mahadevan 1938). On their part, most Buddhists, while they adhere to a doctrine of universal flux which rules out the possibility of enduring essences, do not claim that the perception of objects as permanent entities is completely unfounded. Indeed, it is based in the psychological apparatus of human beings who through conceptual activity superimpose constructs onto the seamless flow of events and thereby solidify them into substantial objects (Gowans 2003). For both sides, this dispute is not 'merely academic', for, as we shall shortly note, its ramifications spread out to their views on the ethical enterprise, as well as the means to the highest end of human existence.

The notion of 'substance' is invoked to explain two somewhat different sets of observations about sameness, one synchronic and the other diachronic. First, it is claimed that concrete particulars can be regarded as composed of various attributes, and since these attributes cannot be disembodied, they must be borne by something which is not itself an attribute, but is the bearer of the attributes. For instance, in a red ball, its redness, weight, sphericity and so on are inherent in something that in itself does not possess any of these attributes, but is a bare particular. Consequently, the concrete particulars – or the 'things' that populate the world – are not ontologically basic, but derived from simpler entities, namely the bare substratum that provides the 'glue' holding together its attributes. Second, this fine-grained analysis of objects also helps us to make sense of the persistence of numerically the same 'thing' through time: the bare particular remains a substantial whole independent of its attributes and qualities. Further, historically at least, most philosophers who have accepted the metaphysical apparatus of substances and properties have been presentists about time and argued that only what is in the present 'now' really exists, as well as endurantists and argued that concrete particulars exist completely at different points of time. Therefore, a philosopher who accepts the combination of the views outlined here will hold that when a green, raw mango becomes over a period of a week a yellow, ripe mango, it

is the same substantial whole that is completely present at each point of time over the week. The raw mango – which does not exist now – is numerically identical with the ripe mango – which is present now – and the rawness and the ripeness are two temporally indexed properties of the enduring bare particular (Loux 1998: 92–129).

Although it is sometimes held that talk of substrata – that is, things that have no essential properties – is incoherent, there have been some influential revisions of the notion of 'substance' in the current philosophical discussion. From a historical point of view, seventeenth-century Western philosophers such as Descartes and Locke, on the one hand, and classical Indian Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophers would have broadly accepted this picture of substrata and properties. Locke, for instance, argued in the following manner: 'Not imagining how these simple ideas subsist by themselves, we accustom ourselves to suppose some *substratum* wherein they do subsist and from which they do result, and which therefore we call substance' (Yolton 1965: 245). In the Indian tradition, the source of philosophical speculation about the substantial self is, of course, the Upaniṣads, where, as Brian Black has shown in Chapter 1, the self is portrayed as the underlying foundation of cognitive capacities, but characterised in negative terms because it itself is not an object that can be cognitively grasped. The Upaniṣadic statements about the self became for the later tradition the source texts for the different schools: the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas and the Mīmāṃsā taking the position that the unity of subjective experience required as its precondition a substantial foundation, and Advaita arguing that this psycho-physiological foundation was ultimately an illusion that had to be overcome. For the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas, it is an empirical generalisation that attributes such as smell and taste are supported by substances, and that these substances are perceived to be different from their attributes. The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, as a realist school, accepted a plurality of substances, including the substantial self, with desire, aversion, volition, pleasure, pain and cognition being the marks of the latter. A self, on this substantialist account, is ontologically distinct from other substances, including other selves, has certain essential properties such as cognition and agency, and is capable of self-awareness (Chakrabarti 2001). While Mīmāṃsā, another realist school, views the self as a substantial entity, it develops an understanding of subjecthood not through ontological considerations, but through a hermeneutical concern with ritual action. As

Elisa Freschi notes in Chapter 9, the Mīmāṃsā position is that an individual gains her sense of being a subject through the summons of a Vedic text such as 'the one who is desirous of heaven should sacrifice', which makes her aware of herself as the person who is referred to in the text.

The Advaitins, however, accept distinct substantial 'things' to be real only as convenient fictions which facilitate ordinary discourse by enabling us to label different types of stuff with names. They claim that a logical analysis of the relationship between a substance and its properties, regarding them as distinct entities, leads to incoherence. Their argument is, in effect, a version of the doctrine that all 'relations' are internal, and that no sense can be made of external relations between independently existing entities. Further, their reading of the causal doctrine of *satkāryavāda* – according to which the effect pre-exists in the cause – led them to regard the temporally indexed qualities of a substance as merely apparent transformations or insubstantial appearances. There is only one numerically identical 'bare particular' – namely, Brahman – which, according to scripture, is pure being, consciousness and bliss, and remains unchanged through the three times while its temporally indexed properties come to be and pass away. The phenomenal ego, with its numerous empirical experiences, is therefore not the transcendental Self which is in itself without attributes, though individuals mistakenly attribute various properties to it (Indich 1980). As Mikel Burley points out in Chapter 3, a standard criticism of the Sāṃkhya system from Advaita's perspective is that because the true self, *puruṣa*, is supposed to be contentless, the notion of a multiplicity of such consciousnesses is absurd because they cannot be individuated in the absence of any objective content. The transcendental self, according to Advaita, is wrongly conceived to be a substantial inhabitant of the world, hence giving rise to the illusion of plurality of distinct selves; it should rather be viewed as the clearing or the space within which empirical entities – themselves ultimately insubstantial – are constituted by the psychological self as objects of experience. That is, ultimately Advaita rejects the analysis of consciousness as a substantial self with conscious states; as MacKenzie notes, consciousness for Advaita is pure reflexivity, and is not directed towards any objects.

In direct contrast to metaphysicians who speak of substrata and qualities are those who view, for reasons of ontological parsimony, things as

collections of insubstantial entities, whether these latter are events, properties or tropes. These bundle theorists, as they are called, are usually of an empiricist bent, and claim that the assertion that there are bare entities with no qualities or properties is meaningless. Rather, concrete particulars are clusters of qualities which are co-present or co-actualised, and which exist at the most ontologically basic level (Hoffman and Rosenkrantz 1997: 26). While bundle theorists can sidestep the question of the ontological 'glue' that holds together the cluster by regarding the relation of co-location or co-presence as ontologically primitive, they have to deal with a more difficult issue in connection with the phenomenon of persistence through change. Since the unity of 'things' is explained in terms of bundles, and since change involves alteration of the bundles, it would seem that a 'thing' cannot remain numerically identical to itself after a change. A possible solution for the bundle theorist is to accept a perdurantist analysis of persistence which views concrete particulars as aggregates of temporal parts. Further, perdurantists are usually also eternalists about time – that is, they hold that objects are four-dimensional beings and have a temporal spread within which there is an order among the different slices, and all these slices have the same ontological status. In other words, objects have not only spatial parts, but also temporal parts, so that a concrete particular is a sequence of temporal slices that exist at different times, each slice itself being a cluster of insubstantial events, qualities or processes. Therefore, when a raw apple ripens, the process can be understood in the following terms: there is a single concrete particular, the apple, which is a collection of temporal parts which are related through spatiotemporal connectedness. The apple is a numerically identical space-time being with a temporal extension of different temporal phases which are tenselessly real (Loux 1998: 202–32).

The counterpart to the bundle theorists in classical India were the Buddhists, for whom the self is a bundle of insubstantial events or processes which are classified into five aggregates interacting with one another. It is a matter of scholarly dispute as to whether the Buddhist teaching of *anattā*, often translated as 'no-self', was formulated as a direct rejection of Upaniṣadic, and later Vedāntic, teachings of the substantial self. As Black shows in his survey of some early Buddhist texts such as the Nikāyas in Chapter 1, while the Buddhists debated about selfhood with various traditions, their primary opponents were not Brahmins, and while Brahmins

are indeed depicted as their main rivals, their debates with Brahmins are not about the self. Furthermore, both the Upaniṣads and the Nikāyas use similar dialogical narratives between teacher and student and a similar range of metaphors, which suggests that the later boundaries between post-Upaniṣadic Hindu thought and Buddhism were not sharply drawn in the early development of the Buddhist tradition. Nevertheless, while the Buddha may not have explicitly stated that 'there is no self', it is clear that the early Buddhist texts also deny that there is an inner controller, foundation or establishment for the psycho-physical components (*skandha*s) into which the human person is deconstructed. Given the pragmatic thrust of Buddhist teaching, one might therefore view *anattā* not so much as a doctrinal standpoint, but as a 'soteriological strategy' for reinforcing in the aspirant for liberation appreciation of the lack of permanence in all empirical phenomena. The world is correctly viewed not as composed of permanent substrata with their fleeting qualities, but as a collection of interdependent processes, none of which bears the mark of substance, but which are related to one another through dependent origination (*pratītya-samutpāda*). Therefore, in place of a substantial self that is ontologically distinct from its properties such as thoughts and feelings, there are simply interrelated processes of cognitions and feelings, and no 'I' that possesses or comprehends these events as 'mine' (Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi 1995: 232). In terms of the vocabulary that we have been using, the Buddhist conception of the self can therefore be regarded in perdurantist terms as a collection of temporal slices of cognitions, volitions and perceptions, which through causal connectedness are sufficiently overlapping to make possible reference to one such stream as one individual. As Jonardon Ganeri points out in Chapter 4, with specific reference to Vasubandhu, there is no 'owner' of the stream of mental particulars; if we speak of a 'person' in this case, we must understand it to mean not a metaphysical macrostate, but simply a resultant property of these particulars. Therefore, the explanation of persistence through change is not that of a singular being as consisting of temporal stages of one concrete particular, but in terms of qualitative similarity across the temporal stages. As the *Questions of King Milinda* puts it, the adult who grows out of the child is neither the same nor another – a statement which seems to presuppose a presentist analysis of change: the child, non-existent now, has conditioned the present adult, but there is no

concrete particular of which these two phases are constituents (Mendis 1993: 39).

However, it is precisely the combination of the acceptance of the perdurantist analysis with the rejection of an underlying *what* which unifies the temporal stages that gives rise to some of the most debated issues in Buddhist thought. While the Buddhist analysis decomposes persons into insubstantial events, by regarding the 'glue' that supposedly holds them together to the substantial self as a misconception, the crucial question is whether causal connectedness is sufficient to ground the sort of personal identity which would seem to be required to answer questions such as '*Who* attains *nirvāṇa*?' As Burley's discussion in Chapter 3 of certain puzzling aspects of the Sāṃkhya system shows, it faces a somewhat similar problem: if the self is to overcome its misconception about personal identity, it must be able to discriminate between itself as pure transcendent witness and its phenomenal cognitive apparatus, but given the self's passivity, it seems it is incapable of undergoing such a process of enlightenment. The somewhat counterintuitive response seems to be that ultimately there is 'nobody' who is liberated, because the self was never really in bondage, as Sāṃkhya, Yoga and Advaita Vedānta affirm, or because the self was mistakenly believed to be an enduring essential entity, as Buddhism counters.

There seem to be at least three standpoints on this issue, two Buddhist and one Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, which deal with the paradox in somewhat different ways. First, one could argue that process selves are collections of sufficiently internally integrated and organised processes to explain our sense of unity of consciousness in terms of character traits, dispositions and propensities, but the latter should be understood not as properties of bare substrata, but themselves as impermanent processes which are densely interrelated with neighbouring processes. The five aggregates which constitute the 'person' at one temporal slice are causally connected to those which constitute it at the next, so that all statements of the type 'I am thinking' should be systematically translated into statements of the type 'There are cognitions causally producing subsequent ones.' In line with contemporary philosophers of mind who accept some form of 'non-reductive physicalism' or 'emergence', one can carry further the previous point and argue that in a sufficiently integrated complex of material form, on the one hand, and cognitions, perceptions and volitions, on the other

hand, there arises as a higher-order property a sense of subjective unity, which therefore is not ontologically prior to these closely integrated processes. Second, however, the combination of a perdurantist analysis of persistence in terms of collections of temporal stages and a presentist view of time can be pushed in one direction to conclude that all talk of change is incoherent. If the apple which was green three days ago is non-existent, it cannot meaningfully be said to be the cause of the red apple, which is existent now, and the same analysis holds for any two subsequent time slices. Considerations such as these led Nāgārjuna to claim that it is only from the conventional level that we may speak of interdependent processes, but from the transcendental standpoint of emptiness (*śunyatā*), there aren't even any processes (Kalupahana 1986).

Third, the Buddhist claim that psychological connection is sufficient to ground personal identity, one that has been repeated in recent times in a somewhat different version by Derek Parfit (1984), has been strongly contested by the Advaitins and Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas (Matilal 1989: 61–79). According to Parfit, certain interrelations between experiences such as memories and intentions constitute a person, but there is no 'self' over and above these transient cognitive episodes. The Advaita critique of reductionism has been discussed in detail by Wolfgang Fasching (Chapter 10) and Matthew MacKenzie (Chapter 11), especially with respect to the question of whether we can make sense of self-recognition and object-recognition on the Buddhist dissection of experience into momentary events. As Fasching points out in his presentation of Advaita, experiences are irreducibly related to a subject in a first-personal mode (their 'mine-ness'), and the 'I' in question is not a collection of momentary events, but a precondition for the subject to experience succeeding events as contents of its own experience. The Advaitins do not accept the self as a substantial entity with conscious acts as its property; rather, the first-person presence or consciousness itself is the abiding, unchanging self. Fasching argues that because of the 'forgetfulness of presence' in Western philosophy of mind, subjectivity is conceived of in terms of conscious states, and hence the unity of consciousness is understood reductively through interrelationships among these states. However, Advaita's conception of contentless, non-intentional consciousness as the abiding dimension in which experiences unfold can be used to develop an account of synchronic and diachronic unity of subjectivity.

Now, while the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas, in contrast, accept a plurality of selves, and consciousness as a property of each substantial self, they too oppose the Buddhist analysis of the person as a causally related series of cognitions and volitions on the grounds that it cannot explain the phenomenon of recognitive perception of a cogniser who states: 'I who perceived X earlier am the same I who perceive it now.' As John Taber (Chapter 6) and Douglas L. Berger (Chapter 7) have pointed out, the Nyāya philosopher Uddyotakara opposed the Buddhist explanation of psychological continuity in terms of mental states which condition each other, on the grounds that since cognitions are momentary, succeeding cognitions cannot be causally related to the preceding cognition which has vanished. In other words, for the Buddhist, the earlier temporal slice with the impression of a cat is causally related to the present temporal slice where the impression is revived; but NyāyaVaiśeṣika counters that unless both these slices belong to the self same cogniser, the subsequent temporal slice cannot know that the object of its cognition is the same object of cognition as that of the previous temporal slice (Chakrabarti 2001: 60–65). On the basis of certain theses about memory such as 'one can only remember what one has seen before', the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika tries to establish that the memory criterion of personal identity in fact presupposes the existence of a permanent substantial self. The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, in other words, joins contemporary critics of the analysis of personal identity in terms of the memory criterion: since a mental state can be a genuine memory of an experience only if the person in that state is the same person who had the experience, psychological continuity theories cannot explain personal identity without presupposing it (Beebee and Dodd 2007: 36–54). And as Irina Kuznetsova points out in Chapter 5, their arguments for the substantial self as a necessary precondition for an integrated mental life find support from the somewhat unexpected quarters of neurobiological research on emotion which suggests that this diachronic integration extends even below the waterline of conscious mental states.

This line of argumentation can be found also in Vedāntic thinkers such as Rāmānuja who argue for the self as an enduring unitary entity that underlies its conscious states. Rāmānuja says that the various states of consciousness such as joy and grief which arise, persist for some time and then dissipate are attributes of the *same* self which endures through them. This permanence of the self underlying all its conscious acts is established by the

fact that a certain object could not have been recognised as the same object over a stretch of time unless the subject of knowledge had continued to exist for that duration. Also, the distinction of the knowing subject from its conscious acts becomes the more evident when statements such as ‘I, the knower, do not at present have the knowledge which I once had’ are considered, for what they show is that conscious acts do not have the same permanence that the knowing self has (Lipner 1986: 52–3). If such transient acts of consciousness were to be identified with their substrate, the knowing self, it would not be able to recognise a thing seen on one day as the very same thing which it had seen on the previous day. This is because, as Rāmānuja says, what has been cognised by one cannot be re-cognised by another.

The Metaphysics of the Self and Ethical Practice

Whereas contemporary philosophers sometimes discuss personal identity as a theoretical issue over the nature of 'persons', for classical Indian thought it was never simply an 'academic' dispute, for the conceptualisation of the self as a substantial entity or as a nexus of interconnected processes had crucial ethical implications. As Kuznetsova notes in Chapter 5, it is a crucial issue between the *ātmavādin*s and the *anātmavādin*s whether the education of emotions requires as a presupposition a temporally extended self which can act as the substantial locus for this self-cultivation, or whether the acceptance of such a locus is precisely the misconception which must be overcome for eradicating emotional turmoil. For instance, for Śaṅkara one of the prerequisites for the attainment of liberation is the ability to discriminate between the eternal – the bare substratum, pure consciousness – and the non-eternal – the insubstantial properties into which the former is mistakenly believed to have been transformed.[1] While disagreeing with the assumption of Śaṅkara's Advaita that whatever is impermanent is only imperfectly or provisionally real, Rāmānuja, on the other hand, holds that it is possible for 'things' such as material entities to be impermanent but fully real, for he regards properties to be as real as the substances of which they are modes. Nevertheless, he too would accept this prerequisite, which he would read in the following manner. The self as well as material objects are dependent substances – dependent on the Lord – with ontological reality of their own, but the substantial self must be able to move away from its hankering after material entities which are impermanent, and towards devotional love for the Lord who is everlasting (Lipner 1986). Further, as Burley points out in Chapter 3, Rāmānuja speaks with some other voices in the Indian tradition when he claims that no aspirant could possibly aim at liberation if the latter were to be understood as total annihilation of the empirical self or its complete dissolution into a cosmic Self. For Buddhists, on the other hand, it is precisely this belief in a substantial self that holds together one's cognitions and volitions that is the misconception that needs to be overcome. The 'I conceit' that unifies the different impermanent aggregates into a self is the source of attachment not

only to ‘myself’, but also to physical objects in the world which are regarded as ‘mine’.

In other words, whereas both Vedāntic and Buddhist groups agree that attachment to impermanent objects is – at least in part – the cause of empirical suffering, they part ways over the question of the means of overcoming it. For Śaṅkara, the turn to the self involves an intuitive awareness of oneself as ultimately identical with the transcendent Self: craving for material objects is riddled with suffering, for they are ultimately illusory phantasms. Rāmānuja and other realist Vedāntic thinkers such as Mādhva would argue, however, that material objects are a source of suffering not because they constitute an illusory domain, but because the self that has not yet been wholly filled with devotional love for the Lord often comes under their sway and becomes unable to turn towards the Lord. Nevertheless, whatever their views on the ontological status of the world – as an insubstantial mirage or a real adjectival attribute of the Lord – most Vedāntic schools agree that the way beyond *saṃsāra* lies in uncovering the deeper substantial self and ridding it of its empirical impurities. They would concur with the Buddhists on the relation between suffering and impermanence, but would retort that the cure lies in becoming more centred in the heart of being, whether the absolute of Śaṅkara, which has no fleeting, and hence sorrowful, attributes, or the Lord, who shall take away the empirical misery of the dependent self.

Thus, Vedāntic and Buddhist thinkers, pursuing the internal logic of their metaphysical positions, sketch two somewhat distinct ethical outlooks and sets of practices that they recommend for the aspirants after liberation: the former advocate the path of interiority to the ground of all-encompassing everlasting being, while the latter seek to de-solidify all entities including the self into congeries of fleeting events. Although thinkers on both sides engaged in active debate over the centuries, piling up arguments in defence of their positions, they often emphasised that the truth of their positions would become clear only within a setting of meditative praxis. Vedāntic figures appealed to foundational texts such as *tat tvam asi*, prolonged reflection and meditation on which was believed to take the initiate towards liberation, whereas Buddhists affirmed that continuous meditation on the insubstantiality of the world would lead to the liberating insight that pronouns such as ‘I’ and ‘mine’ were at best convenient labels. This close intertwining of philosophical doctrine with praxis leads us back to our

earlier observation about the ‘self obsession’ of classical Indian thought, and explains how contemporary figures such as S. Radhakrishnan could find much in the tradition to refer to the masters as ‘experimenters’ in the spirit. Radhakrishnan himself believed, of course, that all such experimenters would ultimately arrive at the truth of the Advaitic position, for according to the perennial philosophy that he championed, doctrinal statements are superimpositions on the pure awareness which he believed to be the core of all religious traditions (Radhakrishnan 1932). In contrast, many contemporary writers on the epistemology of religious experience emphasise that all experience is conditioned by cultural and mental patterns, so that the process of differentiating between patterns of experience into its various symbolic and institutional forms takes place not *after*, but *during* the experience itself (Katz 1978: 24–66).

Consequently, the debate between the Buddhist and the Vedāntist cannot be settled simply through an appeal to introspective experience, for the two figures, depending on their background scriptural sources, will describe this experience in two different ways. The former will report this experience as ‘No introspective experience includes experience of myself as an enduring self,’ and the latter as ‘Each introspective experience includes experience of myself as an enduring self’ (Yandell 1993: 288–93). This implies, in turn, that meditation does not amount to conclusive ‘verification’ of either standpoint, because the way in which introspective experience is described is influenced by two different doctrinal standpoints on how such experiential evidence should be assessed.

Conclusion

To sum up, looking at classical Indian thought through the perspective of the self can help us to re-examine in a different light the question ‘How philosophical is Indian philosophy?’ As Western philosophers become more interested in questions traditionally dealt with by metaphysics, the question of persistence through change has returned to the fore of philosophical discussion, a question on which Indian thinkers expended a considerable amount of energy. Neo-Humean arguments on the self have interesting parallels with – and crucial differences from – Buddhist theories of the non-self, and comparative philosophical work in this area shows that classical

Indian theorists were capable of rigorous logical enquiry on these matters. More generally, Western philosophers engaged in discussions on the self in connection with issues relating to personal identity, consciousness studies and virtue ethics may profitably draw on the traditional debates between Vedāntic and Buddhist thinkers. However, those who highlight the distinctiveness of Indian philosophy as grounded in 'experience' have also caught hold of something of the truth, given the emphasis laid on experientially confirming doctrinal truths through meditative practice. However, as we have noted, a Radhakrishnan-style appeal to trans-empirical experience is itself undergirded by a particular set of truth-claims about reality, especially the belief that an individual is consubstantial with ultimate reality and can become aware of this inner identity by focusing the inner being on the Spirit (Radhakrishnan 1932). Both in traditional Advaita and in contemporary presentations of Advaita, various types of arguments have been offered in defence of this belief, and the arguments have been subjected to intense scrutiny not only by theologians such as Rāmānuja and Mādhva who have charged the thesis of non-dualism, with its associated notion of 'contentless experience', as being infected with radical incoherence, but also by Buddhist critics of the notion of substance. Now whether or not these refutations succeed is a complex issue; but what the long tradition of arguments for and against the Advaita claim shows is that the appeal to trans-historical 'experience' did not prevent the flourishing of argumentative settings within which the doctrines of the different groups were analysed, debated and critiqued. Consequently, approaching classical Indian intellectual culture through questions of the self can perhaps also help us to readdress the question 'Is Indian thought religious or philosophical?' For as our discussion has shown, it is 'religious' to the extent that many of its traditions are strongly oriented to the care of the self through an exploration into the transcendent, and 'philosophical' in that the way towards the transcendent is paved with intricate patterns of argumentation from which contemporary philosophers East and West may have much to learn.

[1] See Śaṅkara's commentary on the *Brahma-Sūtras*.

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