Christian Coseru

Perception, Causally Efficacious Particulars, and the Range of Phenomenal Consciousness

Reply to Commentaries

Copyright (c) Imprint Academic 2013
For personal use only -- not for reproduction

Many thanks to the contributors for their thorough and thoughtful commentaries on my book, *Perceiving Realit*y, and for the opportunity they gave me to clarify and elaborate my views. In what follows, I will do my best to address their objections and concerns, many of which move the discussion forward in significant ways. I shall respond to each contributor in alphabetical order. (Unless otherwise noted, all parenthetical page references are to *Perceiving Reality*.)

Laura Guerrero

Guerrero focuses on the metaphysics of causation, and its role in the broader question of whether the 'two truths' framework of Buddhist philosophy can be reconciled with the claim that science provides the best account of our experienced world. She finds my account of phenomenological naturalism compelling but thinks that interpreting it as a causal theory of knowledge is problematic. Following Alvin Goldman (1999), Guerrero argues that causal theories of knowledge underscore ontological realism and commitment to a correspondence theory of truth that works against the embodied account of knowledge that I develop. I welcome this proposal since it invites further

Correspondence:
Email: coseruc@cofc.edu

Journal of Consciousness Studies, **22**, No. 9–10, 2015, pp. 55–82

reflection on how best to understand the efficacy of our cognitive processes and their epistemic status.

1. Proposal for a Buddhist Causal Account of Knowledge

A central feature of the Buddhist epistemological programme (and of Indian epistemologies in general) is the grounding of belief in causal accounts of belief formation. This naturalist tendency, as I argue at length in Chapters 2, 4, and 6, aligns Buddhist epistemology with recent efforts to understand cognition in embodied and causal terms. Metaphysical considerations, of course, are never altogether absent from the scene, but the debate often centres on basic issues of definition, given the range of views, for instance, about the cognitive function of perception, and the relation between perception and conception. Thus, when the Buddhist epistemologists reject realist definitions of perception (that is, perception as the apprehension of spatiotemporal entities possessed of intrinsic properties), they do so because such definitions attribute to perception capacities that are beyond its reach (see pp. 141–54 — for similar concerns in contemporary philosophy of perception see Bayne, 2009, and Siegel, 20006). Perception does not provide transparent access to a world of self characterized entities. Rather, it apprehends particulars as uniquely characterized and as affording different opportunities for action.

One of my aims in *Perceiving Reality* is to show how accounts of perception informed by metaphysical realism can be problematic on both metaphysical and epistemological grounds, especially when relying — as they typically do — on conceptions of consciousness that ignore its properly phenomenological features. Claiming, as do the Indian realists (the Naiyāyikas), that consciousness intends the external object directly has to contend with cases of illusory objects. The possibility of illusory cognitions, however, is not the only problem externalist conceptions of intentionality face. By separating phenomenal character from intentionality, they also face the problem of knowledge intimation, of explaining just how the cognition of an object is itself known.

On the causal model of cognition I develop, intentionality and phenomenality are structural, yet adaptive features of consciousness itself, and reflect the embodied character of cognition. The first captures the content or objectual aspect of each instance of cognitive awareness, the fact that each perception, judgment, memory, etc. is about a specific object of its own. The second is constitutive of the

Copyright (c) Imprint Academic 2013
For personal use only -- not for reproduction

cognizing subject's sense that the respective mental state is his or her own, that it happens in their mental stream. This causal model has important consequences for theories of inference, and for proposed solutions to the problem of induction.

Take, for instance, Dignāga's attempt to solve the problem of induction by grounding the logical proof in the observation and non-observation of occurring associations and dissociations. While it could serve as a viable model for evidence or cased-based reasoning, it does not explain how the cognitive equivalence of sentences is possible given the difference between universal statements and those expressing particular states of affairs. For this reason, his successor, Dharmakīrti, demands a stronger foundation for the connection between the reason (*hetu*) and the position stated (*pakṣa*), specifically one capable of explaining the evidence–subject relation (*pakṣadharmatā*), that is, the relation between the subject of an inference and the reason adduced in its support.

Consider one of the most common examples of inferential reasoning in the literature: 'Sound is impermanent because it is a product, like a pot.' Three components are at work in this model of inferential reasoning: *the subject* ('sound'), *the predicate* ('is impermanent'), and *the reason* ('because it is a product'). In order for the reason to be considered valid the following three criteria must be satisfied: (i) the subject must have the property of the reason (e.g. all sounds must be products); (ii) the reason must pervade all instances of the predicate (e.g. all impermanent things must be products); and (iii) there can be no conceivable instance of the reason that is not also a predicate (e.g. there are no products that are not impermanent things).

The question is: what specifically counts as the evidence for this thesis? On what grounds do we assert the nature of 'being a product'? The tripartite model I have just sketched, it seems, is inadequate, for it does not account for how judgments of the sort 'being a product' come to serve as evidential reason in a given circumstance. Is 'being a product' a unique particular? Is it a relational property of things (a universal)? Given metaphysical commitment to the principles of dependent arising and momentariness, the most obvious solution is to treat such instances as tropes. Particulars (as tropes) are not simply the entities disclosed by perceptual awareness. Rather, they are the causal properties or powers that occasion different types of experience. The 'thirst-quenching' property of water is a causal power of water drinking or water metabolism. On a trope-theoretical model, these unique properties of particulars are themselves particulars, for each

Copyright (c) Imprint Academic 2013
For personal use only -- not for reproduction

instance of liquidity, blueness, or aggregation is typical to the specific and unique circumstances in which it occurs (see Goodman, 2004; Tillemans, 2011; and Coseru, forthcoming).

Guerrero rightly observes that 'given their strange nature' how these unique particulars 'serve as the truth-makers for perceptual representations is also distinctive'. But she thinks that, despite their distinctiveness, 'there does appear to be a clear correspondence-type understanding of what makes a cognition veridical'.

The correspondence, in this case, is between the veridicality of cognition (that is, its epistemic status) and the multiple cognitive instances that occasion it (e.g. thirst-quenching is a property of most drinks with a high water content). Guerrero cites and endorses Dharmakīrti's view that 'objects that differ in nature… can still have similar effects', using the example of different medicinal plants with the same curative effects. But she thinks that we run into explanatory difficulties when we try to make sense of how an infinite plurality of distinct causes can have the same determinate effect. That is because 'the cognitive processes or engaged practices at work in the externalist account' and 'the nature of the objects to which the cognitive subject is in constant embodied engagement with' lack fitness. In other words, the principle of momentariness prevents the cognitive process from sharing any features with the objects it apprehends.

I agree with Guerrero that the presence of a multiplicity of factors that can be reliably represented as yielding a given vertical cognition poses problems for causal theories of knowledge. But if the true mark of the real, as Dharmakīrti insists, is its capacity to produce an effect (see Pandeya, 1989, p. 84), then we need not worry about the multiple realizability of veridical states of cognitive awareness. They reflect not the ontological status of the properties, states, or events that occasion them, but their pragmatic efficacy. I know water through liquid-ingesting, quench-satisfying experiences. I also know water through immersive, floating, cleansing, and fire-extinguishing experiences. That different causal chains can in principle prompt quenching experiences is no reason of concern for naturalist accounts of belief formation. The question, of course, is how water transmits its fluid dynamics and quenching properties to a subject, and whether these properties, whose intentional content is constituted by the phenomenology, can be described in efficient-causal terms.

Copyright (c) Imprint Academic 2013
For personal use only -- not for reproduction

2. Cognition, Causality, and the Question of Ontological Irreducibility

A more pressing objection is that the causal theory of knowledge I advance on behalf of the Buddhist epistemologists is at odds with the prevailing view that, given scholastic affiliations with the positions of either Yogācāra or Madhyamaka (in the case of Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla), their metaphysical commitments rest with either idealism or anti-realism. Therefore, writes Guerrero, 'it seems *prima facie* [original emphasis] odd to attribute to these philosophers an externalist account of knowledge'.

First, what I explicitly attribute to these philosophers is what I call, borrowing a term from Keijzer and Schouten (2007, p. 114), *process externalism*: the view that perceptual and inferential cognitions depend on, or are continuous with, bodily processes that extend into the environment by virtue of the tight relations between perception and action. Second, I argue that this account has the added virtue of helping to steer clear of the typical conundrum of metaphysical interpretations. The question of how someone like Dharmakīrti can seemingly argue for both external realism and epistemic idealism (see Dreyfus, 1997; and Dunne, 2004) — namely, the view that all entities that are present to awareness, including those that are seemingly extra-mental, are nothing but aspects of cognition — has thus been avoided.

My case for process externalism, or what Clark and Chalmers (1998) call 'active externalism', is built on an analysis of Dharmakīrti's so-called *kāryānumāna* argument, that is, the argument that an inference is sound only when one infers from the effect to the cause and not vice versa. The argument turns on the question of whether a careful inspection of the effect can lead to ascertaining the unique causal totality that is its source. How does the order of the causal domain establish the sort of evidence that can serve as a warrant for sound inference and, at the same time, rule out instances of erratic attribution of a connection between evidence and the property to be proven? To answer this question, Dharmakīrti avails himself of various examples of things that are ordinarily thought of in conjunction: the act of speaking and passion, rice and cooking, a living body and breathing, perceptual awareness and the senses, and such stock examples as fire and smoke. The question is: what sort of properties, whether observed or unobserved, in similar or dissimilar cases, can be counted as evidence for asserting a given thesis? And

Copyright (c) Imprint Academic 2013
For personal use only -- not for reproduction

how are such properties ascertained? That is, how does one come to know the truth of the major premise?

Take the example of rice and cooking. Non-observation in dissimilar cases does not provide sufficient grounds for sound inference either: even though one may observe grains of rice cooking in a cauldron, one cannot thereby infer that all grains of rice are cooked simply because they are in the cauldron. Indeed, some may be uncooked (see Pandeya, 1989, p. 67; and Hayes and Gillon, 2008). Can we avoid the risk that there could be unobserved instances to the contrary, given that observation of a relation between things at a given place and time does not necessarily guarantee that the same relation will obtain in other places and at other times? The solution to this conundrum is appeal to rules of reasoning that best reflect the nature of causally efficient entities: that is, to the so-called natural relation (*svabhāva-pratibandha*) between the properties of an inference. And this strategy requires that, in turn, we reflect not from cause to effect, not even from a causal totality to an effect, but from effect to the cause, because only causes so inferred are in tight proximity to their effects. The strategy of naturalization I favour, therefore, grounds this model of effective cognition on two things (see pp. 114–6): (a) empirical evidence that the reason acquired its evidential status as a result of factors that are inherent to our cognitive architecture, specifically to information processing systems that translate perceptual content into action; and (b) theoretically robust accounts of how intentional content, as the subjective basis for reasoning, translates into the successful accomplishment of desired ends (see p. 115).

In *Perceiving Reality* I argue that human cognitive processes have evolved to provide effective and meaningful interaction with the environment, and thus to maximize both the observational and predictive skills necessary for survival. The notion that cognition is effective in so far as it is produced in the right way — which is the hallmark of the Indian philosophical tradition (see Mohanty, 2000, p. 149; Matilil, 1986, p. 105) — is widely shared by embodied and enactive approaches to cognition (see Varela, Thompson and Rosch, 1991; Hutchins, 1995; Clark, 1998; Hurley, 1998; Noë, 2004; Gallagher, 2006; Thompson, 2007). As developed under the guise of *phenomenological naturalism*, this approach states that cognitive processes involving perception are not entirely internal but rather co-constituted by factors that extend into the environment.

Copyright (c) Imprint Academic 2013
For personal use only -- not for reproduction

3. Phenomenological Naturalism: A Conventional or Ultimate Account?

Guerrero also raises questions about the epistemic status of my phenomenological naturalism: is this meant to be an ultimate epistemological position or merely a statement about our mundane cognitive practices? Considering the threat of 'epistemological nihilism' inherent in the view (common among Buddhist philosophers who endorse a dialectical move from conventional to ultimate truth) that all positions are only provisionally held, where does that leave phenomenological naturalism? The conventional view, as Guerrero clarifies, reflects the Buddhist principle of dependent arising, which postulates that all phenomena, including states of cognitive awareness, arise in dependence upon a multiplicity of causes and conditions and do not endure for any length of time. Because objects and the cognitive processes that instantiate them lack intrinsic properties, and are in a perpetual state of flux, any theory of knowledge that purports to offer us reliable access to what there is, is conventional at best. Phenomenological naturalism, which endorses both causal and constitutive accounts of cognition, runs against this view that the causal powers of objects are merely conventional attributions.

At stake is the issue of whether the causes and conditions that underpin the Buddhist principle of dependent arising are metaphysical features of ultimate reality or conventional designations that reflect human interests and practices. It should be clear from my framing of the Buddhist epistemological programme in terms of the efficacy of our epistemic practices that I dispute the usefulness of the two truths dialectic. Just what it means to say that something true in one sense is characterized as entirely false in another sense is a vexed question in Buddhist philosophy. Claiming, as some Mādhyamika philosophers do, that the conventional level of description lacks ultimate epistemic standing is problematic, if only because such assertions can only be made from the standpoint of the truth that defines what it means to lack such standing. One cannot understand the difference between a true oasis and only a mirage if the question of what gets to be (and be thus called) an oasis is not settled first. That is, we cannot overcome the pure conventionalism of the first dialectical step without doing some epistemology first. Indeed, as Mark Siderits has convincingly argued, without some account of how 'true and false cognitions differ in their etiology' (Siderits, 2011, p. 178) there is little scope for mitigating conventionalism — the view that how things appear to us

Copyright (c) Imprint Academic 2013
For personal use only -- not for reproduction

depends on whatever system of conventions ordinary practice has set in place (the conventions by which we get to call something 'white' and 'a shell').

While I appreciate Guerrero's attempt to defend, following Garfield (2015), a view of causal relations as 'thoroughly conventional' — because the alleged 'perceived regularity' on which they depend reflects the shared interests and conceptual practices of a particular philosophical community — I worry about the consequences of this conventionalist approach for our understanding of the causal powers of perception itself. My plea for phenomenologically accurate descriptions of our experienced world is also an invitation to adopt a trope-theoretical approach to epistemology that resists the pressure of ontological commitments. However, the naturalism I defend requires that we take seriously the efficacy of our epistemic practices and allow for an expanded conception of 'nature' where material and formal categories are seamlessly interwoven. This liberal conception of nature acknowledges the ontological complexity of our world of experience, while remaining non-committal about the ultimate substratum of things.

Guerrero is right to interpret my phenomenological naturalism 'as simply a claim about what we have reason to believe is our best scientific theory about the nature of consciousness and the positive role Buddhist epistemology can play in articulating this theory'. But calling it simply a conventional view that makes no claim to 'reveal the way things ultimately are' assumes our reasoned deliberations about what there is, and how it can be known, lack normative force. There is nothing ordinary about mapping out the structure of consciousness or, for that matter, about the biological and cognitive processes that underlie it. For the Buddhist epistemologists, our epistemic practices do not simply disclose a domain of conventionally designated entities. Rather, when expertly deployed, they become the means by which we effectively enact our lived world. In so far as that (chiefly Madhyamaka) dialectical step to the ultimate truth collapses the distinction between what is true and what merely appears to be true, we are left with a quietism that is unable to sustain our pragmatic ends.

Let me clarify: Dharmakīrti and his successors do indeed claim that the language of 'causation' and 'entities' reflects conventional practices of categorization. But while it is true that entities are posited only in so far as they are part of a causal nexus, they are ultimately real only to the extent that they are practically efficacious. That is, there

Copyright (c) Imprint Academic 2013
For personal use only -- not for reproduction

are no uncaused entities in the Buddhist epistemologist's ultimate ontology. Can we advance on behalf of Dharmakīrti a causal theory of knowledge that does not rest on self-justifying basic empirical beliefs? That is, can the causal account serve as a basis for the sort of naturalism that can accommodate the efficacy of our epistemic practices?

In Chapter 2 I argue that embodied and enactive accounts of cognition see nature not simply as a domain of externally related entities and processes, but as structures that are 'irreducibly relational and immanently purposeful' (see Thompson, 2007, p. 353). Such non-reductive naturalism is both scientifically informed and phenomenologically constraining: it tells us that the relations between various phenomena are not merely naïve correlations but patterns of regularity with predictive force. Take a prototypical example from evolutionary biology: changes in the anatomy of the hand and thumb, for instance, support the phenomenological notion of *maximum*, or in this case *precision*, grip. On the picture I'm presenting here, phenomenological naturalism is not a conventional view, but an ineliminable stance that, *pace* Guerrero, lends the descriptive account its explanatory force and supports its normative conclusions. Such descriptions may borrow from the Scientific Image the language of causal explanation, but they retain the significance and meaningfulness of the Manifest Image.

4. Does Phenomenology Eschew Foundationalism?

Finally, on the issue of foundationalism and causal theories of knowledge, Guerrero, of course, is right to point out that 'not all foundationalist theories are concerned with justification'. Indeed, reliabilist and causal theories of knowledge retain the foundationalist structure without appealing to the justification of beliefs (Siegel, 2006; Shoemaker, 2006). The claim here is that one knows in so far as one stands in the right sort of epistemic relation to a given state of affairs, regardless of whether the underlying causal factors are transparent to the subject. But Guerrero proposes that we reverse the relationship between the efficacy of our epistemic practices and the positing of causally efficacious entities: things do not lead to successful practice because they are real; rather, the experience of pragmatic efficacy 'precedes and explains' the causally efficacious entities thus posed. I am sympathetic to this proposal, which is both in keeping with the view (going back to Dharmakīrti) that we are better off inferring from the effect to the cause (rather than the other way around), and

Copyright (c) Imprint Academic 2013
For personal use only -- not for reproduction

illustrative of the pragmatic orientation of my project. I am less convinced, however, that this pragmatic orientation cannot also serve as an 'ultimate epistemological justification'.

In the final chapter of *Perceiving Reality* (see especially §9.2), I argue that what is 'ultimate' need not be thought about in such dialectically opposite term. In my plea for epistemological optimism I argue that our attentive capacity (*manaskāra*), which Buddhist contemplatives have explored at length, 'makes a certain dimension of human cognition not merely the effect of causal chains in the physical domain but also a cause in its own right in the domain of cognition' (p. 289). That this self-intimating aspect of cognition could intend a given object of experience (say, a column of smoke), despite it being prompted by a deficient cause (in this case, a dust column), I take it, serves as proof that consciousness can be neither entirely grounded in, nor explainable in terms of, physical elements and processes. Phenomenological naturalism thus offers an understanding of the relationship between the irreducibly presentational character of conscious apprehension and causal generation that provides an alternative to reductive physicalist models.

Copyright (c) Imprint Academic 2013
For personal use only -- not for reproduction

5. *Conclusion: Should Epistemological Optimism Be Tempered?*

Whether the 'two truths' dialectic calls for a more tempered epistemological optimism remains, as I noted above, an open question. Although we can and have made good progress in carving nature at its joints, Guerrero urges that we not lose sight of the conventional status of either science or phenomenology. Does that mean the explanatory priority that causal theories of knowledge and descriptive accounts of experience are compromised? No, if our 'conventional' conception of truth reflects our practical, effective engagement with situations and things rather than naïve realist assumptions about what there is. Furthermore, reversing the relation between pragmatic efficacy and causal generation does not make causal explanation conventional: it merely suggests that an explanation of phenomena must reflect the nomological nature of causally efficient things.

In *Perceiving Reality* I leave open the possibility that causality in the mental domain rests on principles of intelligibility, rather than on principles of mechanism: I do, however, claim that the dominant direction in the Buddhist epistemological account of cognition points toward a naturalistic explanation of perception, intentionality, and reference.

Copyright (c) Imprint Academic 2013
For personal use only -- not for reproduction

Matt MacKenzie

MacKenzie turns the spotlight on what is perhaps the most ambitious part of the book: the reflexivist dual-aspect model of consciousness, which I develop in Chapter 8 drawing on the works of Dignāga, Dharmakīrti, and Śāntarakṣita. This model, which serves as foil for an account of the various relations that obtain between perception, intentionality, and self-awareness, shares certain structural features with models of consciousness put forward by Brentano (1874/1973), Husserl (1983), Sartre (1967), and more recently by Zahavi (2006), Janzen (2008), and Kriegel (2009).

Just because there are structural affinities between the conception of consciousness at work in Buddhist epistemology and similar conceptions in western philosophy does not mean that there is mutual cross-cultural validation. The presence of alternative models of consciousness, specifically as put forth by Mādhyamika thinkers like Candrakīrti, who align more closely with the higher-order thought theory (and with externalist accounts of self-knowledge) would preclude such a conclusion (for a defence of the latter, see Garfield, 2015). The issue of cross-cultural affinity is not at stake, but rather its epistemic import: that is, on what ground do we concede the viability of one model over another?

In his commentary, MacKenzie pursues two related questions: (i) Is reflexive awareness (*svasaṃvedana*) identical with the subjective pole of a dual-aspect cognition or are there alternative, perhaps better, ways of understanding this self-intimating character of mental states? (ii) Is perception constitutively intentional or is it representational? In his response, he suggests an alternative reading, which takes reflexivity to be a 'formal and invariant feature of consciousness', and offers a compelling argument for why 'intrinsic intentionality is perfectly consistent with the logical independence of experiential objects from their cause' (an account he has defended at length in MacKenzie, 2007). I am sympathetic to the first interpretation, but less willing to grant that intentional reference entails (or is compatible with) representationalism.

1. Self-Awareness and Reflexivity

MacKenzie argues that his interpretation of reflexive awareness as a 'formal and invariant feature of consciousness' finds equal support in the literature. I agree. My only concern is with the 'anonymity of mental events' this view generally entails (see Ganeri, 2012, p. 181,

for a similar concern). While in keeping with the principles of the Buddhist no-self view, his interpretation of reflexive awareness is at odds with what I take to be certain salient and ineliminable features of phenomenal consciousness: its *for-me-ness* and its *horizon structure*. If self-reflexively conscious episodes lack an intentional structure, then they cannot provide the minimal sense of internal distance necessary for subjectivity. On this interpretation of the reflexivity thesis, it is easier for critics to point out its inadequacy in discerning basic sensations like pain as occurring in a given mental stream (let alone thoughts like 'I am in pain'). My claim, on the contrary, is that mental streams are differentiated by being covariant with intentional behaviour, which presupposes that intentionality is a structural feature of consciousness, rather than a relation to an external object (as proposed by the Indian realists, the Naiyāyikas). As I argue at length in §8.4 (p. 264), 'even assuming that Dignāga has in mind a non-objectifying or intransitive type of experience when he describes self-awareness, something akin to the Yogācāra notion of consciousness only (*cittamātra*), or perhaps a type of primitive and pre-reflective self-awareness, of the sort that phenomenologists like Zahavi (2004) define as implicit and nonconceptual, it is still the case that this is an intentional experience'. The reason? A self-awareness that is not implicitly intentional cannot in principle serve as a necessary condition for genuine 'aboutness'.

In *Perceiving Reality* I set out to trace both the phenomenological and dialectical roots of the dual-aspect model. I argue that this model grows out of attempts to come to terms with the cross-modular account of consciousness and cognition of the Abhidharma (I offer a reconstruction of the textual evidence for this view in Chapter 3). But it also reflects a commitment — on the part of at least some Buddhist thinkers — to finding common ground for certainty in a philosophical culture dominated by appeals to testimony (chiefly that of extra-ordinarily accomplished individuals such as Buddhas) (see also Arnold, 2010; and Kellner, 2011). If the phenomenological analyses at work in early Abhidharma translate into a complex taxonomy of conscious mental states (of visual, auditory, introspective, subliminal, type of consciousness), then we have a way of mapping out the domain of phenomenal experience, the *loka-saṃjñā*, so as to identify which features are invariant. Only when these features are in place do concerns about their epistemic status come into play. And only then can we proceed to ask whether phenomena that cannot be further dissolved through analysis count as real.

Copyright (c) Imprint Academic 2013
For personal use only -- not for reproduction

Some aspects of consciousness, on this account, may be found to be deceptive, and this is precisely the conclusion drawn by Buddhist thinkers such as Asaṅga, who associates the self-referential and possessive uses of the first-person pronoun with 'defiled' or 'afflicted' mentation (*kliṣṭa-manas*). In such states of mind, one has both the experience of a sense of self and of the persistence of such a sense (Lamotte, 1973, p. 21; see also Dreyfus and Thompson, 2007). MacKenzie suggests that reflexive awareness, as a 'formal and invariant structure of consciousness', could not be conducive to such 'afflictive' identification with either the subjective or objective pole of experience. That is, reflexive awareness simply illuminates the cognitive process without itself displaying any of the dual-aspect characteristics of this process. On my view, 'for-me-ness' and 'intentional orientation' are co-emergent features of consciousness that are constitutive of our active engagement with the situations and things of mundane existence (see Silberstein, 2006).

Regardless of how the mental domain is mapped out, the sense that cognitive awareness is a dynamic process embedded within a complex system of causal and conditioning factors is precisely why I take the reflexivity of awareness to manifest a distinctly phenomenal character. The Abhidharma synthesis is predicated on an ingenious but tentative tripartite model of cognitive awareness sketched in the canonical literature. As one *Middle Length Discourse* puts it, what holds together this individual bundle of aggregates and forges a first-personal sense of the givenness of experience are the proliferating tendencies (*prapañca*) of the 'reasoning and deliberating' (*vitarka-vicāra*) mind. Consider this passage, which I quote in *Perceiving Reality* (p. 63):

> Dependent on the eye and forms, visual-consciousness arises. The meeting of the three is contact. With contact as condition there is feeling. What one feels, that one perceives. What one perceives, that one thinks about. What one thinks about, that one mentally proliferates (*papañceti*). With what one has mentally proliferated as the source, perception and notions resulting from mental proliferation beset a man with respect to past, future, and present forms cognizable through the eye. (Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi, 2001, p. 203)

This formula, which is repeated in various guises throughout the literature, captures an important phenomenological insight: empirical awareness, it seems, has a discerning aspect built into it, even as the notion that one perceives independent spatio-temporal things (e.g. tables and chairs) is justly traced to unreflective habits of thought.

Copyright (c) Imprint Academic 2013
For personal use only -- not for reproduction

Against the prevailing tendency to proceed from metaphysical considerations about what there is, the Abhidharma thus develops into a hybrid of naturalistic and existential phenomenology: hybrid, because the analysis of the elements of existence and/or experience (*dharmas*) is always embedded in a broader concern with action and agency in concrete situations, and with the moral consequences of these actions (see, for instance, Vasubandhu's *Treatise on Action* in Lamotte, 1936). At the heart of this enterprise are two seemingly irreconcilable notions of consciousness: (i) consciousness as sentience, and (ii) consciousness as discernment. If sentience is what is ultimately meant by 'mind' (*citta*) and discernment simply stands for the 'mental constituents' (*caitta*), then we have an effective way of explaining the reciprocal relation between thought and its content. The experiential domain is then constituted as sensed textures that mould our experience and give it its qualitative aspects — the phenomenal character of 'what it is like'.

But this project of reductive analysis has an unintended consequence: in the formula of dependent arising just cited, which serves as the hallmark of the Buddhist metaphysical picture of causality, the awareness that arises in conjunction with the activity of a given sensory system is itself impermanent and momentary: visual awareness and visual object, thus, are both events within a mental stream of continuing relations. The question that Abhidharma philosophers must confront is precisely what accounts for the sense of recollection that accompanies these cognitive series. That is, if discrete, episodic cognitive events are all that constitutes the mental domain, what accounts for the sort of intimation we associate with being conscious? If experiential episodes are indeed reflexively aware but lack subjective character, as MacKenzie claims, how do they achieve their epistemological goal? (See Coseru, 2009b.)

The reflexivist dual-aspect model of consciousness put forth by Dignāga is in large measure conceived as a response to this problem. On my view, Dignāga grounds his understanding of reflexive awareness in an analysis of perception precisely because he sees it as a key structural feature of his epistemological stance. If the interpretation I favour brings reflexive awareness closer to the conception of embodied self-awareness advanced by Merleau-Ponty, it is only because we are in a better position today to judge its phenomenological aptness.

My second objection to treating reflexive awareness as a formal and invariant feature of consciousness is that it dislodges it from the

Copyright (c) Imprint Academic 2013
For personal use only -- not for reproduction

ongoing flow of the mental stream. If reflexive awareness is a phenomenon *simpliciter*, how does it come to illuminate cognition in its various modalities (visual, recollective, anticipatory)? If there is an invariant structural feature in place that explains why grasping the pot, tasting the coffee, and planning for the day has this self-reflexive character, how are we to explain its direction of fit? MacKenzie points to the experience of non-dual states of consciousness as providing a clue to the deep phenomenology of reflexivity. I am sceptical, if only because I share with Paul Griffiths (1986) the worry that such non-dual states are phenomenologically opaque, since there is nothing it is like to be in them while they endure. If consciousness is inherently intentional, something that Dignāga's dual-aspect model evidently seeks to capture, then a minimal sense of mineness must be an ineliminable aspect of its structure. The worry has deep roots in the Buddhist philosophical tradition itself, and finds one of its best articulations in Kamalaśīla, who rejects the claim that non-conceptual states of cognitive awareness lack mentation. On the contrary such states should be regarded, at best, as modes of insight (*prajñayā*) into the very nature of phenomena. As I write (p. 47), 'what Kamalaśīla argues against is the mistaken view that meditative cultivation essentially amounts to casting aside all mental activity and achieving a state of unconsciousness (*asaṃjñīsamāpatti*)' (see also Tucci, 1971, pp. 13f.; and Tillemans, 2013).

2. *Intentionality and Perception*

The second issue concerns the question whether perception is intentionally constituted (see Coseru, 2009a; 2015), and whether some of the structural features of the dual-aspect theory fit Husserl's analysis of the *noema* or the object as intended. MacKenzie agrees that such a reading is possible, but that it gets complicated when we prise apart embodied agency and the first-person perspective. The latter, in his view, is something one has simply by virtue of adopting a standpoint, whereas embodied agency tracks closely the coping skills one develops in response to various practical needs (e.g. crossing a busy intersection, running to catch a train, etc.).

More importantly, MacKenzie questions whether my analogy between the phenomenological notion of *noema* and the concept of *ākāra* ('aspect' or 'phenomenal form') is tenable given Dignāga's presumed representationalism about perception. On his interpretation, for the Buddhist epistemologists 'perception is direct in that it is non-

Copyright (c) Imprint Academic 2013
For personal use only -- not for reproduction

inferential, but it is indirect in the more relevant respect that what is immediately grasped in perception is the *ākāra*, which is a) mental, and b) logically independent of the cause of the perceptual experience'. If perception grasps mental aspects that are logically independent from the causes of perceptual experience, why does Dignāga insist on treating cognitions and their sources as undifferentiated? Dignāga's statement, which I quote on p. 247, makes this point amply obvious: 'we do not admit, as the realists do, that the resulting cognition (*pramāṇaphala*) differs from the accredited source of cognition (*pramāṇa*).' That is, the pot is apprehended only *as grasped*, the blue sky only *as seen*. As Dignāga further clarifies, it is only because 'the resulting cognition arises bearing in itself the aspect of the cognized object' (p. 247) that it serves as an epistemic warrant. This resulting cognition (say, as of an earthen pot) does bear formal resemblance to the object that is apprehended, but we have no direct access to the complex array of causal and conditional factors that are constitutive of it. As such, cognition is effectively nothing but reflexive awareness itself in its twofold appearance as subjective and objective aspects.

Consider the sensation of pain. Rather: one is in pain, and the pain is of a particular type; burning, stinging, or throbbing. This account of cognition raises an important question: how do we know that cognition has this two-aspectual character? As I write (p. 247), 'Dignāga's answer is quite categorical: because object-cognition without self-cognition and self-cognition without object-cognition would otherwise be indistinguishable' (see Hattori, 1968, p. 30).

MacKenzie worries that taking reflexive awareness to be intentional is problematic because intentionality implies a subject–object distinction and reflexive awareness lacks such a distinction. However, if reflexivity lacks this dual-aspect structure, how is 'character' differentiated from 'content', that is, assuming each has a distinctive and proprietary phenomenology? Taking the subjective aspect to reflect self-ascription or some kind of internal monitoring, and the objective aspect directness toward some empirical object or property of some kind would not suffice (see Peacocke, 2010, for a similar view with regard to contemporary debates about the character of self-awareness). An externalist, relational determination of the structure of awareness is precisely what the dual-aspect theory seeks to counter. If the determination of mental content is a relational feature, a sort of isomorphic coupling of causal factors and phenomenal form, then

Copyright (c) Imprint Academic 2013
For personal use only -- not for reproduction

reflexivity is simply a product or outcome of a certain type of material organization typical of biological organisms.

Take MacKenzie's example of the music CD: the information encoded on a CD need not qualitatively resemble the music. True, but the *information* encoding process does qualitatively resemble the music, as does the information decoding process. We call it a 'music CD' only as a manner of speech. It is a part, and an inessential one at that, of music recording and broadcasting technologies, where the medium is electromagnetic signals rather than air or string vibrations. Music scores don't qualitatively resemble music either. Their interpretation does.

3. Aspects and Body Schema

On the problems of aspects (*ākāra*) and *body schema*, MacKenzie thinks my analogy fails. He points out that Gallagher takes the *body schema* to act as a pre-noetic system of processes that constantly regulates posture and movement, that is, a system of sensory-motor capacities and actualities that function without the necessity of perceptual monitoring. Indeed, that is what Gallagher says, but that's only half the story. As Gallagher explains in his account of the negative phenomenology of movement, 'that a body schema operates in a prenoetic way means that it does not depend on a consciousness that… monitors bodily movement' (Gallagher, 2006, p. 32) Gallagher is quite clear that 'this is not to say that it does not depend on consciousness at all' (*ibid*, p. 32). He gives us the example of embodied action that does require a basic perceptual awareness. In reaching out across the room to pull a book out of my library and show you a passage, I am implicitly aware of the furniture in the room, objects on the floor to avoid, and so on. My attention is focused on the book and the passage I have in mind to show you, and only minimally on my motor skills. So, says Gallagher (*ibid*., p. 32): 'My consciousness of the environment and of the location of things I need to reach will guide my movement… In that sense consciousness is essential for the operation of the body schema.'

If consciousness is essential for the operation of the body schema, then the body schema is not entirely an automatic system of processes that provide structural scaffolding for experience. Its operations instead depend on the intentional and qualitative dimensions of conscious cognition. Consider fear or surprise. There is no such thing as fear or surprise *simpliciter*; rather, there is fear *in* the face of impend-

Copyright (c) Imprint Academic 2013
For personal use only -- not for reproduction

ing danger and surprise *at* the electoral outcomes. The body schema offers a better analogy for the constitutive aspects of bodily awareness because it avoids many of the problems representationalist accounts of embodied consciousness face.

I do not mean to suggest that *ākāra*-s cannot be interpreted as mental images, internal aspects that represent various features of experience. Indeed, it seems to be a prevailing view among many scholars of Buddhist philosophy. The problem with this interpretation is that it renders our embodied condition metaphysically unintelligible. The sense of embodied agency that is characteristic of perceptual states of cognitive awareness is not present via localizable sensations in the body or spatio-temporal location, since embodiment is what makes possible the attribution of such features in the first place.

Copyright (c) Imprint Academic 2013
For personal use only -- not for reproduction

Anand Vaidya

I find the question of compatibility between Buddhist philosophy and Husserlian phenomenology that Vaidya raises fascinating, but *Perceiving Reality* is a study in neither phenomenological ontology nor analytic metaphysics, so I will focus on what he calls the '*prima facie* tension between some important themes Husserl holds to and the views of… [the] Buddhist thinkers' I examine.

Vaidya thinks that, in so far as Husserlian phenomenology and Buddhism differ in terms of their fundamental ontological commitments, they must be incompatible, thus rendering any cross-cultural philosophical project that seeks their rapprochement tenuous. He then proceeds to offer a reading of Husserl's work under which particular versions of essentialism and epistemological realism 'are coarse-grain incompatible with the thrust of the kind of Buddhism found in Dharmakīrti, Śāntarakṣita, and Kamalaśīla'. In his analysis Vaidya wonders whether the logic of the three Buddhist doctrines of dependent arising, impermanence, and momentariness support the notion that knowledge entails the apprehension of things as essentially characterized.

In order to address this issue, I will first compare Husserl's method of imaginative variation as the vehicle for his account of eidetic essences with the Buddhist analysis of elements of existence and/or experience (*dharma*-s). I will then examine the specific ways in which the principles of momentariness and dependent arising entail the Buddhist epistemologists' account of particulars. This examination

also affords an opportunity to consider once again the reflexive theory of consciousness, and whether Husserl's argument from Time-Consciousness is helpful in foregrounding the notion that perceptual awareness of an object is pre-reflectively and intransitively self-conscious. Some of the conclusions I draw here reflect on issues I address in my reply to Guerrero, particularly with regard to the difficulties that theories of perception informed by metaphysical realism confront.

1. On Husserl's Method of Eidetic Variation and Buddhist Non-essentialism

In *Experience and Judgment*, §87, Husserl (1973) describes how the method of 'essential seeing', as he conceives it, enables the discovery of eidetic essences. An 'eidetic essence', as he understands it, is that which belongs to an entity invariantly: in short, its 'what' (*Was*) or 'whatness' (*Washeit*). In so far as Husserl speaks of phenomenology as a science of eidetic essences, he has in mind neither abstract entities nor the substrata of things, but invariant features, specifically those features that set objects apart from things. If being a thing means being defined in terms of spatio-temporal properties, being an object is essentially being an intentional object of some kind. One discovers what belongs to an entity invariantly using the method of *eidetic* or *imaginative variation*.

Quoting a long passage from *Experience and Judgment* that describes this method, Vaidya concludes that Husserl is thus committed 'to the existence of essences and to the possibility of human knowledge of them'. But Husserl's account of eidetic variation does not target essences as independent of thought. Rather, he is concerned with uncovering the structural features of experiential phenomena that empiricism had left unexplained. Using eidetic variation, I can imagine a tree stripped of its particular qualities, located here rather than there, as seen from this or that side, and with this or that foliage colour. What I cannot do is imagine the tree as having only one side (that is, as lacking a back), for that would constitute a violation of the object. This process, Husserl is clear to emphasize, is not one of abstraction, but of discovering what that object is essentially about: its 'whatness' (incidentally, Searle, 2015, p. 150, seems to be making a similar point when, in his defence of perceptual holism, he notes that '*being a tree* is not a basic perceptual feature'). Furthermore, what is thus discovered as belonging to an entity invariantly is not

Copyright (c) Imprint Academic 2013
For personal use only -- not for reproduction

independent of its mode of ascertainment. Eidetic variation also reveals something fundamental about the structure of experience itself.

Perhaps the most salient aspect of this account of eidetic variation is the recognition that real things, unlike invariants, are subject to alteration, which Husserl understands as 'a continual being-other or, rather, a becoming other and yet being the same, individually the same, in this continual becoming-other' (Husserl, 1973, p. 347). In other words, things undergo constant transformation even as they maintain the appearance of sameness. Unlike objects, which are formally understood as the bearers of properties, things are always apprehended in profiles or what Husserl calls 'adumbrations'. Indeed, it is part of the essence of perceptual objects that they always reveal themselves in 'profiles'. A tree can only be *seen* from one specific perspective. It is not only things that reveal themselves in endless perceptual profiles; each sensory modality likewise is given in profiles. I can both see the ambulance driving by and hear it from a distance as it approaches. Notice, however, that the thing itself is strictly speaking never seen. Rather, the thing is disclosed as an endless series of appearances. As Husserl explains in *Crisis*, §47, '"The" thing itself is actually that which no one experiences as really seen, since it is always in motion, always, and for everyone, a unity for consciousness of the openly endless multiplicity of changing experiences and experienced things…' (Husserl, 1970, p. 164).

Copyright (c) Imprint Academic 2013
For personal use only -- not for reproduction

2. *Profiles, Moments, and Things*

How does this reading of eidetic variation square with the Buddhist account of cognitive awareness, now that it is clear that Husserl is concerned with the world as experienced, as pre-thematically given? First, consider this passage from *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha*, which I quote in *Perceiving Reality* (p. 66):

> That is the world by which one is a perceiver of the world, a conceiver of the world — this is called the world in the Noble One's Discipline. And what, friends, is that in the world by which one is a perceiver of the world, a conceiver of the world? The eye is that in the world by which one is a perceiver of the world, a conceiver of the world. The ear… The nose… The tongue… The body… The mind is that in the world by which one is a perceiver of the world, a conceiver of the world. (Bodhi, 2000, p. 1190)

As I explain in *Perceiving Reality*, what we come across here is the picture of a fluctuating world in which entities and the cognitive modalities in which they are disclosed exist only as aggregated phenomena of experience. That visual, aural, and mental profiles would exist 'in the world by which one is a perceiver' is, I claim, akin to Husserl's account of adumbration. The elements or specific profiles that are constitutive of experience, however, 'are not simply the counterparts of corresponding physical objects, since what lies outside the sphere of perception is always already constituted by the dynamic structures of our cognitive architecture' (p. 67).

Furthermore, this conception of the body (with its sensory organs) as both the medium of contact with the world and the world with which it comes in contact is not unlike Husserl's account of the body as revealed through phenomenological reduction (*epoché*) — as both a biological entity (*Körper*) connected to the continuum of life, and as the medium for the expression of life (*Leib*). An analogy to the notion of a lived world is at work in the Buddhist view that body, mind, and world arise in dependence upon each other. The principle of dependent arising captures precisely this notion. What is thus meant by 'world' in the Buddhist Abhidharma context is not an external domain of entities and relations, but the 'phenomenal world of experience' (*lokasaṃjñā*).

It should be obvious that pressing Husserl's account of the lived world, in the service of unpacking the Buddhist view that mind and world are co-constituted, has its virtues, and there is much that can be learned by bringing these two traditions of thought together. However, there are also important tensions both within and between these traditions of thought about the nature, scope, and limits of first-person methods. If Abhidharma philosophers share with Husserl (as well as William James, Franz Brentano, and others) the view that the study of mind must be experientially grounded, the question what precisely that grounding entails is not as straightforward.

Consider the Buddhist view that disciplined forms of moral and mental cultivation are capable of revealing not only the content and character of mental states, but also the invariant relations and properties these states have (see pp. 43–50). One such property is *causal determination*: mental states never arise in isolation from each other. Another is *duration*: mental states do not last for more than a moment. Like a streaming river, thought too is said to be in constant flux (de la Vallée Poussin, 1971, p. 69). While Husserl agrees that the stream of consciousness flows on, he thinks that time-consciousness

Copyright (c) Imprint Academic 2013
For personal use only -- not for reproduction

actually has a tripartite structure. Each instance of consciousness is characterized by *primal impression*, *retention*, and *protension*. In hearing a sound (the primal impression), there is at once recognition of its tonality (retention) and openness toward what is yet to be heard (protension). Time-consciousness, in other words, has an aspectual shape (see Husserl, 1991, §11, §24).

Abhidharma accounts about the duration of each moment of consciousness vary significantly, with some texts giving fixed estimates (e.g. 120) of how many basic moments there are in an instant — roughly the time it takes to blink or snap one's fingers — while others leave the question open or venture numbers of many orders of magnitude (e.g. billions) (see de la Vallée Poussin, 1971, pp. 70f.; Bodhi, 1993, p. 156; and Dreyfus and Thompson, 2007). The presence of varying estimates for the duration of a mind moment in the Abhidharma literature suggests that, while the Buddhist principle of momentariness is grounded in a basic introspective awareness of change, precise estimations are at best speculative.

In *Perceiving Reality* I am not concerned with such speculative questions about the measurable duration of a mind moment, but with issues surrounding the question of whether simultaneity is a conceptual construct or something that is given in perception. Consider this passage by Kamalaśīla, which I quote in *Perceiving Reality* (p. 174):

> …[I]f despite numerous intervening sensory conditions, the illusion of the simultaneity of sensory cognition becomes manifest due to the quick succession in which cognitions arise; then, in the case of syllables heard in rapid succession as, for instance, when one hears the words *latā* and *tāla* or *sara* and *rāsa* together, as though resulting from rapidly intervening cognitions, the two words *sara-rāsa* appear simultaneously when heard. Thus there should be neither an auditory recognition of two separate words nor an apprehension of the two different objects they denote… [A]s all cognitions are momentary, because they occur in quick succession, they cannot endure for any length of time, so that no cognition of succession for any object is [ever] apprehended. (Shastri, 1968, pp. 459f.)

The question raised here is whether in perception we apprehend a cluster of sensation simultaneously or serially. If the principle of momentariness is true and things do endure for only a moment, how can there be cognition of simultaneity? Yes, without the capacity to grasp at once a string of sounds, one could not discern any rhythm or melodic structure. In my discussion, I make the case for considering

Copyright (c) Imprint Academic 2013
For personal use only -- not for reproduction

the phenomenon of perceptual binding, which explains how sensory input, which is aggregated through a process of selection and grouping in the somatosensory cortex, comes to be correlated with a distinct subjective awareness. As I claim (p. 175), 'in the case of hearing, simultaneity occurs when a sequence of two acoustic cues, such as two syllables above a certain threshold, are perceived not as separate but as a single phonetic event' (see also Pessoa, Thompson and Noë, 1998). In rejecting the notion that 'simultaneity' is a real feature of perceived objects, while acknowledging its seeming character, the Buddhists, I claim, put forward something akin to a sensorimotor account of phenomenal experience: perception is not something that happens to us, rather it is something that we do (see Clark, 1998; Hurley, 1998; Matthen, 2004; Noë, 2004). This dependency of the perceived on the perceiver's orientation and disposition is what occasions the illusion of simultaneity when an untrained perceiver fails to account for, as Kamalaśīla notes, 'the numerous intervening sensory conditions'.

2. *Consciousness and Causality*

Vaidya is right to note that there is a tension between the Buddhist doctrines of impermanence and momentariness: if the mental stream is discontinuous and our awareness of things is itself momentary, what factors are responsible for the persistence of an object over time? He constructs an argument ('from perishability') for the view that, even assuming the thesis of momentariness, essential properties are necessary for individuating entities. Combined with his reading of Husserl's conception of eidetic essences as extra-mental but not physical, Vaidya then offers two concluding arguments: the first targeting, again, the ontological incompatibility of Husserlian phenomenology and Buddhist epistemology, and the second the incompatibility of momentariness and essentialism.

Using Husserl's method of eidetic variation, argues Vaidya, we can learn that an object, say a cup, has spatial extension, but not 'that it is extended in space *for a moment* [original emphasis]'. But as I already noted above, the distinction between objects and things is important in assessing the compatibility of the two accounts. Momentariness is a statement about the nature of phenomena in so far as they arise in dependence upon causes and conditions. But this nature is not assessed independently of its mode of givenness. That an object is extended in space for *any length of time* is a statement about time-

Copyright (c) Imprint Academic 2013
For personal use only -- not for reproduction

consciousness, not a description of the object's temporal features. And whereas there is no agreement in the Buddhist tradition about what serves as the immediately antecedent condition for the arising of a moment of consciousness, there is agreement about the persistence of objects in conceptual analysis.

Consider this passage from Vasubandhu, which I quote in *Perceiving Reality* (p. 206):

> When the apprehension of an entity persists after that entity has been reduced through conceptual analysis, that entity exists ultimately, e.g., form: while form may be reduced to atoms, and while we may exclude from it through cognitive analysis other qualia (such as taste, etc.), the apprehension of the proper nature of form persists. Feelings too are to be understood [as ultimately true]. (Pradhan, 1975, p. 334)

Vasubandhu's argument is that entities that can be either physically fragmented or dissolved in conceptual analysis are not ultimately real, unlike the elements of existence (*dharma*-s), which are. Examples of the latter include a whole typology of mental states, and their specific characteristics. But if Vasubandhu understands the 'real' in this ontological sense, the Buddhist epistemologists describe in pragmatic terms. Entities that are changeless and enduring cannot produce any effect. This is essentially the conclusion drawn by Dharmakīrti, who in articulating a conception of reality in terms of causal efficacy — essentially the ability of an object to perform a function — departs from Vasubandhu's view that only partless entities are ultimately real. As perceptual objects, particulars represent (in the sense of 'making present') the defining characteristics of individual entities. As I have claimed (p. 211), 'the particular is a sort of uniquely characterized phenomenon accessible only through a perceptual cognition, and serving as the latter's noematic content (viz., the *perceived as such*). For the Buddhist epistemologists, then, the particular is not simply internal, uniquely characterized sense-data but veridical, non-conceptual content'.

3. Eidetic Variation and the Perceived as Such

On Vaidya's reading of eidetic variation, when imagining a cup as having different properties I can only do so if 'the variation on the object remains the same in time through certain variations and perishes at another time through other variations'. For that reason, the object on which the variations are done cannot be momentary. But this reading of eidetic variation assumes a bifurcation of act and content

Copyright (c) Imprint Academic 2013
For personal use only -- not for reproduction

that the phenomenological method does not support. When Husserl claims that experience extends the boundaries of the given, constraining 'our reason to go beyond intuitionally given physical things' (Husserl, 1983, p. 105), he does not mean these boundaries are *temporally* extended. Rather, he is simply making a statement about the mutual tripartite constitutiveness of object intended, intentional act, and the structureless given. The cup is present only so long as it is intended as such.

The Buddhist epistemologists too invoke the holistic character of cognition, in which the particular is present as a structureless whole. Consider this passage from Dignāga's *Collection on the Sources of Knowledge*, which I cite on p. 200:

> It is mentioned in the Abhidharma treatise that 'these sense-cognitions take a unique particular as their object insofar as it is the particular in the form of a cognizable sense-sphere and not in the form of a constituent substance [viz. an atom].' How is this to be understood? In the Abhidharma passages cited above, that perception, being caused by the sense-organ through its contact with many aggregated entities, takes the whole as the object of its sphere of operation. Since perception is caused by the sense organ through its contact with many substances [viz., aggregates of atoms], it is said, in respect to its sphere of operation, that it takes the whole as its object. (see Hattori, 1968, pp. 26f.)

In mapping out the structure of cognition, Dignāga, it seems, quite clearly identifies the horizon structure that discloses both the particular aspect of the object as experienced and the perceiver's intentional stance. I perceive colour because I am sensitive to light.

As I argue in *Perceiving Reality*, the Buddhist epistemological account of perception captures the intent of Husserl's distinction between the data of the inherent noetic content (the qualia of experience, e.g. this particular shade of blue) and the data of the noematic content (the thing perceived *as perceived*, e.g. blue sky *as seen*). For the Buddhist, perceptual awareness represents a constantly new introduction to an object: what is genuinely seen is always foregrounded by what is merely co-present. Thus, when Buddhists argue that a misunderstanding of the capacity and function of direct perception can result in a failure to grasp the implications of the causal principle of dependent arising, they have in mind a similar analysis of the perceptual event. As I make quite clear (p. 144), from a Buddhist standpoint, 'any attempt to define perception as the activity of forming perceptual judgments, the result of which is the apprehension of external objects as characterized by stable physical properties, runs

Copyright (c) Imprint Academic 2013
For personal use only -- not for reproduction

counter to the view (taken to be axiomatic by the Buddhist), that things and the cognitive events that instantiate them are episodic and relational'.

While the Buddhist epistemologists are committed, like all Buddhist thinkers, to a view of phenomena as episodic and relational, they advance a theory of the unity of consciousness as reflexive awareness, which allows them to explain how the world, with its fundamental structure, is self-disclosed in consciousness.

References

Arnold, D. (2010) Self-awareness (*svasaṃvitti*) and related doctrines of Buddhists following Dignāga: Philosophical characterizations of some of the main issues, *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, **38**, pp. 323–378.

Bayne, T. (2009) Perceptual experience and the reach of phenomenal content, *Philosophical Quarterly*, **59** (236), pp. 385–404.

Bodhi, B. (ed.) (1993) *A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidharma*, Seattle, WA: Buddhist Publication Society.

Bodhi, B. (2000) *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of Saṃyutta Nikāya*, Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications.

Brentano, F. (1874/1973) *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*, McAlister, L.L. (ed.), Rancurello, A.C., Terrell, D.B. & McAlister, L.L. (trans.), London: Routledge.

Clark, A. (1998) *Being There: Putting Brain, Body, and World Together Again*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Clark, A. & Chalmers, D. (1998) The extended mind, *Analysis*, **58**, pp. 7–11.

Coseru, C. (2009a) Naturalism and intentionality: A Buddhist epistemological approach, *Asian Philosophy*, **19** (3), pp. 239–264.

Coseru, C. (2009b) Mind in Indian Buddhist philosophy, in Zalta, E.N. (ed.) *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Winter 2012 Edition)*, [Online], http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2012/entries/mind-indian-buddhism/.

Coseru, C. (2015) Taking the intentionality of perception seriously: Why phenomenology is inescapable, *Philosophy East and West*, **65** (3), pp. 227–248.

Coseru, C. (forthcoming) Consciousness and causality: Dharmakīrti against physicalism, in McClintock, S., Lasic, H., McAllister, P. & Kellner, B. (eds.) *Proceedings of the Fifth International Dharmakīrti Conference, Heidelberg, August 26–30, 2014*, Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften.

de la Vallée Poussin, L. (1971) *L'Abhidharmakakośa de Vasubandhu*, Brussells: Institut Belge des Hautes Etudes Chinoise.

Dreyfus, G. (1997) *Recognizing Reality: Dharmakīrti's Philosophy and Its Tibetan Interpretations*, Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

Dreyfus, G. & Thompson, E. (2007) Asian perspectives: Indian theories of mind, in Moscovitch, M., Thompson, E. & Zelazo, P.D. (eds.) *The Cambridge Handbook of Consciousness*, pp. 89–114, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dunne, J.D. (2004) *Foundations of Dharmakīrti's Philosophy*, Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications.

Copyright (c) Imprint Academic 2013
For personal use only -- not for reproduction

Gallagher, S. (2006) *How the Body Shapes the Mind*, New York: Oxford University Press.

Ganeri, J. (2012) *The Self: Naturalism, Consciousness, and the First-Person Stance*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Garfield, J.L. (2015) *Engaging Buddhism: Why It Matters to Philosophy*, New York: Oxford University Press.

Goldman, A.I. (1999) *Knowledge in a Social World*, New York: Oxford University Press.

Goodman, C. (2004) The treasury of metaphysics and the physical world, *Philosophical Quarterly*, **54** (216), pp. 389–401.

Griffiths, P.J. (1986) *On Being Mindless: Buddhist Meditation and the Mind–Body Problem*, LaSalle, IL: Open Court.

Hattori, M. (1968) *Dignāga, On Perception*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Hayes, R. & Gillon, B. (2008) Dharmakīrti on the role of causation in inference as presented in Pramāṇavārttika Svopajñavṛtti 11–38, *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, **36**, pp. 335–404.

Hurley, S. (1998) *Consciousness in Action*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Husserl, E. (1970) *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, Carr, D. (trans.), Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

Husserl, E. (1973) *Experience and Judgment*, Churchill, J.S. & Ameriks, K. (trans.), Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

Husserl, E. (1983) *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*, Vol. I, Kersten, F. (trans.), Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Husserl, E. (1991) *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time (1893-1917)*, Brough, J.B. (trans.), Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Hutchins, E. (1995) *Cognition in the Wild*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Janzen, G. (2008) *The Reflexive Nature of Consciousness*, Amsterdam and Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins.

Keijzer, F. & Schouten, M. (2007) Embedded cognition and mental causation: Setting empirical bounds on metaphysics, *Synthese*, **158**, pp. 109–125.

Kellner, B. (2011) Self-awareness (*Svasaṃvedana*) and infinite regresses: A comparison of arguments by Dignāga and Dharmakīrti, *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, **39** (4–5), pp. 411–426.

Kriegel, U. (2009) *Subjective Consciousness: A Self-Representational Theory*, New York: Oxford University Press.

Lamotte, É. (1936) *Karmasiddhiprakaraṇa: Le Traité de l'acte de Vasubandhu*, Brussells: Mélanges Chinois et Bouddhique.

Lamotte, É. (1973) *La Somme du Grand Véhicule d'Asaṅga (Mahāyānasaṃgraha). Tome II*, Louvain: Institut Orientaliste de Louvain.

MacKenzie, M. (2007) The illumination of consciousness: Approaches to self-awareness in Indian and western traditions, *Philosophy East and West*, **57**, pp. 40–62.

Matilal, B.K. (1986) *Perception: An Essay on Classical Indian Theories of Knowledge*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Matthen, M. (2004) *Seeing, Doing, and Knowing: A Philosophical Theory of Sense Perception*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Copyright (c) Imprint Academic 2013
For personal use only -- not for reproduction

Mohanty, J.N. (2000) *Classical Indian Philosophy*, Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield.

Ñāṇamoli, B. & Bodhi, B. (2001) *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Majjhima Nikāya*, Boston, MA: Wisdom.

Noë, A. (2004) *Action in Perception*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Pandeya, R.C. (ed.) (1989) *The Pramāṇavārttikam of Ācārya Dharmakīrti*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

Peacocke, C. (2010) Self-consciousness, *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*, in Longuesnesse, B. (ed.) *Le moi, the Self, le soi*, **68**, pp. 521–551.

Pessoa, L., Thompson, E. & Noë, A. (1998) Finding out about filling in: A guide to perceptual completion for visual science and the philosophy of perception, *Brain and Behavioral Sciences*, **21** (1998), pp. 723–780.

Pradhan, P. (1975) *Commentary on the Compendium of Superior Knowledge (Abhidharmakośabhāṣyam)*, revised 2nd ed., Haldar, A. (ed.), Patna: Kashi Prasad Jayaswal Research Institute.

Sartre, J.-P. (1967) Consciousness of self and knowledge of self, in Laurence, N. & O'Connor, D. (eds.) *Readings in Existential Phenomenology*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Shastri, S.D. (ed.) (1968) *Tattvasaṃgraha of Āchārya Shāntarakṣita with the Commentary 'Pañjikā' of Shrī Kamalaśīla*, vols. I–II, Vārāṇasī: Bauddha Bhāratī Series.

Searle, J. (2015) *Seeing Things How They Are: A Theory of Perception*, New York: Oxford University Press.

Shoemaker, S. (2006) On the way things appear, in Gendler, T. & Hawthorne, J. (eds.) *Perceptual Experience*, pp. 461–480, New York: Oxford University Press.

Siderits, M. (2011) Is everything connected to everything else? What the Gopis know, in *Moonshadows: Conventional Truth in Buddhist Philosophy*, pp. 167–180, New York: Oxford University Press.

Siegel, S. (2006) Which properties are represented in perception?, in Gendler, T. & Hawthorne, J. (eds.) *Perceptual Experience*, pp. 480–503, New York: Oxford University Press.

Silberstein, M. (2006) In defence of ontological emergence and mental causation, in Clayton, P. & Davies, P. (eds.) *The Re-Emergence of Emergence*, pp. 203–224, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Tillemans, T. (2011) Dharmakīrti, in Zalta, E.N. (ed.) *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2014 Edition)*, [Online], http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/entries/dharmakiirti/.

Tillemans, T.J.F. (2013) Yogic perception, meditation, and enlightenment, in Emmanuel, S. (ed.) *A Companion to Buddhist Philosophy*, pp. 290–306, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Thompson, E. (2007) *Mind in Life: Biology, Phenomenology, and the Sciences of Mind*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Tucci, G. (1971) *Minor Buddhist Texts*, Pt. III Serie Orientale Roma, Rome: Instituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente.

Varela, F.J., Thompson, E. & Rosch, E. (1991) *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Zahavi, D. (2004) Phenomenology and the project of naturalization, *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*, **3**, pp. 331–347.

Zahavi, D. (2006) *Subjectivity and Selfhood: Investigating the First-Person Perspective*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Copyright (c) Imprint Academic 2013
For personal use only -- not for reproduction