

## Bhaṭṭa Rāmakaṇṭha's Elaboration of Self-Awareness (*svasaṃvedana*), and How it Differs from Dharmakīrti's Exposition of the Concept

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**Abstract** The article considers what happened to the Buddhist concept of self-awareness (*svasaṃvedana*) when it was appropriated by Śaiva Siddhānta. The first section observes how it was turned against Buddhism by being used to attack the momentariness of consciousness and to establish its permanence. The second section examines how self-awareness differs from I-cognition (*ahampratyaya*). The third section examines the difference between the kind of self-awareness elaborated by Rāmakaṇṭha ('reflexive awareness') and a kind elaborated by Dharmakīrti ('intentional self-awareness'). It is then pointed out that Dharmakīrti avails himself not only of intentional self-awareness but also of reflexive awareness. Some remarks on the relationship between these two strands of Dharmakīrtian Buddhism are offered. The conclusion points out that although self-awareness occurs in Buddhism as inextricably linked with *anātmavāda*, the doctrine of no-self, and *sākāravāda*, the view that the forms we perceive belong not to external objects but to consciousness, it is used by Rāmakaṇṭha to refute both of these views. An appendix addresses the problem of how precisely to interpret Dharmakīrti's contention that conceptual cognition is non-conceptual in its reflexive awareness of itself.

**Keywords** Self-awareness · Śaivism · Buddhist Philosophy · Rāmakaṇṭha · Dharmakīrti · No-self

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## Introduction

Bhaṭṭa Rāmakaṇṭha was the most prolific and influential of the early Śaiva Siddhānta commentators. By ‘early Śaiva Siddhānta’ I mean the pan-Indian Śaiva Siddhānta that flourished from the fifth to the twelfth century before this tradition came to survive only in the Tamil speaking south from the twelfth century onwards, where it was transformed under the influence of Vedānta and devotionism (*bhakti*).<sup>1</sup> Rāmakaṇṭha wrote in Kashmir in the tenth century; he was an older contemporary of Abhinavagupta’s, and was cited by him.<sup>2</sup>

Rāmakaṇṭha’s philosophical texts and philosophical passages within his theological commentaries, on which this paper is based, attempted to establish Śaiva Siddhānta as a force to be reckoned with within the rational tradition of Buddhist-Brāhmanical debate.

The task of the present paper is to consider what happened to the Buddhist concept of self-awareness (*svasaṃvedana*) when it was appropriated by this alien system that was constitutively opposed to Buddhism.<sup>3</sup> To what use was it put? How did it fit with its neighbouring Saiddhāntika concepts, the purpose of which was to articulate a very different world view from that of the Buddhism that gave birth to it? The first section will observe how it was put to the use of attacking a core Buddhist doctrine, the momentariness of consciousness. The second section will examine how it differed from ‘I-cognition’ (*aḥampratyaḃya*), a related concept that had been part of Saiddhāntika philosophy for approximately 200 years before the new concept was adopted.<sup>4</sup> We will then be ready in the final section to consider how Rāmakaṇṭha’s version of the concept differed from Dharmakīrti’s—to note the subtle transformations that the concept underwent as a result of its journey from Buddhism to Śaivism.

## Refutation of the Momentariness of Consciousness

Rāmakaṇṭha’s version of *ātmavāda* differs from that of the Naiyāyikas, Vaiśeṣikas and Mīmāṃsakas in that he does not accept the existence of a self over and above consciousness. For him the self is not a substrate (*āśraya*, *dharmīn*) to which consciousness belongs, nor a substance (*dravya*) in which consciousness inheres as a quality. The self just *is* consciousness.<sup>5</sup> He thus agrees with Buddhism that consciousness can exist without belonging to or inhering in something else; but he

<sup>1</sup> See Goodall (2004, xiii–xxxiv). Up until 2006, specialists gave the seventh century as the date of the earliest evidence for the existence of the tradition (see for example Sanderson 2001, 2006, p. 40). But recent work on the oldest surviving text of the tradition, the *Niśvāsātattvasaṃhitā*, has suggested that its earliest parts date from 450–550 (see Goodall and Isaacson 2007).

<sup>2</sup> Sanderson (2006, p. 44).

<sup>3</sup> Other non-Buddhist traditions beside Śaivism into which the concept spread were Prābhākara Mīmāṃsā, Advaita Vedānta and Jainism.

<sup>4</sup> I-cognition was advanced as evidence for the existence of a self by Sadyojyotis (see NP 1.15) who has been dated by Sanderson (2006, p. 76) to ca. 675–725. See also Watson (2006, pp. 111–114, 272).

<sup>5</sup> Some readers may be struck by the similarity of Rāmakaṇṭha’s position to that of Advaita Vedānta. For the difference between the two, see Watson (2010).

disagrees with Buddhism in holding that consciousness is enduring (*sthira*), not momentary (*kṣaṇika*). He appeals to *svasaṃvedana* to argue for his position.

For both Buddhism<sup>6</sup> and Rāmakaṇṭha, consciousness is aware of itself (i.e. is known through *svasaṃvedana*), and this self-awareness is necessarily valid. It occurs without the interference of our subjective conceptual framework, i.e. without the interpretative application of *vikalpas*. Neither does it depend on any sense- or internal faculty, it being an intrinsic property of consciousness, constitutive of its nature. Hence the form that self-awareness takes is determined entirely by that which it is aware of, consciousness. The lack of any potentially distorting intermediary between perceiver and perceived guarantees its validity.

Since both Buddhism and Rāmakaṇṭha agree about that, they also agree that the way to discover who is correct about whether consciousness is momentary or enduring is to focus on our self-awareness, and see if consciousness appears in it as momentary or enduring. We do not need logical arguments here, but rather a kind of phenomenological observation of our ongoing *svasaṃvedana*, while bearing in mind the following question: 'Does consciousness present itself as something different in every moment or as always the same?' This is the question that is posed in a passage that occurs with slight variations in three of Rāmakaṇṭha's texts, NPP, PMNKV and MatV;<sup>7</sup> the following is an account of Rāmakaṇṭha's response.<sup>8</sup>

That which we are conscious of is clearly changing all the time (a pot, followed by a cloth, followed by a pain etc.), but how about the consciousness that perceives those objects, the perceiver (*grāhaka*)? (The perceiver just is consciousness for Rāmakaṇṭha, as for Buddhism, unlike for the Naiyāyikas and Vaiśeṣikas.)

Rāmakaṇṭha contends that though the objects of our perception come and go, the perceiver of those objects appears to us, through self-awareness, as always the same. We never lose a sense, after all, that it is me who is experiencing the objects. Consciousness never detects a break in its existence. But if we not only were momentary, but experienced ourselves as momentary, we would seem to ourselves as utterly separate from what we were in the previous moment. We would appear to ourselves as continually ceasing to exist and continually coming into existence for the first time.

This sense that we continue to exist over time, as opposed to ceasing in every moment, accompanies and motivates our actions; I act in the belief that it will be me who experiences the benefit of that action. If we did not experience ourselves as existing for more than one moment, we would have no aspiration to relinquish some things and to strive for others (*heyopādeyabuddhi*); this aspiration is predicated on a sense of self-continuity, and is as much a part of the Buddhist path as it is of the Śaiva.

<sup>6</sup> 'Buddhism' is used from here onwards as shorthand for 'Dharmakīrtian Buddhism.'

<sup>7</sup> See NPP ad 1.5, pp. 13.20–14.2: *kiṃ pratyartham pratikṣaṇam cāpūrvo 'pūrvaḥ pūrvoṭtarābhyāṃ anubhavābhyāṃ bhinnāḥ kṣaṇamātrārūpāvabhāso grāhakaḥ prakāśata uta sarvadaivābhinna iti*. 'Does the perceiver appear as different from the earlier and subsequent experience, ever new with regard to every object and in every moment, its form appearing only for a moment, or does it appear as always the same?'

<sup>8</sup> For the full passage as it occurs in all three texts, a translation and detailed discussion, see Watson (2006, 220ff).

So if we accept, with Buddhism, that experience should be our guide as to what is the case, we are led to the view of a permanent perceiver. Of course Rāmakaṅṭha will have to provide an independent refutation of the Buddhist arguments for momentariness, such as that from existence (*sattva*) defined as the capacity to produce effects (*arthakriyāsāmarthya*), which he does. But if we concentrate on the evidence of our experience, what we find presented to us is a permanent perceiver. Since we never sense any *abhāva* (absence, non-existence) of consciousness, why regard it as flashing on and off in every moment instead of permanently on? And this is the only issue between Buddhism and Rāmakaṅṭha; the latter is not postulating any further entity to which consciousness belongs, in the manner of the Naiyāyikas or Vaiśeṣikas for example.

### Buddhist Response

The Buddhist opponent responds by accepting that we experience ourselves as continuously existing. Is Rāmakaṅṭha representing his opponent realistically here, or is he cheating, having him consent to something with which he would not in fact agree? It does not seem unrealistic that a Dharmakīrtian would accept that we experience ourselves as identical over time. If we experienced ourselves as momentary, why would there be any need of a Buddhist path? The Buddhist practice of ‘counteracting meditation’ (*pratipakṣabhāvanā*), or meditation on selflessness (*nairātmya*), is intended to counteract precisely this sense of ourselves as one continuously existing entity (*satkāyadr̥ṣṭi*), and hence presupposes its existence. Thus the Buddhist opponent in NPP, PMNKV and MatV accepts that we experience our own consciousness in the way that Rāmakaṅṭha has described; he denies, however, that that experience is *svasaṃvedana*, which means that it does not have to be regarded as a valid, accurate apprehension of consciousness.

It results, according to the Buddhist, from conceptualization. What actually presents itself is a sequence of momentary perceivers, but because of the rapidity with which they succeed each other, and the likeness of each to the previous one, we superimpose permanence onto them, we mistake them for being one lasting thing rather than many momentary things.

Thus even though our experience of an enduring perceiver seems like direct, immediate experience, it in fact has already been mediated by conceptualization. It is like looking at a very calm river; we may think we are looking at one unmoving thing, but we are actually looking at different bits of water rushing by.

To state the Buddhist position in brief: the perceiver does appear to us as enduring (*asti ... sthira-grāhakaprakāśaḥ*),<sup>9</sup> but this enduring appearance is superimposed

<sup>9</sup> *asty ayam ekarūpasthiragrāhakaprakāśaḥ, anapahnavanīya eva. sa punar na svasaṃvedyaḥ, api tu grāhakaḥṣaṇapravāha evānubhūyamāne tatsādṛśyadarśanabhṛāntair vikalpair adhyāropito 'mbhaḥ-pravāhasyevaikyam iti bhrānta eva* (NPP ad 1.5, p. 14,18–21). ‘[Buddhist:] There is this appearance of a stable perceiver that is of uniform character. That indeed cannot be denied, but that [appearance] is not experienced by itself. Rather, although all that is actually experienced is a stream of momentary perceivers, [the appearance of a stable and uniform perceiver] is superimposed [onto those momentary perceivers] by conceptual cognitions that are mistaken owing to perceiving the resemblance of the [momentary perceivers], just as the oneness of a stream of water [is superimposed]. So [this appearance] is nothing but [an] erroneous [cognition that misidentifies disparate momentary perceivers].’

(*adhyāropita*) through conceptualization. The debate between Rāmakaṇṭha and Buddhism thus ceases to be about whether we experience our consciousness as momentary or enduring. The crucial issue now is whether our sense of our consciousness as enduring is a case of *svasaṃvedana* or is a *vikalpa* (conceptual cognition). The reason that so much hangs on this question of whether or not something is *svasaṃvedana* is that both sides hold *svasaṃvedana* to be necessarily valid. Thus if something appears as lasting through *svasaṃvedana*, it must be lasting.

### Rāmakaṇṭha's Response: For Consciousness to Superimpose Duration onto Itself is Impossible

How then does Rāmakaṇṭha respond to the Buddhist point that our experience of an enduring perceiver is conceptual, resulting from superimposition of duration, not a direct, unmediated encounter of consciousness with itself? He gives four reasons why the appearance of an enduring perceiver (*sthira-grāhaka-prakāśa*) cannot be superimposition of the concept of duration by a *vikalpa*; hence it must be a genuine case of *svasaṃvedana*.

(1) Superimposition involves synthesis of earlier and later experiences (*pūrvāparaparāmarśa*), and thus can only be carried out by something which exists not only now but also at the time of the earlier experience. Superimposition of the concept of silver onto mother-of-pearl only happens if its agent has experienced silver earlier; thus it implies the existence of a non-momentary agent, a subject both of the past experience and the present superimposition. This objection is not original,<sup>10</sup> and it is not difficult to see how the Buddhist would respond, namely by adducing memory traces (*saṃskāras*). It is not the case that one thing has to experience both the earlier silver and the present mother-of-pearl. Rather the earlier experience of silver leaves a trace of itself in the next moment of consciousness, which gives rise to the same trace occurring in the next moment of consciousness, and so on, such that a subsequent perception of what is in fact mother-of-pearl gives rise to the awakening, in the next moment, of the memory of the silver, followed, in the next moment, by the misidentification of the mother-of-pearl as silver, i.e. the superimposition of silver onto the mother-of-pearl.

But with regard to our specific case of the superimposition of duration onto what is momentary, the question arises for the Buddhist as to where traces of duration could come from. In a Dharmakīrtian universe, in which all things, both perceivers and perceived objects, are momentary, where could anyone ever have experienced something enduring, in order to acquire the concept of duration such that they are then able to superimpose it?

<sup>10</sup> In the commentaries on *Nyāyasūtra* 1.1.10, for example, we find the argument that synthesis (*pratisandhāna*, *anusandhāna*) of various different experiences can only take place if the subject of all those experiences is the same. On the versions of the argument put by Vātsyāyana, Uddyotakara, Jayanta Bhaṭṭa, Vācaspati Miśra and Udayana, as well as the more primitive version in the *Śābarabhāṣya*, see Watson (2006, pp. 139–165, especially pp. 159–165).

- (2) Since the Buddhist accepts direct awareness of ourselves as momentary, why is it not that that registers with us? Why is it that we are unaware of that and aware of the opposite, i.e. of ourselves as enduring? We have to assume a mysterious forgetting or overriding of our direct experience. The Buddhist position seems to require that we overlay that correct experience with a false one, in such a way as to eradicate consciousness of the correct one.
- (3) Even allowing that traces of the concept of duration somehow occur in consciousness, and that our correct experience of momentary perceivers is somehow overlaid, there is a further problem. The river example, in which a plurality of moving bits of water appears as one unmoving bit of water, illustrates how an observer can be mistaken about something other than himself. But what the Buddhist is asking us to believe is that consciousness is mistaken about itself.

That consciousness could deceive itself by superimposing duration onto itself is contradicted by Dharmakīrtian doctrines that Rāmakaṇṭha also accepts. First, there is the principle that consciousness is only ever mistaken with regard to its objects, not with regard to itself.<sup>11</sup> This is a statement about the validity of *svasaṃvedana*, but how about if this experience of oneself as stable is not *svasaṃvedana* but conceptual cognition? Here we come to a second Dharmakīrtian doctrine, namely that even conceptual cognition is non-conceptual with regard to itself.<sup>12</sup> This means that it is impossible for

<sup>11</sup> *bhrāntiyabhāvāc ca, bhrāntam api hi vijñānaṃ sarvaṃ ālambane bhrāntam, na svātmani* (NPP ad 1.5, p. 16,14–16). ‘And because of the impossibility of error [in self-awareness]; for even mistaken cognitions are all mistaken [only] with regard to some object, not with regard to themselves.’ See also *nāpi bādhaḥ [nāpi bādhaḥ MatV(ū), MatV(ṛ), MatV(ṛ)]; omitted in the other MSS and in ed., sarvaṃ ālambane [ālambane 4 (non-Kashmirian) MSS; ālambanaṃ ed.] bhrāntam [bhrāntam MatV(ū), MatV(ṛ), MatV(ṛ)]; bhrāntir ed.] na svātmani yataḥ [yataḥ MatV(ū), MatV(ṛ), MatV(ṛ)]; kadācana iti ed.]* (MatV VP ad 6.34c–35a, p. 173,6).

As an example of this view in Buddhist texts, see the following passage from the TarBhā (p. 19,5–8): *bhrāntam apy ātmany abhrāntaṃ svaparākāśarūpeṇaivābhāsanāt. asadvīṣayatvāc ca bhrāntir ucyate. tad uktaṃ—svarūpe sarvaṃ abhrāntaṃ pararūpe viparyayaḥ | iti.* ‘Even mistaken [cognition] is correct with regard to itself, because it appears in the very form of its own shining forth. And the reason it is said to be mistaken is because it has an *object* that is unreal. Thus it has been said [by Prajñākaragupta], “All [cognition] is correct with regard to its own nature; error [is only possible] with regard to the [object] whose nature is other [than that of the cognition] (PVBh verse 778, p. 372).”’ See also PVBh 331,13: *svarūpe tad abhrāntam arthe bhrāntam.*

<sup>12</sup> *svātmany avikalpako vikalpaḥ* (NPP ad 1.5, p. 15,21–22; PMNKV ad 43, p. 295,13–14; MatV VP ad 6.24ab, p. 161,2, adopting the readings of MatV(ṛ) and MatV(ṛ)). ‘Conceptual cognition is non-conceptual with regard to itself.’ One could regard this as simply the application of the first more general doctrine to the specific case of conceptual cognition. It goes back to Dignāga—see PrSa 1:7ab: *kalpanāpi svasaṃvittāḥ iṣṭā nārthe vikalpanāt.* ‘[We] hold even conceptual cognition [to be non-conceptual perception] in its self-awareness, [but] not with regard to its object, because it conceptualizes that.’ Dignāga makes the same point in his now only-extant-in-Chinese *Nyāyamukha*: cf. Yao (2004, p. 64).

Dharmakīrti makes the same point at PVā 3.287:

*śabdārthagrāhi yad yatra taj jñānaṃ tatra kalpanā |  
svarūpaṃ ca nā śabdārthas tatrādhyakṣam ato ‘khilam ||*

‘Cognitions which are conceptual are those which grasp the meaning of a word, and they are conceptual [only] with regard to that to which they are directed (i.e. the meaning of a word). Now the own nature [of conceptual cognitions] is not the meaning of a word, so all [conceptual cognition] is perceptual (i.e. non-conceptual) with regard to that (i.e. its own nature).’

- consciousness to conceptualize itself, to see itself through the distortion of a concept, to have anything other than an accurate apprehension of itself.<sup>13</sup> Thus if it were momentary, it would not experience itself as enduring. Since it does experience itself as enduring, it cannot be momentary.
- (4) If Dharmakīrti and his followers were to deny the possibility of direct, unmediated self-knowledge, then they could easily dismiss our apprehension of ourselves as continuously unbroken as non-direct knowledge, mediated by a distorting act of superimposition. But given that they assert that we all have valid self-awareness, where is it if not our sense of ourselves as one enduring perceiver (*ekarūpasthiragrāhakaprakāśa*)? This is a plausible candidate. And there seem to be no other candidates that we are aware of. For we are not aware of ceasing to exist in every moment, of repeatedly coming into existence without having existed previously.
- If the Buddhists denied unmediated awareness, there would be no burden on them to establish that we experience ourselves as momentary. They would then be left with a different problem, namely that their doctrine of momentariness would be completely unsupported by, in fact counter to, experience. They assert the existence of direct experience of a sequence of momentary perceivers, but this assertion is unconvincing given that, as they admit, we experience ourselves as a single temporally extended perceiver.<sup>14</sup>

### The Difference Between *svasaṃvedana* and *ahampratyaya*

For Rāmakaṇṭha the self knows itself not only through *svasaṃvedana* but also through I-cognition (*ahampratyaya*). What is the difference between these two? They constitute the two sides of a split that separated the Kaumārilas and the

Footnote 12 continued

Prajñākaragupta's introduction to this verse includes (PVBh 331,12–13): *svarūpaṃ tad eva spaṣṭākāram arthaḥ tu na tathā. tathaḥ svarūpe tan nirvikalpakam. arthe tat savikalpakam iti smaraṇam. arthe smaraṇam svarūpe pratyakṣam*. 'The own nature [of the cognition] has a clear form; the object on the other hand does not. Therefore the [cognition] is non-conceptual with regard to its own nature. With regard to the object it is conceptual, so it [involves] memory. [In other words:] [a conceptual cognition] is memory with regard to the object [but] perception with regard to its nature.' Sāṅkṛtyāyana's edition reads *arthasmarāṇam* in the last sentence, but Birgit Kellner kindly informed me (1) that he has misread the manuscript, which reads *arthe*, not *artha-* (see Watanabe 1998: folio 167b2 of manuscript B); (2) that *arthe* is also confirmed by *don la ni* in the Tibetan translation (Derge 4221, The, 1a3).

See also TarBhā 18,19–19,2: *vikalpajñānam api svātmani nirvikalpaṃ eva. ghaṭo 'yam ity anena bāhyam evārthaṃ vikalpayati, na tv ātmānam*.

<sup>13</sup> Claus Oetke pointed out to me that this argument is susceptible to the following response from the Buddhist: just because every cognition has a perception of itself, it does not follow that every cognition which a cognition has about itself is a perception. In response to this Rāmakaṇṭha could reply by giving the next argument (4): if the experience of a stable perceiver is not a (self-)perception but a conceptual cognition, where is the (self-)perception that according to the Buddhist must exist?

<sup>14</sup> These four arguments are not given explicitly by Rāmakaṇṭha in the way in which I have presented them here. They result rather from my putting myself into Rāmakaṇṭha's shoes, working through, and in some places extending, those of his lines of thought that strike me as most powerful. For Rāmakaṇṭha's exact words, together with my translation and close exegesis, see Watson (2006: 236–254).

Prābhākaras, the former advocating *ahampratyaya*<sup>15</sup> and the latter *svasaṃvedana*.<sup>16</sup> The differences between them are particularly clearly revealed by Bhaṭṭa Jayanta near the beginning of the *ātman* chapter of the *Nyāyamañjarī* (NM 268–275), where first a Kaumārila and then a Prābhākara opponent put forward their respective views about how the self is known. The very next section of that chapter (NM 276–284) can be known to have been read by Rāmakaṇṭha, for I have shown that he not only follows its structure precisely but also echoes its wording on three occasions.<sup>17</sup> It is thus likely that the similarity of Rāmakaṇṭha's and Jayanta's thoughts about *svasaṃvedana* and the way it differs from *ahampratyaya* is not co-incidental but results from direct influence. In providing evidence for my claims below about what separates *svasaṃvedana* and *ahampratyaya*, I will draw not only on the writings of Rāmakaṇṭha, but also on those of Jayanta and the Prābhākaras.

- (1) *ahampratyaya* involves the word and the concept 'I' (*aham*); *svasaṃvedana* takes place independently of concepts or language. For that reason alone I-cognition is precluded from qualifying as a case of perception (*pratyakṣa*) for Buddhism; for Rāmakaṇṭha it is a valid case of perception.
- (2) *svasaṃvedana* functions through the power of consciousness alone; it does not require the involvement of any other instruments, such as the faculty of attention (*manas*). This is expressed in the Sanskrit by such phrases as *upāyāntaranirapekṣa*, 'independent of any other means,'<sup>18</sup> *na parādḥīnaprakāśaḥ*, 'not a shining forth that is dependent on something else,'<sup>19</sup> and by the use of *sva-*, *svataḥ* or *svayam*.<sup>20</sup> *ahampratyaya* does require the *manas*. It occurs when the self/consciousness is made into an object by the employment of the *manas*.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>15</sup> *ahampratyaya* was the kind of perception of the self (*ātmapratyakṣa*) advocated not only by the Kaumārilas (see ŚV, *ātmavāda* 107–139), but also by many but not all Naiyāyikas from Uddyotakara onwards (see NVā ad 3.1.1, p. 323,12–324,10).

<sup>16</sup> PrPañc 144,5: *yac ca svasaṃvedanaṃ sarvavittināṃ pratyakṣam uktam, tad anumanyāma eva*. 'As for the [supposed] self-awareness of all cognitions that [the Buddhists] teach as [a kind of] direct perception, with that we are in complete agreement.'

<sup>17</sup> See Watson (2006, pp. 141–156).

<sup>18</sup> *upāyāntaranirapekṣam eva prakāśamānam ātmattvam āsta iti* (NM Vol. 2, 273,12–13). 'The essence of the self is always shining forth without requiring any other means at all.'

<sup>19</sup> *svayamprakāśarūpatvāt saṃvido na parādḥīnaprakāśaḥ* (Rju 64,11b). This and the continuation of the passage are given and translated in footnote 27.

<sup>20</sup> *taṃ svaśaktyaiva prakāśayann ayam anubhūyate* (NPP ad 1.6ab, p. 26,6–7), 'While illuminating the [object] through its own power alone, this [self] is experienced;' *sarvadāthaprakāśakatvenāsya svato vabhāsanāt* (NPP ad 1.2, p. 4,7–8), 'because this [perceiver] always shines forth of itself as the illuminator of objects;' *tatprakāśakatayāntaviviktaḥ puruṣaḥ svayam avabhāsatē* (MoKāVṛ ad 105, p. 267,9), 'The soul shines forth by itself completely separate [from the objects of cognition], as their illuminator.'

<sup>21</sup> See *saiva grāhakatmasaṃvin manaḥprañidhānena viṣayikṛtā* (MatV VP ad 6.35b–d, p. 174,8). For Naiyāyikas and Kaumārilas the *manas* is the only faculty required for I-cognition. But Rāmakaṇṭha's Sāṅkhya-derived ontology means that for him the *buddhi* and the *ahaṅkāra* are also involved: *tasya ca parāmarśātmano jñānasyotpattyapavargayogasiddhāv api buddhyahaṅkāradharmatvena vyadhikaraṇatvān na grāhakatmany anityatvasādhanē sāmāthyam* (MatV VP ad 6.35b–d, p. 175,4–5). 'And even though that [I-]cognition, of the nature of verbal determination, is proved to rise and pass away, [it] is not capable of proving the non-eternality of the perceiver, because it occurs in a different locus [from the perceiver] in that it is a property of the *buddhi* and the *ahaṅkāra*.'



- (3) Rāmakaṇṭha is writing from a realist perspective according to which the things we are directly aware of are neither projections caused by memory traces (the Yogācāra position), nor internal representations of external objects (the Sautrāntika position), but the external objects themselves. These objects are ontologically quite distinct from consciousness, and consciousness does not take on their form (*ākāra*), but, like a light, illuminates them without being affected by them.

In spite of this there is a sense in which for him, as for Buddhism, consciousness' perception of itself is not other than its perception of its objects. The *svasaṃvedana* is not other than the *arthasaṃvedana*, because it is the same *saṃvedana* even though the *sva-* and the *artha-* are firmly separate. See, for example, the following sentence: 'For there are not two cognitions, one of the object and one of the self. Rather it is this very object-awareness that, being established through self-awareness, is the nature of the Self.'<sup>22</sup> In other words there is only one cognition, a unitary action in which consciousness illuminates an object, but in so doing it illuminates itself. It is not that consciousness points in two directions at once: towards the object and towards itself.<sup>23</sup> It resembles a light that flows out towards the object, but thereby reveals itself.<sup>24</sup> The flame of a candle reveals the objects in its range through its shining, but at the same time it is nothing other than that shining that makes *itself* visible.<sup>25</sup> This analogy is central to the concept of *svasaṃvedana*, and is the source of its plausibility. Just as it is impossible to conceive of a flame having the power to illuminate objects without thereby making itself visible, so, according to the proponents of *svasaṃvedana*, it is impossible to conceive of consciousness having the power to illuminate objects without thereby making itself perceptible.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>22</sup> *na hi dvāv upalambhau [upalambhau MatV(ū), MatV(r), MatV(ṛ); upalambhau staḥ ed.], eko 'rthasya, aparāś cātmanah, kiṃ tu tad eva viṣayasamvedanaṃ [viṣayasamvedanaṃ MatV(ū), MatV(r), MatV(ṛ); viṣayasamvedanaṃ svasaṃvedanaṃ sat ed.] svasaṃvitsiddham ātmano rāpam, nānyat (MatV VP ad 6.22cd, p. 157,7–8).*

<sup>23</sup> That it would not be capable of doing that is one of Kumāri's objections to *svasaṃvedana*. He maintains (ŚV, *śūnyavāda* 184ab: *vyāpṛtaṃ cārthasaṃvittau jñānaṃ nātmānam ṛcchati*) that consciousness, while occupied with one thing—the perceiving of an object—would not at the same time be capable of another, different task, the perceiving of itself. On Śāntarākṣita's engagement with this and other of Kumāri's objections to *svasaṃvedana*, see TattSa (2012–2021) and Suganuma (1963).

<sup>24</sup> See *tam ... prakāśayann ayam anubhūyate* in footnote 20.

<sup>25</sup> See Williams (1983, p. 323), Robbins (1992, p. 242), MacKenzie (2007, p. 47) and Dreyfus (1997, pp. 241–243).

<sup>26</sup> See PVin 1.54cd: *apratyakṣopalambhasya nārthadrṣṭiḥ prasidhyati*. 'For someone for whom the perception [itself] is not perceived, [even] the perception of the object is not possible.' For a discussion of other possible syntactical interpretations of this half-verse, see Watson (2006, p. 206). For a list of places where it is cited, see Steinkellner 2007: 40. Some other citations not mentioned there are found at: NPP ad 1.5, p. 12,13; ad 1.27c–28b, p. 61,1; Jayaratha's commentary ad TĀ 10.96c–97b, p. 75,1; TattSaPañj ad 2069, Vol. 2, p. 705,17.

For the point that cognition of an object necessarily entails cognition of cognition, see also PVā 3.443ab and 446 (both pointed out to me by Birgit Kellner) and TarBhā 17,8–18,16 (passage beginning *api ca yadi jñānaṃ svasaṃvedanaṃ na syāt, tadā jñāto 'rtha iti durghaṭaḥ syāt ...*, 'Moreover if cognition were not aware of itself, then it would not be possible to say that the object has been cognized ...'), translated at Kajiyama (1998, pp. 49–52).

It is possible however, according to the proponents of I-cognition, to perceive an object without simultaneously having a cognition of the concept 'I': we have cognitions of the form 'this is a pot,' not only those of the form 'I am looking at a pot.'

- (4) In *svasaṃvedana* the self/consciousness does not feature as an object; it is apprehended only as the subject (*grāhakatvenaiva*), not as the object of perception (*na grāhyatayā*).<sup>27</sup>

In *ahampratyaya* the self does feature as an object,<sup>28</sup> although this is qualified in various ways; see point 6 below.

As a result of this particular difference, Rāmakaṇṭha and Jayanta regard certain objections to the perceptibility of the self as more valid when directed against *ahampratyaya* than when directed against *svasaṃvedana*:

- (i) An objection commonly levelled against *svasaṃvedana* is that nothing can direct its action onto itself (*svātmani kriyāvirodhā*). The tip of a finger

<sup>27</sup> See:

- (1) *na cātmā svātmana eva grāhyibhavati, svātmani kriyāvirodhāt, sa hi grāhakatvenaiva pratyagrūpatayā sarvadā bhāsata ity uktam* (NPP ad 1.55, p. 93,20–94,1). 'And the Self cannot become the object of itself, because action directed to oneself is impossible. For as [I] have said, it always shines forth internally as the perceiver alone.' This sentence is paralleled at PMNKV ad v. 48, p. 299,2b–1b.
- (2) *na cātmana evātmā grāhyo bhavati, tatra tasya vyāpāravirodhāt, api tu grāhakatvenaiva pratyagrūpatayā sarvadā bhāsate* (MoKāVṛ ad 23ab, p. 250,4b–2b).
- (3) *na prakāśyatayā kin tu kārakatvena* (MoKāVṛ ad 105, p. 267,8). '[It is illuminated] not as the object of illumination, but as the agent [of that illumination].' This occurs in a passage that is repeated almost word-for-word by Aghoraśiva ad BhoKā 60.
- (4) NPP ad 1.6ab, p. 20,18–20.

Note the similarity of Rāmakaṇṭha's position in those places to that put forward in Jayanta's representation of the Prābhākara position: *yad āhuḥ, 'saṃvit saṃvittayaiva saṃvedyate, na saṃvedyatayā' iti, nāsyāḥ karmabhāvo vidyata ity arthaḥ. evam ātmā grāhakatayaiva prakāśyate na grāhyatayā* (NM Vol. 2, 273,9–11). 'As [Prābhākara] has said, "One is aware of consciousness as consciousness, not as an object of consciousness," the point being that it does not occur as an object. In the same way the self is revealed not as the object of perception, but only as the subject.' The impossibility of the self becoming an object is expressed at one point by characterizing the self not as illuminated (*prakāśyate*), but just as shining forth (*prakāśate*): *na hy ātmānyajanyena jñānena ghaṭādir iva prakāśyate, api tu svata eva prakāśate* [*prakāśate* NM(C); *prakāśyate* ed.] (NM Vol. 2, 273,3–4). 'For the self is not the object of illumination by a cognition produced in something else, as a pot is, rather it shines forth by itself.'

Jayanta is quoting and drawing on the *Bṛhatī* in that passage: *na brūmo na saṃvedyā saṃvid iti. saṃvittayaiva hi saṃvit saṃvedyā, na saṃvedyatayā [...] nāsyāḥ karmabhāvo vidyata ity arthaḥ* (Bṛh 64,2–5). Śālikanātha comments: *svayamprakāśarūpatvāt saṃvido na parādḥīnaprakāśaḥ, iti na karmatā, na ca prakāśābhāvaḥ. prakāśamānaṃ cāstīty ucyate, na punaḥ karmataiva vivakṣitā. pratyakṣaśabdō 'pi saṃvidām aparokṣatayā, na punar indriyajñānavedyatayaiveti mantavyam* (R̥ju 64,11b–8b). 'Because consciousness is self-illuminating, [its] shining forth is not dependent on anything else; so it is not an object, yet it does shine forth. It is taught to be always shining forth, but its becoming an object is not intended. It should be understood that (*iti mantavyam*) the word "perceptible," for its part, [is used of consciousness] because consciousness is not imperceptible, but certainly not because it is the object of a cognition arising from a faculty.' On the Prābhākara position see Chatterjee (1979), Matilal (1985, pp. 1–2), and Matilal (1986, pp. 142–143). Dreyfus (1997, p. 242) attributes to Dharmakīrti the view that *svasaṃvedana* does not take consciousness as its object, but he gives no reference and I have been unable to find one.

That consciousness is aware of itself but not as an object is claimed by Sartre in *La Transcendence de l'Ego and L'Être et le Néant*. Dreyfus (1996, p. 229, n. 49) and MacKenzie (2007, p. 49) remark on the similarity to the Buddhist notion of *svasaṃvedana*. See also Ganeri (1999, p. 480).

<sup>28</sup> See for example *nīścayapratyayena viṣayīkṛtatvād ātmāpi pratyakṣeṇa nīścitaḥ* (MatV VP ad 6.35b–d, pp. 175,3–4). 'Because it is made into an object by a determining cognition, the Self too is determined by direct perception.'

cannot touch itself, a sword cannot cut itself, fire cannot burn itself; so similarly the self or consciousness should not be able to perceive itself.<sup>29</sup> But for Rāmakaṇṭha this objection, though relevant to I-cognition, has no bearing on *svasaṃvedana*. Its examples illustrate that something cannot be both agent and object of the same action; but the self/consciousness is not the object of self-awareness.<sup>30</sup>

- (ii) When Jayanta presents the Kaumārila view that the self can be known through I-cognition, it is objected that the self could not be both perceiver and perceived, because that would entail it having two contradictory natures—that of perceiver and that of perceived—which is impossible given its oneness and partlessness. The Prābhākara claim of *svasaṃvedana* is then presented as a way of avoiding this problem, given that the self does not feature there as perceived (*grāhyatayā*), but merely as perceiver (*grāhakatayaiva*).<sup>31</sup>

- (5) In *ahampratyaya* the object is the perceiving cognition in the previous moment. There is a time gap (like in the case of the Naiyāyikas' *anuvyavasāya*).<sup>32</sup>

<sup>29</sup> See for example TattSaPañj ad 1683, p. 585,11–12: *kecid buddhyantarapratyakṣaṃ buddhim icchanti, na svasaṃvidrūpām, svātmani kāritvavirodhāt*. 'Some hold that cognition is perceived by a subsequent cognition—that it is not capable of self-awareness, because [for something] to be capable of agency towards itself would be contradictory.' See also BrSūtBhāṣ ad 2.2.28, pp. 398,15–399,2; TarBhā 16.4–10; and Yao 2005: 29, 52, 53, 63, 102, 124 and 148.

<sup>30</sup> Thus acceptance of the principle that one thing cannot be agent and object of the same action (*svātmani kriyāvirodha*) is quite compatible for Rāmakaṇṭha with acceptance of self-awareness (*svasaṃvedana*). In fact for both Rāmakaṇṭha and his father, Nārāyaṇakaṇṭha, the principle of *svātmani kriyāvirodha* provides evidence for self-awareness. Nārāyaṇakaṇṭha uses the principle in his discussion with the Buddhist opponent at the point where it is agreed that we *appear* to ourselves as a continuous entity, but it is disputed whether this experience is *svasaṃvedana* or is superimposition of duration by a conceptual cognition (*vikalpa*). *svātmani kriyāvirodha* serves to rule out the second possibility: such superimposition by cognition onto itself would be a case of precisely the kind of reflexive action, *svātmani kriyā*, that is agreed to be impossible. Thus the conclusion is left that our sense of self-continuity is a genuine case of *svasaṃvedana* (see MṛgTV ad 1.2.25ab, p. 88,13–16).

For Rāmakaṇṭha the principle of *svātmani kriyāvirodha* confirms that when the self/consciousness appears to us, it is as the perceiver, not as an object of perception: see the first two quotations in footnote 27. Thus whereas other non-Buddhist authors use *svātmani kriyāvirodha* to argue against the possibility of *svasaṃvedana* (see previous note), we see it being used by these Śaiva authors to argue for it.

<sup>31</sup> NM Vol. 2, 273,1–11. For an example of the Prābhākaras themselves using the impossibility of one thing being both agent and object in the same action (because of *svātmani kriyāvirodha*) against *ahampratyaya*, and by implication in favour of their view, see *tatra ke cid āhuḥ—mānasaṃ pratyakṣaṃ sukhādiṣv ivātmani pramāṇam iti. tad ayuktam iti prābhākarāḥ, na hy ekasya kartṛtvam karmatvaṃ ca svāpekṣam upapadyate, svātmani kriyāvṛttivirodhāt* (PrPañc 333,1–3). 'On that point some teach that mental perception is a means of knowing the self in the way that it is a means of knowing pleasure and the like. [We] Prābhākaras maintain that that is incorrect, for one thing cannot be both agent and object with regard to itself, because the occurrence of an action directed [by the agent] onto itself is impossible.'

<sup>32</sup> See NBh ad 1.1.4, p. 11,13: *sarvatra ca pratyakṣaviṣaye jñātur indriyeṇa vyavasāyah, paścān manasānuvyavasāyah*. 'And with regard to all objects of sense perception there is [first] a determining by the agent's sense-faculty; [only] afterwards [may there be] a subsequent determining (*anuvyavasāya*) by the *manas*.'

But there is the important difference between *anuvyavasāya* and *ahampratyaya* that whereas the former involves a momentary entity perceiving a different momentary entity, *ahampratyaya* involves a permanent entity perceiving the preceding stage of the same entity. This explains why the impossibility of anything acting on itself, which is an argument against *ahampratyaya*, is actually used in the TattSaPañj citation in footnote 29 to argue for *anuvyavasāya*.

The model is that of conceptual cognition in general, which follows a non-conceptual cognition in the previous moment. Just as the cognition ‘this is a pot’ conceptualizes a non-conceptual pot in the previous moment, so I-cognition conceptualizes the perceiving cognition in the previous moment.<sup>33</sup> In *svasaṃvedana* there is no time gap.

- (6) In *svasaṃvedana* the self/consciousness appears precisely as it is. Consciousness can be mistaken about an object—because the object can exist in one way and be perceived in another—but not about itself. The validity of *svasaṃvedana* is guaranteed by the fact that there is no room for distorting intermediaries between consciousness that is perceiving and consciousness that is being perceived.<sup>34</sup> Indeed there is no such distinction in *svasaṃvedana*; as we have seen, self-awareness does not consist in consciousness becoming an object, but simply in consciousness shining forth.<sup>35</sup>

Although Rāmakaṇṭha does think that *aḥampratya* is valid, its validity is not so straightforward. How *can* it be valid when it is mediated by the concept ‘I,’ given that the self/consciousness is beyond all concepts (*vikalpātīta*)? The self’s transcending of concepts should make it incapable of being experienced by the *buddhi* (*buddhibodhya*), the faculty that produces all conceptual

<sup>33</sup> For this characterization of I-cognition, see MatV VP ad 6.35b–d, p. 174,4–175,4, translated at Watson 2006: 362–365. The time gap between the occurrence of the object of I-cognition and the I-cognition itself is indicated there by the following phrases: *tadgrahaṇottarakālabhāvinī yādhyavasāyātmikā samvit*, ‘[I-]cognition, which is of the nature of a determinative cognition, taking place subsequent to a perception by that [perceiving cognition];’ *paścād arthagrahaṇottarakālam*, ‘later, [i.e.] subsequent to the perception of the object;’ and *anubhāvaprṣṭhabhāvinā niścayapratya*, ‘by a determining cognition after a [perceptual] experience.’

<sup>34</sup> See the first two quotations given in footnote 11, and the following:

- (1) *svasaṃvittau bhramābhāvāt* (PMNKV ad 46, p. 297,10).
- (2) *na ca svasaṃvedanasya bādhaḥ sambhavati, yena bhrāntatā bhavet* (PMNKV ad 43, p. 295,21–22). ‘And there can be no refutation of self-awareness, as a result of which it might be [revealed as] mistaken.’
- (3) *bhrāntam hi vijñānam sarvam ālambane bhrāntam, na svātmani. ālambanaṃ hy anyathā bahiḥsthitam anyathā pratīyamānaṃ bhramaviṣayatām āpadyate. yat punar bodhaikasvabhāvaṃ vastu tad yathaiva cakāsti tathaiva sat, atatsvabhāvāsyaṣvasaṃvedyatvāt* [°*āsvasaṃvedyatvāt* em.; °*āsvaṃvedyatvāt* Ked]. *svasaṃvedyatve ca tatsvabhāvatvam* (NPP ad 1.53, p. 90,2b–91,3). ‘For all mistaken cognition is mistaken with respect to some object, not with regard to itself. For an object becomes the object of a mistake when it exists externally in one way and is cognized in a different way. But an object whose single nature is consciousness exists in precisely the way that it appears, because something not of that nature is not self-cognized, and if something is self-cognized, then it has that (i.e. consciousness) as its nature.’
- (4) *na ca* [na ca MSS; na ed.] *tatra bhrāntiḥ sambhavati. bhrāntam api hi* [api hi MSS; api ed.] *svapnādāvijñānam sarvam ālambane* [ālambane MSS; ālambate ed., MSS] *bhrāntam, na svātmani. ālambanaṃ ca bahiḥsthitam anyathā pratīyamānaṃ bhramaviṣayatām āpatati* [āpatati MSS; āpādayati ed.]. *yat punar bodhaikasvabhāvaṃ vastu tad yathaiva cakāsti tathaiva sad* [sad MSS; tataḥ ed.] *asvasaṃvedyasya* [asvasaṃvedyasya MSS; svasaṃvedyasya ed.] *tatsvabhāvatvāyogāt. tatsvabhāvatve vā* [tatsvabhāvatve vā ed., MSS; atatsvabhāvatve na 1 MS] *svasaṃvedyam eva. iti svasaṃvedane bhrāntyasambhavād ātmabhedhaḥ pratyeḥkaṃ parātmānumātrītyā svasaṃvedanasiddhaḥ* [svasaṃvedanasiddhaḥ MSS; svasaṃvedanena siddhaḥ ed., MSS] *satya eva* (PMNKV ad 49, p. 302,8–12).

<sup>35</sup> See the quotation already given above: *na hy ātmā [...] prakāśyate, api tu svata eva prakāśate* [prakāśate NM(C); prakāśyate ed.] (NM Vol. 2, 273,3–4). ‘For the self is not the object of illumination [...], rather it shines forth by itself.’

cognition including I-cognition. Rāmakaṇṭha articulates this objection<sup>36</sup> and gives the somewhat half-hearted reply that though the self is not precisely the content of I-cognition, it is so by a rough approximation, and can be held to be so for the purposes of communication.<sup>37</sup>

The same kind of objection to the validity of I-cognition is articulated slightly differently elsewhere: Through I-cognition we access not the self directly, but rather the concept 'I'; how do we know that this concept corresponds to something of like nature outside the conceptual cognition? Could the concept of 'I' not be like that of a forest, i.e. something which does not reflect the nature of that to which it refers, it being unitary and its referent being a plurality?<sup>38</sup> Rāmakaṇṭha's response is that the concept of 'I' would indeed be susceptible of exactly that kind of doubt, were it not for the fact that we can experience its referent through *svasaṃvedana*; through this route we can know that it has a referent of like nature, one that is unitary.<sup>39</sup>

Elsewhere Rāmakaṇṭha states that the perceiver/self/consciousness is revealed not as the object of I-cognition, but as its very shining forth.<sup>40</sup>

- (7) *Svasaṃvedana* is an identical experience for everyone,<sup>41</sup> for (i) as we saw above<sup>42</sup> its form is determined entirely by its referent, since it contains no interference from the conceptual framework of the subject in question; and

<sup>36</sup> *nanv ātmano vikalpātītatvenoktatvāt, mokṣakārikāsv ācāryeṇa buddhibodhyatvanirāsāc cāham-pratyayagocaratvaṃ vādyasiddham eva* (NPP ad 1.15ab, p. 38,14–17). 'Because the self has been said to be beyond concepts and because the master (i.e. Sadyojyotis) in his *Mokṣakārikā* has refuted that it can be experienced through the *buddhi*, it is surely not established for the disputants [in this discussion] that the self is accessible to I-cognitions.' See Watson (2006, p. 278) for an identification of the passages referred to in this sentence.

<sup>37</sup> *satyam, ātmādirpratyayavat tu kathamcid adūraviprakaṣeṇa so 'pi vyavahārthaṃ tadviṣayo 'bhyupaṅamyate, iti nāsiddhiḥ* (NPP ad 1.15ab, p. 38,17–18). 'True, but [we] hold that even the [self] is their content somehow, by a close approximation (*adūraviprakaṣeṇa*), for the purposes of everyday linguistic usage (*vyavahāra*), just like cognitions of the self and the like, so it is not unestablished [for the disputants that the Self is accessible to I-cognitions].' See Watson (2006, p. 279) for further explanation of details within this sentence.

<sup>38</sup> *pratyayavyatirekeṇānyasya kasya cid ātmanaḥ pratyeyasyānupalabdher vanādyekatvapratyayavad ahampratyayo 'pi nirviṣaya eva* (NPP ad 1.16, p. 40,2–4). 'Because we don't experience outside of the [I-]cognition some other self that is the object of [I-]cognition, [it follows that] I-cognition, just like a cognition of the unity of a forest and the like, certainly lacks a [real] object (*nirviṣaya*).'

<sup>39</sup> *satyam, syān nirviṣayo yady ātmā sarvārthaprakāśakatayā svato nāvabhāseta, sa tu svasaṃvedanena vikalpātīta eva sarvadā bhāsete* (NPP ad 1.16, p. 40,9–11). 'It is true, [I-cognition] would be without referent if the Self did not shine forth by itself as the revealer of all objects, but it shines forth at all times through [its] self-awareness, beyond conceptualization.'

<sup>40</sup> *na ca grāhakātmā grāhyikartuṃ śakyate ... ata evāsyāhampratyayaviṣayatāpi na sambhavati, api tv ahampratyayaprakāśarūpataiva* (NPP ad 1.5, p. 15,20–16,1). 'And the perceiver cannot be made into the perceived ... that is why it cannot be the content of I-cognition; rather it is the very shining forth of I-cognition.'

<sup>41</sup> *na hi pratidarśanaṃ vyavasthāpakanām sarvapramāṅgāṇām anubhavabhedah sambhavati, tasya svabhāvasiddhatvāt* (NPP ad 1.5, p. 13,15–17). 'For the [self-]experience of all knowers who set out [views] in the different philosophical traditions cannot differ, because it is established [entirely] by [its] own nature [not at all by the mental conditioning of knowers].'

<sup>42</sup> Both on p. 299 of this article, paragraph beginning 'For both Buddhism and Rāmakaṇṭha,' and on p. 308 of this article, paragraph beginning 'In *svasaṃvedana* the self/consciousness appears precisely as it is.'

(ii) its referent, perceiving consciousness, though numerically distinct in each individual,<sup>43</sup> is qualitatively identical, since it is formless (*nirākāra*) and lacks distinguishing features.

Is everyone's experience of 'I' identical? The existence of such I-cognitions as 'I am fat,' 'I am thin' suggests not. But how about if we exclude these as resulting from a figurative extension of the meaning of 'I' from consciousness to body, and confine ourselves to the experience of 'I' when it is used in reference to consciousness? Is not one person's experience of 'I' contained in the cognition 'I am desiring X' the same as another's contained in the cognition 'I am perceiving Y?' The subject of the first person's desiring is their self/consciousness and the subject of the second person's perceiving is their self/consciousness. If one person's experience of their consciousness through *svasaṃvedana* is exactly the same as another's through *svasaṃvedana*, then is not one person's experience of their consciousness through I-cognition the same as another person's through I-cognition? It is not obvious how Rāmakaṇṭha would have responded to this. He may have replied in the affirmative. Or he may have held that the fact that we have the concept 'I' intervening in the second case allows for differences to enter as a result of one person's concept differing slightly from another's.

- (8) *Svasaṃvedana* occurs all the time; it 'accompanies' the self permanently, even in deep sleep,<sup>44</sup> even after death and before the next incarnation.<sup>45</sup> I-cognition does not; it does not constitute the nature of consciousness in the same way that self-awareness does.

### The Difference Between Rāmakaṇṭha's and Dharmakīrti's Concepts of *svasaṃvedana*

Dharmakīrti's use of the concept of *svasaṃvedana* is closely bound up with his critique of externalist accounts of perception, according to which we directly encounter external objects. For Dharmakīrti (whether he is writing from a Yogācāra or Sautrāntika perspective), what we encounter directly are not external objects, but forms (*ākāra*) that consciousness carries within itself. Although a cognition such as 'I see blue' may seem to involve consciousness cognizing something other than itself, the blue that is experienced in fact falls within consciousness, and is thus

<sup>43</sup> Unlike for Abhinavagupta and the other non-dualistic Śaivas, for Rāmakaṇṭha perceivers are, and will always remain, even in liberation, firmly separate from each other, from Śiva and from matter. His ontology here is similar to a kind of *śeṣvara* Sāṅkhya.

<sup>44</sup> *ayaṃ sthīrarūpaḥ prakāśaḥ sarvadaiva* [...] *śusuptādāv apy akhaṇḍītasvasaṃvit, satatam eva sva-prakāśatvena gamyatvād ātmapadapratipādyāḥ pratipurusaṃ svasaṃvedanasiddhaḥ* (NPP ad 1.5, p. 14,2–8). 'This enduring shining forth, which is ever-present (*sarvadaiva*) [...] is established for every person through self-awareness, its self-consciousness unbroken even in deep sleep [fainting, coma] and the like, being conveyed by the word 'self' because it is constantly perceived as the shining forth of oneself/itself.'

<sup>45</sup> See MatV ad VP 6.7cd–9b, p. 139. A Cārvāka opponent states that surely the existence of the self prior to conception (*śuklaśoṇītasamyogāt prāk*) is not established. Rāmakaṇṭha responds: *yena rūpeṇa tat siddham, tenaiva rūpeṇa svasaṃvedanātmānā tatrāsmābhiḥ saṃbhāvīyate*, '[The existence of the self prior to conception] is postulated (*sambhāvīyate*) in the very form, consisting of self-awareness, through which [its existence] (*tat*) is established [after conception].'

non-different from that which perceives it.<sup>46</sup> Since it is the same thing (consciousness) that is both doing the perceiving and being perceived, we are dealing with a case of *self-awareness* (*svasaṃvedana*), despite the seemingly external appearance of the perceived object.

Thus Dharmakīrti's *svasaṃvedana*, i.e. his view that consciousness is aware of itself, is closely associated with *sākāravāda*, the view that consciousness contains within itself the forms that it perceives, and *grāhyagrāhakābheda*, the non-difference of perceiver and perceived. Yet what we find in Rāmakaṇṭha is acceptance of *svasaṃvedana* along with a firm denial of *sākāravāda* and *grāhyagrāhakābheda*. This may appear extremely strange, perhaps even incoherent, to those Dharmakīrti scholars who have become accustomed to seeing *svasaṃvedana* as inextricably linked with these two.

For Rāmakaṇṭha the forms we perceive belong not to consciousness but to an external world. Consciousness itself lacks form (*nirākāravāda*); like a light it remains unaffected by whatever objects come within its range. It perceives objects not by containing their form, but by casting its light on them, so that it becomes related to them in a relation of illuminator-illuminated. Subject and object, perceiver and perceived, are not two poles of one thing, but rather belong to completely separate realms of reality. He thus holds precisely the externalist position that Dharmakīrti uses *svasaṃvedana* to refute; and yet he accepts *svasaṃvedana*.<sup>47</sup>

The explanation of this puzzling situation is that there is an important difference between Rāmakaṇṭha's and Dharmakīrti's notions of *svasaṃvedana*. This difference can be brought out by noting how the two thinkers would respond differently to the question: Does consciousness' awareness of itself include an awareness of its object? I.e. does *svasaṃvedana* grasp the content of consciousness as well as consciousness itself?<sup>48</sup>

<sup>46</sup> The non-difference of perceiver and perceived, which has been labeled by Dan Arnold (2008) 'epistemic idealism' holds true not only from Dharmakīrti's Yogācāra ('idealist'), but also from his Sautrāntika ('representationalist'), perspective. The difference between the two perspectives only emerges when the cause of the perceived is specified as either an external object or latent traces (*vāsanā, saṃskāra*).

That blue and the consciousness that perceives blue are non-different (*abhinna*) is argued for in different ways, one of which is the *sahopalambhaniyama* ('necessary co-perception') argument (see PVin 1.54 ab and commentary ad loc., and PVā 3.387–389). This argument of Dharmakīrti's is often represented by later Buddhist and non-Buddhist authors as establishing the non-existence of external objects (the Yogācāra position). But Dharmakīrti seems to have intended it to prove that blue and the consciousness that perceives blue are not different *even if there are external objects*, a conclusion acceptable from not only the Yogācāra, but also the Sautrāntika, perspective: see Matsumoto (1980, p. 26). The non-difference of perceiver and perceived, *grāhyagrāhakābheda*, holds good from a Sautrāntika perspective because the 'perceived' (*grāhya*) in that expression refers to the blue that we experience, not the external object: the external object is, for the Sautrāntikas, not *grāhya* but *anumeya* (inferred).

<sup>47</sup> Śaiva Siddhānta (from Nārāyaṇakaṇṭha and Rāmakaṇṭha onwards) is not the only tradition to hold this combination of positions; they were also held by Prābhākara Mīmāṃsā (from Śālikanātha onwards), for which see the article by Taiken Kyuma in this volume.

<sup>48</sup> Note that I use 'object' to refer to that which is experienced, the phenomenal object that appears to consciousness, and which, according to Rāmakaṇṭha is the external object, but according to Dharmakīrti is internal to consciousness. I therefore intend there to be no difference between the meaning of 'object of consciousness' and 'content of consciousness,' as there could be if I were using 'object' exclusively in the sense of 'external object.' If I need to refer to the entity postulated by the Sautrāntikas, which is other than this 'object of consciousness' and is its cause, I always use 'external object.'

For Rāmakaṇṭha the answer is certainly no. Self-awareness for him consists of awareness of the light of consciousness, but not of its object; awareness of the perceiver but not the perceived. Whether the object is pleasure, pain<sup>49</sup> or a patch of blue, consciousness is aware of none of these through self-awareness; but it is aware of itself through self-awareness as it perceives them.

Dharmakīrti, however, when he names *svasaṃvedana* as the result of the means of valid cognition (*pramāṇaphala*),<sup>50</sup> makes the point that what may appear to be a cognition of an external object amounts in fact to self-awareness, to a cognition cognizing an object-pole (*grāhyākāra*) within itself. Since cognition of the object-pole is regarded by him as *svasaṃvedana*, it clearly follows that *svasaṃvedana* accesses the object.<sup>51</sup>

The difference results partly from their ontologies. Rāmakaṇṭha can exclude awareness of objects from self-awareness, since objects are ontologically quite distinct from consciousness, and consciousness contains within itself no representations of objects. It is harder to see how awareness of consciousness for Dharmakīrti could not involve awareness of the object of consciousness, given that the latter is not separate from consciousness. If consciousness is formless, not coloured by object-images, then awareness' accessing of it does not necessitate its accessing of them.<sup>52</sup> But if the very form of consciousness is that of the object, it is difficult to

<sup>49</sup> For Rāmakaṇṭha, as for Sāṅkhya, pleasure and pain are objects of consciousness (*grāhya*), not factors associated with consciousness (*caitta*) as they are for Dharmakīrti. Indeed everything transitory falls, for Rāmakaṇṭha, on the object side of the subject-object (*grāhyagrāhaka*) divide. Thus pleasure and pain are neither of the nature of consciousness, nor capable of self-awareness, as they are for Dharmakīrti.

<sup>50</sup> Self-awareness is identified as the result of the means of valid cognition from a Yogācāra perspective at PVā 3.363 and PVin 1 42,8ff., and from a Sautrāntika perspective at PV 3.345a: *tasmāt prameye bhāye 'pi yuktam svānubhavaḥ phalam*. See also PrSa 1.10.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Dan Arnold's characterization of self-awareness as that cognition which is immediately acquainted with 'the contents of our own mental states' (2005, p. 88, italicization mine), and which provides 'indubitable (because uniquely immediate) knowledge' of 'the contents of our own mental states' (2005, p. 88, italicization in the original). For Rāmakaṇṭha the contents (*grāhya*) of cognition are not accessible to self-awareness.

<sup>52</sup> Some may question how, if consciousness is formless, it can be perceived. In response, perhaps Rāmakaṇṭha would have pointed to the metaphor of light. When light enables us to perceive an object, we are not unaware of the light, but the light is not an object of our perception. We are aware of it as the illuminator, not the illuminated.

As to whether we really are aware of light in such cases, perhaps the idea is that when staring at a wall, for example, the space between me and wall is experienced as full of light; after all it (the space between me and the wall) looks very different in the dark. As evidence that light was considered to be visible not only at its source such as a flame, but also in the form of rays spreading out from there, see NVā ad 3.1.38: light (*tejas*) is there considered to be a substance whose two qualities, colour and temperature, can either be manifest or unmanifest. In the case of a ray of the sun, both are manifest; in the case of a ray of light, the colour is manifest but the temperature unmanifest. Hence both of these kinds are visible by means of their colour. In the case of the eye's *tejas*, i.e. the ray of light that enables us to see specific objects, its colour (and temperature) are unmanifest, hence it is invisible.

Another metaphor that Rāmakaṇṭha uses is that of grass by the side of the path which never becomes an object of perception for a person walking along, but is nevertheless somehow there in their field of vision. Although neither the grass (the example) nor consciousness (the exemplified) are perceived by determinative perception (*adhyavasāya*), awareness of them is not completely absent (see NPP ad 1.17ab, pp. 41,13–16; and Watson 2006, pp. 314–315).



see how *svasaṃvedana* could have access to consciousness without also accessing the object.<sup>53</sup>

This principal difference between Rāmakaṇṭha's *svasaṃvedana* and Dharmakīrti's, namely the fact that the former concerns consciousness alone, devoid of any of its contents, is the source of the following further differences.

- (1) As stated above, self-awareness for Rāmakaṇṭha is an experience that is the same for everyone. This is not stated by Dharmakīrti, and it obviously cannot be the case if self-awareness includes in its scope any of the contents of consciousness. Consciousness' awareness of itself as it perceives blue is qualitatively identical to its experience of itself as it perceives yellow, for Rāmakaṇṭha.<sup>54</sup> But since consciousness, for Dharmakīrti, is intrinsically coloured by its contents, its awareness of itself will inherit some of that specific colouring, and will thus qualitatively change with every change in the object of consciousness.
- (2) As we saw above (point 3 on p. 305), for both Dharmakīrti and Rāmakaṇṭha the *svasaṃvedana* is not different from the *arthasaṃvedana*, consciousness' awareness of itself is not different from its awareness of the object. But this means something very different for Rāmakaṇṭha and for Dharmakīrti. For the latter it is a reflection of the fact that the object is not different from consciousness. For Rāmakaṇṭha the object is absolutely different from consciousness. The point for him is just that it is the same cognition which, while illuminating the object, illuminates itself.
- (3) Self-awareness, as we have seen, is necessarily non-erroneous (*abhrāntatva*). The way consciousness is experienced by it is precisely the way in which consciousness exists. There is nothing intervening (such as faculties or concepts), between the experienced and the experience, that could introduce distortion. For Rāmakaṇṭha it is clear that this infallibility attaches to consciousness alone, not to its content.

For Dharmakīrti this is not so clear. If for him self-awareness includes awareness of the object of consciousness, how can the infallibility of self-awareness attach only to consciousness and not to its object? But given that all cognitions are aware of themselves for Dharmakīrti, does this not mean that all objects are validly cognized? How, then, can Dharmakīrti account for invalid cognitions, e.g. dream-cognitions or hallucinations?

Arnold's (2005, p. 88) answer (drawing approvingly on Richard Hayes) is that through self-awareness we are aware that we are experiencing a certain image, or thinking a certain proposition, and this cannot be denied, but this is not to say that there is an external object outside the cognition that corresponds to the image, or a fact that corresponds to the proposition. For Rāmakaṇṭha, we are *not* aware through self-awareness that we are experiencing a certain image, or thinking a certain proposition; thus the need to explain their potential falsity does not arise in this context.

<sup>53</sup> See the Appendix, however, for further thoughts on this matter.

<sup>54</sup> This is stated explicitly at NPP ad 1.6ab, p. 26,19–20, translated at Watson (2006, p. 335).

- (4) Noting that Dignāga refers to a cognition's own appearance (*svābhāsa*) as its perceiver-nature (*grāhakākāra*), Kellner (2010) characterizes cognition's own appearance as 'its appearance in terms of apprehending objects.' This recalls Rāmakaṇṭha's contention that consciousness appears to itself *grāhakatvena* (see footnote 27 above). But it would not capture his view to translate this as 'in terms of apprehending objects.' For according to him consciousness is aware of itself *grāhakatvena* even when it is not aware of any object: between incarnations, in 'deep sleep etc.' (*suṣuptādau*)<sup>55</sup> and 'in between thoughts.'<sup>56</sup> So for Rāmakaṇṭha the sense of *grāhakatvena* is simply 'as the perceiver' = 'as consciousness.' Consciousness' awareness of itself *grāhakatvena* is an awareness that makes no reference to the *grāhya* at all, and does not even require that there *is* a *grāhya* at that time.

It is uncertain whether, according to Dharmakīrti, *svasaṃvedana* is operative when no objects are being perceived, e.g. during deep sleep and in meditative absorption. For Rāmakaṇṭha it certainly is, for it is the very nature of consciousness, accompanying it at all times. When no objects are being perceived, consciousness is like a light shining out into empty space; but in shining out it illuminates itself.

These differences show that we need to distinguish two different kinds of self-awareness. I label, for the time being, the kind elaborated by Rāmakaṇṭha as R's S, and the kind I have been attributing to Dharmakīrti as Dh's S. Both kinds involve consciousness being aware of itself, but:

Dh's S involves intentionality, i.e. has a subject-object structure. R's S does not.

Dh's S can be characterized as the subject-pole of consciousness perceiving its object-pole. In R's S there is nothing that appears as an object.

In R's S there is absolutely no difference between what is perceiving and what is being perceived. In Dh's S there is a difference, in as much as the former is the subject-pole and the latter is the object-pole. However this difference disappears when it is considered that ultimately there is no difference between subject-pole and object-pole, between *pramāṇā* and *prameya*.

D's S is associated with the view: Consciousness' perception of an object is actually consciousness perceiving itself. R's S is associated with the view: When consciousness perceives an object, it perceives not only the object but also itself.

D's S involves a rejection of the Naiyāyika and Mīmāṃsaka view that the forms we perceive belong to a world outside of consciousness. R's S does not. It is concerned to reject a different Naiyāyika and (Kaumārila-) Mīmāṃsaka view, namely that a cognition is only aware of its object, not of itself, and hence can only be experienced by something other than itself.

<sup>55</sup> See point 8 on p. 310 above.

<sup>56</sup> See *vr̥ṭtyantarāleṣv apy aviluptajyotiḥ*, 'its radiance uninterrupted even in between thoughts' (NPP ad 1.5, p. 14,6. For the full passage, parallel passages, translation and exegesis, see Watson (2006, pp. 220–223).

That the concept of self-awareness is not uniform has been noted by Williams (1998); he distinguishes between the kind that I have labeled D's S, attributing it to Dignāga, and what he calls 'reflexive awareness,' which he attributes to Śāntarakṣita. Kellner (2010) picks up on this distinction, terming the first kind 'intentional self-awareness.' Since the two kinds of self-awareness distinguished by Williams are sufficiently close to the two kinds that I have been delimiting above, I will use 'intentional self-awareness' to refer to Dh's S, and 'reflexive awareness' to refer to R's S.

That Dharmakīrti and his followers in fact advance not only intentional self-awareness, but also a kind of reflexive awareness that resembles that advanced by Rāmakaṇṭha can be seen in, for example, those contexts where they assert that:

- (1) cognition is only ever mistaken with regard to its object, never with regard to itself (*ātmani*) / with regard to its own nature (*svarūpe*);<sup>57</sup>
- (2) even conceptual cognition is non-conceptual and accurate in its self-awareness (*svasaṃvittau*) / with regard to itself (*svātmani*), but not with regard to its object;<sup>58</sup>
- (3) a cognition must experience not only its object but also itself; for the position that it could be experienced not by itself but by a subsequent cognition is untenable given that it is subject to the fault of infinite regress.<sup>59</sup>

In each of these contexts, cognition's awareness of itself is *contrasted* with its awareness of its object, only the former being considered as *svasaṃvedana*. Hence self-awareness in these contexts refers not to cognition's subject-pole perceiving its object-pole, but to cognition perceiving its self or own nature: (*sv*)*ātman*, *svarūpa*. One way of interpreting what precisely is meant by (*sv*)*ātman* or *svarūpa* in these passages would be to suggest that it means *svābhāsa* (as opposed to *viśayābhāsa*), and to equate this with the *grāhakākāra*.<sup>60</sup> It could thus be asserted that whereas the Buddhist epistemologists sometimes use *svasaṃvedana* to refer to the subject-pole of a cognition perceiving the object-pole, they elsewhere use it to refer to the subject-pole perceiving itself.<sup>61</sup>

Concerning the complicated and multi-faceted problem of the relationship between these two kinds of self-awareness, I will make just two points:

- (1) The inclusion of the word *self-* (*sva-*) in the expression 'self-awareness' (*svasaṃvedana*) requires the sense of *one and the same thing* being aware of

<sup>57</sup> See the references in footnote 11 above to PVBh and TarBhā.

<sup>58</sup> See the references in footnote 12 above to PVā, PVBh and TarBhā.

<sup>59</sup> See PVā 3.511 and PVin ad 1.54cd, pp. 41,1–42,2. Those draw on PrSa 1.11c–12b.

<sup>60</sup> As noted by Kellner (2010), the context of the word *grāhakākāra* in PrSa 1.10 indicates that Dignāga is using it as equivalent to *svābhāsa*.

<sup>61</sup> Or to cognition perceiving its subject-pole. A third characterization of self-awareness could also be mentioned here, namely cognition's perception of *both* the subject-pole and the object-pole. Kellner (2010) sees Dignāga as intending the second kind in PrSa 1.11–12 and *vṛtti* ad loc. and the third kind in his *vṛtti* ad PrSa 1.9a: *dvyābhāsaṃ hi jñānam utpadyate, svābhāsaṃ viśayābhāsaṃ ca. tasyobhayābhāsasya yat svasaṃvdanaṃ tat phalam*. For the third kind in Dharmakīrti, see PVā 3.337c'd: *ubhayākārasyāsa saṃvedanaṃ phalam*.

itself, and since my perception of blue, at the conventional level at least, is *not* a case of one and the same thing perceiving itself, my perception of blue is not, at the conventional level, a case of self-awareness. Thus it may be that reflexive awareness is in some sense the more ‘basic,’ ‘literal’ or ‘primary’ kind, and that a subject’s perception of an object becomes characterized as self-awareness by extension from its more basic meaning, when it is considered that the subject and the object are not different, given that both elements occur inside a single cognition. After all, as Kellner (2010) points out, Dignāga’s *proof* of self-awareness<sup>62</sup> does not concern intentionality at all.

- (2) Regarding the logical relationship between the two, the existence of reflexive awareness seems commonly to feature as evidence for the *sākāravāda* that intentional self-awareness expresses. The Buddhist opponents in the *Ślo-kavārttika* and the *Nyāyamañjarī*, for example, use reflexive awareness as one argument out of many for the conclusion that the forms we perceive belong to consciousness, not to objects external to consciousness. The Buddhist speakers in both texts—Jayanta basing himself on Kumārila at this point of the *Nyāyamañjarī*—give four arguments for the contention that cognition must be perceived at the very moment that it arises,<sup>63</sup> one of which is the infinite regress that would result if it is perceived by a subsequent cognition.<sup>64</sup> Having established this reflexive awareness they argue as follows. Since cognition is perceived (through this reflexive awareness) it must have some form (*ākāra*).<sup>65</sup> Given then that cognition with form is perceived, and given that we perceive only one form, not two (e.g. just blue, not a blue object and a separate blue-formed cognition),<sup>66</sup> we should accept the existence just of cognitions with forms, not of external objects too. Thus the argument moves from the existence of reflexive awareness first to the *sākāravāda* that is common to the Sautrāntikas and Yogācāras, and then to a Yogācāra rejection of the existence of external objects.

The existence of reflexive awareness is not sufficient evidence for *sākāravāda*; a realist such as Rāmakaṇṭha can accept the former but not the latter, since there is no logical contradiction in maintaining that a cognition can perceive itself as well as an object that is separate from it. Hence Kumārila’s and Jayanta’s Buddhist opponents need to combine the existence of reflexive awareness with other considerations to arrive at *sākāravāda*. But though the possibility of reflexive awareness is not sufficient to establish *sākāravāda*, it may well be a necessary pre-condition of it, for if it is impossible for one thing to be perceived by itself, then it would seem to be impossible for objects whose nature is consciousness to be perceived by consciousness.<sup>67</sup> Such is the

<sup>62</sup> PrSa 1.11d–12 and *vṛtti* ad loc.

<sup>63</sup> ŚV, *sūnyavāda* 21–31ab; NM Vol. 2, 489,12–490,14.

<sup>64</sup> ŚV, *sūnyavāda* 25–27; NM Vol. 2, 490,1–10.

<sup>65</sup> ŚV, *sūnyavāda* 31cd; NM Vol. 2, 490,15–16.

<sup>66</sup> ŚV, *sūnyavāda* 32a; NM Vol. 2, 490,16–17. This whole section of the *Nyāyamañjarī* falls within the portion translated and analysed by Watson and Kataoka (2010).

<sup>67</sup> Candrakīrti sees Yogācāra idealism as requiring reflexive awareness, but for a different reason. He argues that for Yogācāra all objects of cognition are imaginary, so if cognition were known not by itself but by another cognition it would be merely imaginary (see Garfield 2006, p. 5).

argumentation in the *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya*, where a refutation of reflexive awareness is advanced as entailing the refutation of *sākāravāda*.<sup>68</sup>

### Concluding Remarks

This article has attempted to contribute to the understanding of the difference between I-cognition and self-awareness, and the difference between two kinds of self-awareness.

It also highlights two striking features of the landscape of Indian philosophy:

- (1) Rāmakaṇṭha, having stripped the Buddhist concept of *svasaṃvedana* of its association with *anātmavāda*, then uses it as the principal tool in a refutation of *anātmavāda*.<sup>69</sup> In fact it ousted I-cognition (*ahampratyaya*) as Śaiva Siddhānta's principal *pramāṇa* for the existence of the self.
- (2) Although *svasaṃvedana* features in Dharmakīrti's writings as an expression of the non-difference of perceiver and perceived, Rāmakaṇṭha strips it of even this association. Indeed in this case too it is used to establish the opposite, the firm ontological difference of consciousness and objects, in as much as objects are argued to be, unlike consciousness, incapable of self-awareness.

We see how on the dialectical battlefield of classical Indian philosophy, a weapon of one's own making, by being re-fashioned and re-targeted in the hands of an opponent, could threaten parts of one's own army that it was previously well-suited to protect.

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### Appendix: A Note on Dharmakīrti's Reflexive Awareness

In the third part of the article the following question was posed: Does consciousness' awareness of itself include an awareness of its object? It is clear that Dignāga,

<sup>68</sup> See BrSūtBhāṣ ad 2.2.28, pp. 398,15–399,2.

<sup>69</sup> Rāmakaṇṭha's father, Nārāyaṇakaṇṭha, who is the earliest Saiddhāntika author to employ the concept of *svasaṃvedana*, used the same strategy, as did the non-dualist Śaiva, Utpaladeva (see Ratié 2006: 62ff.), who is the earliest Śaiva author to employ the concept (see Watson 2006, p. 100, note 155). Certainly Rāmakaṇṭha is drawing on Nārāyaṇakaṇṭha (MṛgTV ad 1.2.24–25ab). Whether either of them were influenced by Utpaladeva in their acceptance of self-awareness and the way they elaborate it is not clear; there is the important difference that in Utpaladeva it is associated with *sākāravāda*. As mentioned in footnote 47, it is combined with *nirākāravāda* in Śālikanātha and other Prābhākara Mīmāṃsaka authors after him; again, whether Rāmakaṇṭha or Nārāyaṇakaṇṭha were directly influenced by them is not clear to me.

Dharmakīrti and their followers sometimes envisage self-awareness as accessing not only consciousness itself, but also the objects of consciousness.<sup>70</sup> But how about those places where a cognition's self-awareness is explicitly contrasted with its awareness of its object? In other words if we exclude cases of intentional self-awareness and re-apply the question to reflexive awareness, what answer should be given?

Take, for example, the assertions of Dignāga, Dharmakīrti, Prajñākaragupta and Mokṣākaragupta given in footnotes 11 and 12 above, to the effect that (1) cognition can only ever be mistaken with regard to its object (*arthe*), never with regard to itself (*ātmani*)/its own nature (*svarūpe*); and 2) even conceptual cognition is non-conceptual and accurate in its self-awareness (*svasaṃvittau*)/with regard to itself (*svātmani*). The question is how one interprets (*sv*)*ātmani* and *svarūpe*. Does 'itself'/'its own nature' include its content or not? Does cognition's awareness of 'itself'/'its own nature,' include awareness of its content? If it does, then the way it perceives not only itself, but also its content, must be non-conceptual and accurate. And we cannot say that the content of valid cognitions is included, but the content of invalid cognitions is excluded. Either both are in, or both are out.

For Dan Arnold both are in: even images occurring in hallucinations, or propositions occurring in conceptual cognitions, are experienced non-conceptually, accurately and by *svasaṃvedana*.<sup>71</sup> This may seem like a plausible way of giving sense to assertions 1 and 2 in the previous paragraph. But is there not something at best paradoxical and at worst contradictory about the claim that a cognition's relation to its conceptual content is non-conceptual?<sup>72</sup>

Furthermore there is evidence that Dharmakīrti did not intend assertion 2 in this way, i.e. as holding the contents of conceptual cognitions to be accessible to self-awareness. In the PVā verse cited in footnote 12 Dharmakīrti contrasts the own nature of conceptual cognition with that which it grasps: the meaning of a word. The conceptual cognition is said to be non-conceptual with regard to its own nature, but conceptual with regard to the meaning of a word. Is this not strong evidence that conceptual cognition's relation to its content is conceptual, not non-conceptual? Indeed if its relation to its content, the meaning of a word, were non-conceptual, then in relation to what would it be conceptual? In what sense would it be a conceptual cognition?

Thus if we include the contents of conceptual cognition within the reach of self-awareness, we seem to end up with a problem. But if we exclude them, do we not have to exclude also the contents of non-conceptual cognition? Perhaps some criterion could be come up with by which it could be maintained that self-awareness

<sup>70</sup> To be included here are, for example, those places where self-awareness refers to cognition's subject-pole perceiving its object-pole, cognition's perception of both of its poles (see footnote 61), and cognition's awareness of how things subjectively appear in the mind (see Kellner 2010—who points to PrSa 1.9b and its *vṛtti*, and PVā 3.339–350, as elaborating self-awareness in this way—and Shinya Moriyama's article in this volume).

<sup>71</sup> See point 3 above on p. 313. That Kellner (2010) also holds this position could be inferred from her remark: '[S]elf-awareness is an immediate, non-conceptual mode of awareness that provides access to how mental content presents itself subjectively.' She presents this as holding true of all of Dignāga's diverse articulations of self-awareness.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. Arnold (2005, p. 88): '[O]ur acquaintance even with the *conceptual* contents of our minds is itself alleged to be, in a sense, *non-conceptual*' (italicization in original).

accesses some contents and not others. But there is another solution: we understand Dharmakīrti as teaching a kind of reflexive awareness that has no access to either conceptual or non-conceptual content. On this view he envisaged some part or some aspect of cognition—its subject-pole? its own nature?—to be devoid of or separable from its content; (*sv*)*ātmani* and *svarūpe* in assertions 1 and 2 can then be taken to refer to this.

Is this not precluded by the non-difference of perceiver and perceived, of consciousness and its content? Not necessarily, for it is not clear how strongly Dharmakīrti intended this 'non-difference' (*abheda*). Although some, such as Prajñākaragupta and Devendrabuddhi, took him to mean by it 'identity' (*tādātmya*), others such as Dharmottara and Śāntarākṣita considered that it mean the mere negation of difference (*bhedapratishedhamātra*). They pointed out that if the relation were one of identity, then the unreality of an object of consciousness, such as a concept, would imply the unreality of consciousness. Hence they envisaged non-difference as meaning neither completely the same nor completely separate (see Matsumoto 1980, pp. 18–20; Iwata 1991, Vol. 1, p. 241). Indeed for Śāntarākṣita consciousness perceives forms (*ākāra*) only through error (*vibhramāt*); in reality (*tattvena*) it perceives nothing, being devoid of objects (*nirviśaya*) (see TattSa 2044; Suganuma 1963, p. 804). If it is thus possible that Dharmakīrti did not intend the relation between consciousness and its content to be one of complete identity, then it is possible that he envisaged consciousness as capable of accessing itself without its content.

Hence we arrive at the same kind of *svasaṃvedana* as Rāmakaṇṭha's: perhaps like him, Dharmakīrti also envisaged a kind of reflexive awareness that is devoid of contents. The exclusion of objects from self-awareness would be posited for a different reason in the two cases however: for Rāmakaṇṭha because objects are separate from consciousness; for Dharmakīrti because objects, even considered as forms within consciousness, are ultimately unreal.

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