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CROSS-CULTURAL APPROACHES TO CONSCIOUSNESS

MIND, NATURE AND ULTIMATE REALITY

Edited by Itay Shani and
Susanne Kathrin Beiweis

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NOTES ON THE EDITORS AND CONTRIBUTORS

Itay Shani is professor of philosophy at Sun Yat-sen University (Zhuhai, China). His area of expertise is the philosophy of mind with special emphasis on consciousness and the metaphysics of mind. In addition, he is passionate about general metaphysics, the history of philosophy, and the meaning of life. He has written extensively on panpsychism and is mostly known for his contribution to the development of *cosmopsychism*, a monistic position which seeks to explain individual consciousness with reference to a transpersonal cosmic consciousness. With Jonardon Ganeri, he has recently co-edited a volume of the journal *The Monist* dedicated to cosmopsychism and Indian philosophy. He is currently working on a book titled *The Heart of the Matter: An Essay on Existential Meaning*.

Susanne K. Beiweis is currently a research associate in the Department of Philosophy (Zhuhai) at Sun Yat-sen University. Her main interests lie in the history of philosophy and ideas with a specific focus on the Renaissance and Early Modern period. She has published several articles on Marsilio Ficino and Renaissance magic.

Wolfgang Fasching is the author of *Phänomenologische Reduktion und Mushin* and of several papers on the topics of consciousness, the self, and Indian philosophy.

Christian Coseru is Lightsey Humanities Chair and professor of philosophy at the College of Charleston. He works in the fields of philosophy of mind, phenomenology, and cross-cultural philosophy, especially Indian and Buddhist philosophy in dialogue with Western (classical and contemporary) philosophy and cognitive science. Author of *Perceiving Reality* (2012), *Moments of Consciousness* (forthcoming), and editor of *Reasons and Empty Persons* (forthcoming), his research has been supported by grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Australian Research Council.

Loriliai Biernacki is in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Colorado at Boulder. Her research interests include Hinduism, gender, New Materialism, and the interface between religion and science. Her first book, *Renowned Goddess of Desire: Women, Sex and Speech in Tantra* (2007) won the Kayden Award in 2008. She is co-editor of *God's Body: Panentheism across the World's Religious Traditions* (2013) and has a new book coming out with Oxford in 2022 on Abhinavagupta, panentheism, and New Materialism, titled *The Matter of Wonder: Abhinavagupta's Panentheism and New Materialism.*

George Wong Soo Lam is a lecturer at the Singapore University of Social Sciences in the Centre for University Core. His research interests focus on metaphysics, Buddhist philosophy, and comparative philosophy. He has published on metaphysics, specifically on causation, emergence, and material constitution.

Alex Watson is professor of Indian philosophy at Ashoka University, before which he was Preceptor in Sanskrit at Harvard. He works on debates in mediaeval India between Buddhism, Nyāya, Mīmāṃsā, and Śaivism, especially those concerning the self, God, perception, self-awareness, and the status of the external world. He is the author of *The Self's Awareness of the Self: Bhaṭṭa Rāmakaṇṭha's Arguments Against the Buddhist Doctrine of No-Self* (2006) and, with Dominic Goodall and Anjaneya Sarma, *An Enquiry into the Nature of Liberation* (*mokṣa*) (2013) as well as many articles on the history of Indian philosophy.

JeeLoo Liu is professor of philosophy at California State University, Fullerton. She was named 2019 Carnegie Fellow for her research project: Confucian Robotic Ethics. She has authored *Neo-Confucianism: Metaphysics, Mind, and Morality* (2017), *An Introduction to Chinese Philosophy: from Ancient Philosophy to Chinese Buddhism* (2006). She also co-edited *Consciousness and the Self* (2012), and *Nothingness in Asian Philosophy* (2014). Her primary research interest is to reconstruct analytic Chinese philosophy, in topics such as Chinese metaphysics, Confucian moral psychology, and Neo-Confucian virtue ethics. Her current research topic is Confucian robotic ethics.

Pierfrancesco Basile is lecturer in philosophy at the University of Bern and at the KSA Luzern, Switzerland. His research interests focus on metaphysics, philosophy of mind, and, most recently, the history of ancient philosophy. He has published on Bradley, Whitehead, Spinoza, as well as on panpsychism and the origin and development of analytic philosophy. His most recent books are *Whitehead's Metaphysics of Power* (2017) and *Ancient Philosophy* (2021, in German).

Bryce Huebner is Provost's Distinguished Associate Professor in the Department of Philosophy at Georgetown University. His research focuses on a wide range of issues across the cognitive, biological, and social sciences. And he has recently been examining the role of allostatic regulation in biological cognition, as well as attempting to integrate insights from Yogācāra Buddhism with models from computational and cognitive neuroscience.

Eyal Aviv is an assistant professor at George Washington University in the Department of Religion. His research focuses on Buddhist philosophy and intellectual history in India and China. He has published on Buddhist intellectual history in modern China, Buddhist philosophy, and Buddhist pedagogy. His most recent book is titled *Telling Pearls from Fish-Eyes: Ouyang Jingwu and the Revival of Scholastic Buddhism* (2020).

Sonam Kachru is an assistant professor at the University of Virginia in the Department of Religious Studies. A historian of philosophy, his research centers on the history of Buddhist philosophy in premodern South Asia. His first book is *Other Lives: Mind and World in Indian Buddhism* (2021).

Jay L. Garfield is Doris Silbert Professor in the Humanities and Professor of Philosophy and Buddhist Studies at Smith College, the Harvard Divinity School, and the University of Melbourne, and is Adjunct Professor of Philosophy at the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies. His research addresses questions in the philosophy of mind, metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, Buddhist philosophy, and cross-cultural hermeneutics. His most recent books are *Losing Ourselves: Learning to Live Without a Self* (2022), *Knowing Illusion: Bringing a Tibetan Debate into Contemporary Discourse* (with The Yakherds, 2021), *Buddhist Ethics: A Philosophical Exploration* (2021), and *What Can't be Said: Paradox and Contradiction in East Asian Thought* (with Yasuo Deguchi, Graham Priest, and Robert Sharf, 2021).

Anand Jayprakash Vaidya is professor of philosophy and occasional Director of the Center for Comparative Philosophy at San Jose State University in California. His research focuses on the cross-cultural and multi-disciplinary study of mind, knowledge, and reality. His most recent works explore the nature of perceptual knowledge in Nyaya and Analytic epistemology and the nature of consciousness in Vedanta and Analytic panpsychism.

PART THREE

Realism, Idealism, and Panpsychism

CHAPTER SIX

Consciousness as the Fundamental Reality of the Universe: A Master Argument for Buddhist Idealism

ALEX WATSON

INTRODUCTION

The conference on which this volume is based was titled "Consciousness and Fundamental Reality." This contribution concerns the view that consciousness *is* fundamental reality, a view that I will be calling "idealism" and that was advanced in India by the branch of Buddhism known as Yogācāra or Vijñānavāda.

A dominant theme of both the conference and this volume is panpsychism, so I will start by pointing to three points of contrast between idealism and panpsychism. (1) Although both claim that "consciousness is everywhere,"

I have the pleasurable task of naming and thanking an unusually large number of colleagues who kindly gave me feedback on this article. It substantially improved as a result: Dan Arnold, Christian Coseru, Georges Dreyfus, Sonam Kachru, Birgit Kellner, Martin Lin, John Nemec, Roy Perrett, Chakravarthi Ram-Prasad, James Reich, Raja Rosenhagen, Serena Saccone, Kranti Saran, Robert Scharf, Mark Siderits, and Davey Tomlinson.

panpsychism is compatible with pan-physicalism and dualism, for it can assert that everything that exists is *both* mental and physical. Idealism I am defining for the purposes of this article as the denial of the existence of anything external to consciousness. This is clearly not compatible with physicalism or dualism (whether of the mind-body or consciousness-world type). (2) Panpsychism is primarily an answer to the question of the place of consciousness in the world—where it stands in relation to the body and the rest of the physical world. Idealism is primarily an answer to the question of the status of the objects we take to be external to us. (3) Panpsychism asserts the existence of consciousness as one of the fundamental constituents of the universe. Idealism asserts the existence of consciousness as the only fundamental constituent of the universe.[1]

We will now focus our attention on the philosophical world of mid-to-late first-millennium India, where three clearly differentiated views regarding the nature of the objects of our experience had emerged.

1. Direct Realism

According to the direct realists, the content[2] of outward-directed perception is an externally existing object. The external object is perceived directly, without the aid of an intermediary—an image or a representation—intervening between the subject and the external object.

2. Representationalism/Indirect Realism

According to the representationalists, what we directly perceive are images, internal representations that are caused by external objects. We can know external objects to exist through inference, but can never perceive them directly.

3. Idealism

The idealists agree with the representationalists that what we directly perceive are images internal to consciousness, but they deny that the images are caused by external objects. There are no external objects; the images are caused by *vāsanā*s, latent impressions in the mind-stream.[3]

The differences between the three can thus be depicted by Figure 6.1.[4]

These three views were held, respectively, by three different branches of Buddhism: Vaibhāṣika,[5] Sautrāntika, Yogācāra. They were also held, respectively, by the following groups of non-Buddhists: (1) Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika and Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṃsā; (2) Sāṅkhya; (3) Non-dualistic Śaivism.[6] Perhaps it would not be misleading to assert that they resemble the views in Early Modern European Philosophy put forward by, respectively, Reid, Locke, and Berkeley.

The main proponents of the three views in our period of Indian Philosophy were those shown in italics in Figure 6.2. By our period—second half of the first millennium—the Vaibhāṣikas, Vaiśeṣikas, and Sāṅkhyas had ceased to

	Internal image	External object
Direct realism		✓
Representationalism	✓	✓
Idealism	✓	

Figure 6.1 The Three Views.

	Buddhists	Non-Buddhists	Early Modern Europeans
Direct realists	Vaibhāṣikas	*Naiyāyikas,* Vaiśeṣikas, *Mīmāṃsakas*	Reid
Representationalists	*Sautrāntikas*	Sāṅkhyas	Locke
Idealists	*Yogācāras*	Non-dualistic Śaivas	Berkeley

Figure 6.2 Representatives of the Three Views.

have the importance they earlier had, and the non-dualistic Śaivas had not yet come to prominence. In this article we will thus be concerned with Yogācāra Buddhist idealists, Sautrāntika Buddhist representationalists, and Naiyāyika and Mīmāṃsaka direct realists.[7]

THE OVERALL STRUCTURE OF THE IDEALIST'S ARGUMENT

The article aims to give a sense of how Buddhist idealism was argued for in our period—against the rival theories of direct realism and representationalism. It does so by drawing on the argument of the Yogācāra Buddhist speaker in

Jayanta's *Blossoms of Reasoning* (*Nyāyamañjarī*, 890 CE).[8] What we find there is a two-stage master argument, which brings together earlier arguments found in Kumārila (*c*. 550–650 CE) and Dharmakīrti (*c*. 550–660 CE). Some aspects of these arguments are developments of what we find in Dignāga (*c*. 480–540 CE or slightly earlier).

The period of Indian Philosophy that ran from Kumārila and Dharmakīrti's time to that of Jayanta was extremely fertile. By choosing an author from the end of this period, we are afforded a view of how the Buddhist idealist ideas of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti came to be received by, and articulated within, the surrounding environment of the rival theories on offer. Buddhist idealism taken not in isolation, but as part of the mosaic formed by the interplay of it and the two rival explanatory strategies, is what I hope will come across below.

Jayanta, who has been referred to as one of India's three greatest philosophers, along with Kumārila and Dharmakīrti (Shah 1972: 3), is famous for the strength of the arguments he puts into the mouths of his opponents (*pūrvapakṣa*s) (see Watson forthcoming a). But bearing in mind that both he and Kumārila, who is the immediate source of some of the arguments that he attributes to Buddhism, were neither Buddhists nor idealists, but rather Brahmanical direct realists, it should be remembered that what is presented as Buddhist idealism in this article is not necessarily *Buddhist* idealism, but rather *Jayanta's* Buddhist idealism. I have traced most of the elements of Jayanta's Buddhist idealist arguments to Buddhist sources, but not all of them.[9]

The first stage of Jayanta's Buddhist idealist argument consists of a refutation of direct realism; the second stage consists of a refutation of representationalism. In stage 1, the issue is: Do the forms I perceive (e.g., colors, tastes, smells) belong to cognition/consciousness or to an external object? The idealist holds the former, the direct realist the latter. In stage 2, the issue is: Can we infer the existence of external objects that cause the forms within our consciousness? For the representationalist we can, for the idealist we cannot.

What I will be referring to as the idealist "master argument," then, consists of: (1) arguments against the direct realist to the conclusion that forms we perceive belong to cognition; (2) arguments against the representationalist to the conclusion that those forms are not caused by external objects.[10]

I will not here enter the debate about whether the combination of these two conclusions is still not fully fledged idealism, and is better termed phenomenalism for it leaves open the possibility that there are external objects that neither feature in, nor cause, our perceptions.[11]

STAGE 1: IDEALISM VERSUS DIRECT REALISM

In stage 1 the idealist seeks to establish, as said above, that the forms we perceive belong to cognition, not an external object.

First a word is in order about the use in this article of the word “cognition.” It does not refer to one subdivision of the totality of mental states/events, a subdivision that distinguishes itself from perceptions, or emotions, or sensations, on the grounds that cognitions involve an element of “thinking,” or “knowing” that is not present in these latter. No, “cognition” here covers all mental states, including perceptions, emotions, sensations. The reason for my adopting this usage, which is common in English-language discussions of Indian philosophy but may sound strange from the point of view of other branches of philosophy, is that we need an English word to stand for such Sanskrit terms as *jñāna, vijñāna, vijñapti, citta, caitanya, pratyaya, pratīti, buddhi*, which in this Buddhist context include all awareness events, whether we are dealing with awareness of a thought, an object of perception, a sensation, or an emotion.[12] “Cognitions” in the plural should be understood to mean “awareness events” and “cognition” in the singular should be understood to mean simply “awareness” or “consciousness.”

The idealist’s thesis that the forms we perceive belong to cognition may sound very strange. The blue color that I perceive surely belongs to an object that exists at some distance of separation from my body. It belongs to an object that I can walk over to and touch. How can something “out there” belong to cognition? How can I touch something that is within cognition?

This apparent strangeness of the idealist’s thesis disappears if we consider what happens when we dream. The tiger I dream of is experienced at some degree of separation from my body. The blue object I dream of is something I can walk over to and touch (in my dream). Yet dream objects are agreed by all sides to be within cognition, this being entailed by the fact that, when the dreamer sees the tiger, an observer awake next to the dreamer sees no tiger in the vicinity. So there is no incompatibility between being within cognition and being experienced as at some distance from the subject.[13]

The difference between the direct realist’s and the idealist’s theses implies no difference in the way we experience objects of perception. Both agree that we experience objects as external to us, but we are dealing with two competing accounts of this seeming externality. For the idealist it is the result of cognition’s ability to project outwards, an ability attested to in dreams. For the direct realist it is a result of mind-independent objects impinging on us from beyond cognition.[14]

The task of the idealist in stage 1, then, is to establish that any form we experience belongs to cognition, not to an external object. To speak of “form belonging to cognition” is equivalent to speaking of “cognition having form” or “taking on form,” and this highlights an important difference between the idealist and the direct realist. For the idealist cognition has form (*sākāra*);[15] for the direct realist cognition is formless (*nirākāra*) and transparent, all form belonging to external objects.

In considering whether perceptible form belongs to an external object or to a cognition, we should first ask: Could it not be that we perceive two forms, one belonging to the external object and one—an image of the external object—within cognition? If that were the case, we would be experiencing an object separate from cognition, the existence of which is precisely what the idealist denies: The direct realist's contention that there are objects outside of cognition would be established.

But as it happens, the idealist, the direct realist, and the representationalist all agree that, on perceiving blue, only one form appears to us, not both a representation and an external object.[16] This admission on the part of the direct realist and the representationalist that we only perceive one form is crucial. Without it, there would be nothing to discuss: Idealism would be a nonstarter. It gives the idealist the handle they need.[17] It means it is an open question whether this one form, that we all agree to be what we perceive, belongs to cognition or an external object. So now let's turn to the arguments that the idealist gives for the position that form belongs to cognition, not an external object.

1.1 Argument from Parsimony

Attributing form to cognition involves less postulation. Both sides agree that cognition exists; both hold that its existence is indisputable. If form belongs to an external object, we have to postulate not only cognitions, but also external physical things. Since postulating one kind of thing is preferable to postulating two, it is better to assume that form belongs to cognition.[18]

Or to put the same argument, but from a different starting point: The realists postulate insentient physical objects, but if only insentient physical objects existed, they would remain uncognized, and since it's indisputable that (some) objects are cognized, realists have to postulate a second kind of thing: cognition. The idealist postulates half as much: one kind of thing rather than two.[19]

So much for the argument;[20] what are we to make of it? (1) It has already been subject to philosophical evaluation by John Taber. He claims that the idealist is not postulating less because they're postulating a complex power of cognition that the realist is not postulating: the power of latent impressions (*vāsanā*s) to "produce the vast experienced world" (2010: 289). But this can be questioned. The realist also postulates latent impressions as creators of images within cognition in the context of memory and dreaming.[21] In the case of dreaming, these latent impressions endow consciousness with the power to project a world of objects outward, fooling us into thinking we are observing a world beyond ourselves. So the idealist is not postulating anything more than features in the realist's explanation of dreaming. The idealist just extends this already accepted power from dreaming (and memory to the extent that it is present there) to perception.

(2) Jayanta responds to this argument with the claim that external objects are not postulated, they are directly perceived.[22] So accepting them in addition to cognition involves no more postulation than just accepting cognition. This is a statement of the direct realist position. It is helpful for reminding us of the different presuppositions of that position from those of idealism. But it does not carry any argumentative force against the idealist, for they will say that external objects are not perceived. Whether what is perceived is external or not is exactly what is in question, so the idealist will think that the direct realist is prematurely helping themself to the conclusion.

(3) This argument would not work against a physicalist. A physicalist does not share the view (of the Yogācāra idealist, the Sautrāntika representationalist and the Naiyāyika or Mīmāṃsaka direct realist) that if there was only a physical world there would be no perceivers and hence none of the experiences that are undeniably part of the world. So a physicalist can stick to just postulating one kind of thing—a physical world—and assert that form belongs to that. We have three kinds of views: idealism, with its one kind of—non-physical—thing; physicalism, with its one kind of—physical—thing; and dualism, with its two kinds of things. The idealist and the physicalist can both mount arguments from parsimony against the dualist, but they cannot do so against each other. It is only because the idealist's opponents here—Naiyāyika and Mīmāṃsaka direct realists—are dualists that this argument is employable.

(4) Out of two competing theories, the one that involves less postulation is to be preferred only if the two have equal plausibility and equal explanatory power. Solipsism requires less postulation, but it does not provide such a satisfying explanation of the fact that we seem to share the world with other subjects. It is thus open to the realist to challenge this idealist argument on the grounds that postulating cognition alone does not provide such a satisfying explanation of the fact that I seem to share the world with external objects—things that seem to be the objects of cognitions of other cognizers too.[23] The realist could accept that they are postulating more, but maintain that this is justified in order to provide a convincing explanation. The idealist will respond that cognition alone, since it is all that is involved in dream experiences of a seemingly external and publicly shareable world, *does* provide a convincing explanation of waking experience. So this realist move of appeal to plausibility and explanatory power as justification for extra postulation will have to be accompanied by arguments establishing relevant differences between dreaming and waking—differences that indicate the need to postulate a different substrate of form perceived while awake from that of form perceived while dreaming.

(5) It is worth noting that in Bertrand Russell's account of the debate between idealism and realism in *Problems of Philosophy*, he sees considerations of parsimony and simplicity as weighing *against* idealism and in favor of realism:

> The way in which simplicity comes in from supposing that there really are physical objects is easily seen. If the cat appears at one moment in one part of the room, and at another in another part, it is natural to suppose that it has moved from the one to the other, passing over a series of intermediate positions. But if it is merely a set of sense-data, it cannot have ever been in any place where I did not see it; thus we shall have to suppose that it did not exist at all while I was not looking, but suddenly sprang into being in a new place. If the cat exists whether I see it or not, we can understand from our own experience how it gets hungry between one meal and the next; but if it does not exist when I am not seeing it, it seems odd that appetite should grow during non-existence as fast as during existence. And if the cat consists only of sense-data, it cannot be hungry, since no hunger but my own can be a sense-datum to me. Thus the behavior of the sense-data which represent the cat to me, though it seems quite natural when regarded as an expression of hunger, becomes utterly inexplicable when regarded as mere movements and changes of patches of color, which are as incapable of hunger as a triangle is of playing football.
>
> But the difficulty in the case of the cat is nothing compared to the difficulty in the case of human beings. When human beings speak—that is, when we hear certain noises which we associate with ideas, and simultaneously see certain motions of lips and expressions of face—it is very difficult to suppose that what we hear is not the expression of a thought, as we know it would be if we emitted the same sounds. … Thus every principle of simplicity urges us to adopt the natural view, that there really are objects other than ourselves and our sense-data which have an existence not dependent upon our perceiving them.
>
> (1912: 14–5)

I return to Bertrand Russell's arguments at the end of the chapter.

1.2 Argument from the Object-Specificity of Cognition

If cognition lacked form, it could not be object-specific. Lacking form, it itself would be no different when confronted by a red object from when confronted by a blue object. Unless it takes on form from these objects, it is not affected by them. If it is not affected by them, how could a cognition of red be felt as different from a cognition of blue? So if cognition lacks form, we can provide no satisfactory explanation of how a cognition of red differs from, or is felt as different from, a cognition of blue.[24]

We can detect the following principles in the argument:

If a subject S experiences an object O, then S must be affected by O.
For S to be affected by O, some change must occur in S's form.
If no change occurs in S's form, O's presence can make no difference to S.

The argument appeals to what is uncontroversially accepted by both sides: that there is a difference for a subject between a cognition of blue, say, and a cognition of red. It claims that a direct realist account (as depicted in Figure 6.3) is unable to account for this difference.

To avoid the problem, the direct realist assumption that the two cognitions themselves are qualitatively identical, all difference falling outside of cognition on the side of the external object, must be dropped. The situation must rather be characterized as in Figure 6.4: Cognitions take on form from their objects.

Note that it is the representationalist's position that is depicted in Figure 6.4, not the idealist's. That is because we are now in stage 1. All the idealist needs to establish in stage 1 is that cognition contains form. It is the task of stage 2 to then establish that external objects need not be postulated, so that we arrive at the situation depicted in Figure 6.5. In arguing against the direct realist in stage 1, the idealist need not establish anything more than representationalism.[25] This idealist argument effectively says to the direct realist: Even if you are somehow able to establish that an external object must be postulated, you will

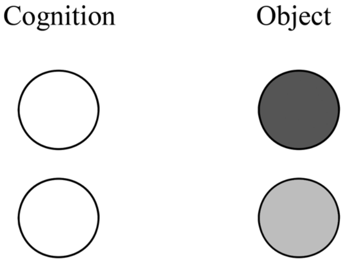

Figure 6.3 The Direct Realist View.

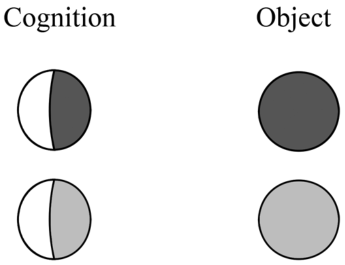

Figure 6.4 The Representationalist View.

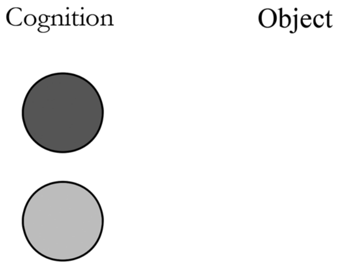

Figure 6.5 The Idealist View.

also have to postulate form within cognition, for otherwise you will not be able to establish specific relationships between cognition and the various external objects—not be able to establish how a cognition is focused on one particular object and distinguishable from cognitions of other objects.[26]

The direct realist could say that cognition is like a mirror: Although it itself never changes as different objects pass in front of it, these different objects are reflected in it. The factor that explains how cognition can in one moment be of blue, and in another of red, is just the proximity of blue in the first moment and the proximity of red in the second.[27] But the idealist will point out that there can be many things at once in the presence of cognition (different objects in the visual field, sounds, tastes, smells, and so on); how can we explain that cognition can be of one of these to the exclusion of others if proximity is all that determines what it is of? For cognition stands in the same relation of proximity to all the things within its range; proximity alone cannot explain a specific connection with one proximate object at the same time as non-connection with other proximate objects. To avoid this problem we have to assume, argues the idealist, that cognition takes on the form of the one thing it is of, and does not take on the form of the other things in its proximity.

Note that the object-specificity problem—the proposed solution to which is form-containing cognition—has two aspects: diachronic and synchronic. (1) How does a cognition of one object in one moment differ from a cognition of another object in the next moment? (2) How can we explain that when we are in the proximity of many potential objects of perception, we focus only on one?

The direct realist denies that form-containing cognition is the necessary solution to this twofold problem by appealing instead to causation. A particular cognition can be of a red object and not of a blue object because it is caused by the red object and not by the blue object. That cognition has a specific object does not have to be explained by cognition having the form of that object, for it can rather simply be caused by that object (*tajjanya*).

We are thus dealing with two competing explanations of cognition's object-specificity. That it is of a blue object is explained by the idealist as resulting from its having a blue form (the "form view"), and by the direct realist as resulting from the fact that it is caused by a blue object (the "causation view").[28]

Here are three ways in which the idealists can defend their form view against the direct realists' causation view. (1) The way the idealist speaker responds in *Blossoms of Reasoning* is by pointing out that cognition is caused by other things in addition to its object. A visual cognition of blue has among its causes the faculty of sight and the presence of light, yet neither of these two features as its object. Thus being a cause of a cognition is not a precise determinant of what turns out to be the object of that cognition. If cognition were of whatever causes it, it would also have to be of the sense-faculty, but it is not. Causation is not specific enough to restrict it to the blue object.[29] If the direct realists are going to avoid appealing to form within cognition as the explanation of its object-specificity, by appealing instead to causation, then the burden is on them to explain why one cause of a cognition, and not others, features as the cognition's object.[30]

The direct realist responds by distinguishing different kinds of causes.[31] Blue, say, is the "object cause" (*karmakāraka*); the faculty of sight and light are instrumental causes; the self is the agentive cause, etc. It is just the case, says the direct realist throwing up their hands, that whatever is the object cause—and none of the other causes—becomes the object of the cognition. The direct realist admits that they cannot give any further explanation of this fact; but they point out that the idealist will also have to throw up their hands when asked why it is the object cause—and none of the other causes—that becomes the form of the cognition (and hence its object). It cannot be held against the direct realist that they have no explanation for why the object cause, and none of the other causes, becomes the object of the cognition, because the idealist also has no explanation for something similar: why the object cause—and none of the other causes—becomes the form within cognition (and thereby the object of the cognition).[32] In both cases we have reached a base-level primitive that cannot be grounded in anything more fundamental. There are some things that can be explained by other features of a system, and there are other things of which it is only possible to say: That is just the way it is.

Where does this leave us? Has the direct realist succeeded in showing that both positions are on an equal (lack of!) footing? I do not think so. For in answer to the question of why blue only, and not also the faculty of sight, features as the object of a cognition, the idealist has a more satisfactory answer than the direct realist. The idealist has a firmer criterion for singling out the blue: It is the form within cognition, the sense-faculty is not. The direct realist, for whom both are causes, neither being a form within cognition, admits they cannot say why it is that one and not the other features as the object. They can, it is true, point to something the idealist cannot say: why the object cause, blue, becomes the form within cognition. But the idealist's appeal to simply "the way things are" comes further along the chain than the direct realist's, which occurs at the very beginning of the chain. The direct realist's occurs immediately on being asked why blue, and not the sense-faculty, is the object. The idealist has an answer for that, and, only on being further asked why blue becomes the form of the cognition, has to appeal to the way things are. When a child responds to every answer we give with "why," then we will eventually have to say "that is just the way things are." But hopefully we do not have to resort to that in answer to the very first question.[33]

(2) Even if the causation view could be saved from the problem that a cognition is caused by other things as well as its object, the idealist will still see the causation view as subject to a dilemma. Does the causal impact of the object produce some qualitative change in cognition itself or not? If so, then this qualitative change amounts to a change in form, which goes against the direct realist's claim that cognition is formless. If not, cognition's nature remains the same whether it is perceiving blue or perceiving red, so the difference between the two has not been satisfactorily explained, and it remains mysterious how the subject could experience the two objects as different. The original diachronic and synchronic problems still apply: (i) If blue is perceived in the first moment, it would be impossible to perceive red in the next: Blue would continue to be perceived until there is some qualitative change in cognition. (ii) If two objects are simultaneously within range of a subject, nothing explains the ability to focus on one to the exclusion of the other.

(3) The direct realist wants all qualitative change to occur outside of cognition on the side of the world of external physical objects. But then how could the direct realist explain a gestalt switch, where we look at a duck-rabbit drawing and change from seeing it as rabbit to seeing it as a duck, despite no change in the external world? Does this not show that the duck-form and the rabbit-form must belong to cognition? How could they belong to the external world when that stays exactly the same as we pass from perceiving the rabbit to perceiving the duck?[34]

Space permits only a brief mention of the two main remaining stage 1 arguments given by Jayanta, but I will provide references to other treatments of them.[35]

1.3 Argument from Necessary Co-Perception (sahopalambhaniyama)

If we compare the idealist view, depicted in Figure 6.5, with the direct realist and representationalist views, depicted in Figures 6.3 and 6.4, we can see that idealism challenges the way that we are used to thinking of experience as consisting of two distinct entities: a cognition and its object/content. Idealism collapses these into one: The object or content of the cognition becomes the form of the cognition, something that constitutes the cognition itself. In the present idealist argument we see the same thing—that idealism takes what are often thought to be separate, cognition and its object, and argues that they are in fact one. The argument was put forward by Dharmakīrti, and is known as that from "necessary co-perception" (*sahopalambhaniyama*):[36]

Premise 1: If two things are necessarily co-perceived, they are not different (i.e. not numerically distinct)
Premise 2: Blue and cognition of blue are necessarily co-perceived
Conclusion: Therefore, blue and cognition of blue are not different

What does Dharmakīrti's talk of two things being "co-perceived" mean? I argue (Watson forthcoming b) that it is perhaps best understood—best both in the sense that it is what Dharmakīrti intended in the *Pramāṇaviniścaya*,[37] and in the sense that it makes premise 1 maximally defensible (though at the cost of making premise 2 more vulnerable)—as follows. X and Y are necessarily co-perceived if and only if perceiving X necessarily involves perceiving Y, and perceiving Y necessarily involves perceiving X. The most thorough philological study of the argument and its history is Iwata (1991).[38] Philosophical evaluations have been given by Chakrabarti (1990), Taber (2010: 292–4), Arnold (2015: 175–83), Westerhoff (2018: 170–1), Taber (2020), and Watson (forthcoming b).[39]

1.4 Argument from the Reflexivity of Cognition and the Perception of Only One Form

The following complex argument does not occur exactly in a Buddhist source known to me, but it is attributed to Buddhism by Kumārila and Jayanta, and contains elements that clearly derive from Dignāga and Dharmakīrti. Its overall structure is as follows.

Premise 1: Cognition is perceived by itself/is self-aware
Premise 2: Since cognition is perceived, it must have form
Premise 3: Only one form is perceived
Conclusion: Therefore the one form that is perceived must belong to cognition and cannot belong to an external object[40]

Premise 1 is justified by a considerable body of supporting arguments,[41] including one that derives from Dignāga's argument from memory for the self-awareness of cognition,[42] and one that involves the following oft-cited contention of Dharmakīrti: If cognition were not perceived, its object would not be perceived either.[43] For only if cognition is perceived can the object within it appear. The contention is further justified by the slightly more general claim that an enabler of knowledge can only enable knowledge if it is perceived: Light, if invisible, would not be able to illuminate. The reason property (*hetu*) in an inference, if unapprehended, would not enable knowledge of the target property. Two immediate direct realist rejoinders suggest themselves. (1) to say "only if cognition is perceived can the object *within it* appear" is to assume that the object is within cognition—to prematurely assume the idealist conclusion that the object is within, rather than external to, cognition. (2) There are counterexamples to the general claim that enablers of knowledge must be perceived. A sense-faculty enables perceptual knowledge, but is held by both sides to be imperceptible. There is now an extensive literature on what could be called the "CC" claim—that cognition of an object necessarily entails cognition of its cognition. An important early landmark was Matilal (1986: 148–60). For Jayanta's insightful discussion of CC in *Blossoms of Reasoning*, see Watson and Kataoka (2010: 304–10, 325–39) and Watson (2014).

Premise 2 asserts that if—as claimed by premise 1—cognition is perceived, then cognition must have some form. If cognition were formless we would see straight through it; it would lack any features that could be picked up by any sense-faculty, whether one of the five external sense-faculties or the inner sense.

Premise 3 reminds us of what was agreed at the outset by both the idealist and the direct realist, that we perceive only one form. It is thus ruled out that we perceive one form of cognition and one of an object. So the only possibility remaining is that the one form we perceive belongs to cognition, not to an external object outside of cognition.

The argument has been discussed in the following places: Taber (2010), Watson and Kataoka (2010), and Watson (2014).[44]

STAGE 2: IDEALISM VERSUS REPRESENTATIONALISM

Having looked at idealist arguments against the direct realist in stage 1, we now turn to the idealist attempts to overcome the representationalist in stage 2.

The representationalists agree that the forms we perceive belong to cognition. They thus do not disagree with anything that the idealist asserts in stage 1. Disagreement begins when we reach the question of the genesis of the forms that belong to cognition: How did they get there? For the representationalist they are taken on by cognition from an external object—in the sense that the presence of an external object causes an image or form to arise within cognition, this form resembling the form of the external object. The representationalist postulates external objects as the best explanation of the forms in consciousness that we directly experience; without them the latter become mysterious. The issue that thus separates the representationalist and the idealist is whether there is a sound inference from forms within cognition to external objects. The task of the idealist in stage 2 is to show that no such sound inference exists.

The idealist argumentation relies on an admission on the part of the representationalist that external objects are not directly perceived, but only inferred. (It may be that not all forms of representationalism on offer in our period conceded this. Even restricting ourselves to Sautrāntika positions, and not including Sāṅkhya ones, it may be that some articulations of representationalism regarded the external object as *directly perceived by means of the representation* within consciousness.[45] But when Dharmakīrti and his followers argue from an idealist perspective against Sautrāntika representationalism, they are arguing against a position that regards external objects as only inferred (*anumeya*), never perceived (*grāhya*).)

I give two arguments that the idealist uses against the representationalist.

2.1 Argument from the Impossibility of Establishing Causation

The inference of an external object as the cause of a form in cognition will be an inference of a cause from its effect (as is the inference of fire from smoke). The inference of a cause from an effect can obviously only get going after a causal relationship has been established. But it is not possible to establish causation between an external object and a form within cognition. When we *are* able to establish a causal relation between two things, say fire and smoke (such that we can subsequently infer instances of fire from instances of smoke), the following at the very least are necessary: (1) a plurality of perceptions of the co-presence of fire and smoke; (2) a plurality of perceptions of the co-absence of fire and smoke. Without these two we would not even be able to establish correlation, let alone causation. We would have no reason for thinking that whenever smoke occurs, fire occurs, and whenever fire does not occur, smoke does not occur. Now we cannot have a plurality of perceptions of the co-presence of an external object and a form within cognition, in fact we cannot even have one such perception, because we cannot, *ex hypothesi*, perceive external objects. The power of this argument derives from the fact that it is not just an expression of the idealist's own position: It appeals to what the representationalists themselves maintain—that external objects cannot be perceived but only inferred. The idealist points to two representationalist claims that are hard to reconcile: External objects are never perceived, and an external object can be inferred as a cause.

The best the representationalist can do is propose an inference of external objects as causes that does not appeal to perception of co-presence, and is based only on perception of co-absence: When no external object is there, we don't perceive a form within consciousness.[46] For an inference to be based only on co-absence does not disqualify it; both sides accept certain such inferences, so the idealist must take this possibility seriously and provide good reasons for rejecting it. The impossibility of perception of co-presence is not fatal.

I give two examples of such inferences that both sides accept. (1) When no colored object is placed next to a crystal, the crystal looks colorless. Therefore when a crystal looks colored, we can infer that a colored object has been placed next to it.[47]

(2) In the absence of a functioning sense-faculty, perception does not take place. Therefore, when perception does take place, we can infer the existence of a functioning sense-faculty. Here is a little more elaboration. When a blind man stands with eyes open in front of a painting, he sees nothing. This means that despite several causes of perception being present—proximity of an object, open eyes, undistracted attention—there must be some further cause that is lacking in this case but present in successful cases of perception. This further cause is a functioning sense-faculty.[48]

The representationalist's inference and these two all have the following structure. They begin with the assertion that when one crucial cause is lacking (external object, colored object next to the crystal, functioning sense-faculty) the effect is absent (perception of, respectively, a form, a colored crystal, the painting); and they then infer from the presence of the effect to the presence of that crucial cause. They are all valid, being cases of *modus tollens.* And the first two are also sound. The question mark hanging over the representationalist's inference is whether its major premise is true.

Its major premise—the claim of co-absence—is that when an external object is not there, then despite all other causes of perception being present (light, functioning sense-faculty, etc.), no form appears in consciousness. There are at least six slightly different ways in which we can gloss this claim. (i) When no external object is there, we experience a cognition without form. (ii) When no external object is there, we do not experience a cognition with form. Then the hypothetical (H) equivalents of those two: (i-H) If no external object were there, we would experience a cognition without form. (ii-H) If no external object were there, we would not experience a cognition with form. Then a third alternative and its hypothetical equivalent: (iii) When no external blue object, say, is there (but rather an external yellow object), we do not experience a blue form in cognition (but rather a yellow form). (iii-H) If no external blue object were there (but rather an external yellow object), we would not experience a blue form in cognition (but rather a yellow form).

(i) and (i-H) appeal to the experience of a cognition with no form and content. Such an experience was not held by either the representationalist or the idealist to have been within the reach of non-Yogins or the non-awakened. So insofar as commonly accepted phenomena will be preferred as examples in this debate, it will not serve the representationalist well. Both sides hold that all worldly cognition, at least, has form (*sākāravāda*); a formless cognition is a potential threat to that shared theory.

So this might lead the representationalist to phrase the major premise as (ii). Rather than appealing to the presence of a certain experience (one without form and content), they appeal to the absence of an experience (one with form and content). But when do these absences of experience take place? Are we not always having an experience? In which case how can we verify the purported absences of cognition when no external object is present? So that might motivate the move to (ii-H), where the absence of experience becomes merely hypothetical, or to (iii) or (iii-H), where there is no appeal to absence of form-containing experience *per se*, only to the absence of an experience with a particular form.

The problem with (ii-H) will be explored below, in the context of a discussion of the crystal inference. What evidence can the representationalists provide in favor of (iii)? By their own admission, all we have perceptual access to in the case described is a yellow form within cognition—not also a yellow external object. So they cannot assert what the characteristics of the external object are that is supposedly causing the form. To know that it is not a blue object but a yellow one would require a means of checking the features of the external object, something they themselves deny. How about (iii-H)? How can we assume that there is a relation of "same color" between external object and form if we cannot observe the color of the external object in even a single case? What firm reasons for correspondence are there? How do we even know that the external objects are things that have color?

(i), (ii), and (iii) begin with "When no external (blue) object is there." But given the representationalist's admission that external objects are perceptually inaccessible, how could we know when or if no external (blue) object is there?

If everything apart from cognition and the forms within cognition lies beyond a veil of perceptual ignorance, then we are unable to perceptually verify not only co-presence but also co-absence. Yet the inference can only go through if one of these is known. Prior to the inference, if all we have to go on is perception, and if perception can tell us nothing about external objects, then not only can we not know that an external object is present: we cannot know that an external object is absent either. Perception is no more able to help us establish co-absence than co-presence.[49]

But perhaps perception is not all we have to go on. The representationalist can admit that perception cannot help to establish the co-absence, and so give up on the non-hypothetical formulations, (i), (ii), and (iii), and opt for a hypothetical formulation that could be supported by reasoning rather than perception. Some difficulties with (i-H) and (iii-H) have been given above. (ii-H) will be addressed below.

2.2 The Superior Candidacy of Latent Impressions over External Objects

The representationalist argues that the best candidate for the cause of forms within cognition is an external object. But the idealist argues that there is a better candidate: “latent impressions”/“traces of earlier experiences” (*vāsanā*s). These latent impressions are not *ad hoc* entities imported here by the Yogācāra to enable argumentation in favor of idealism. They are appealed to by the representationalists too (and the direct realists) in at least three domains: memory, karma, and dreaming. What is it that enables us to recall an experience at some separation of time from the experience itself? The experience, if significant enough for the subject, lays down an impression of itself in the subject, which remains latent unless and until it is triggered by something, for example, a present experience similar to the earlier one. This results in the activation of the trace, which causes a memory. What is it that explains how an action that has long since ceased causes a karmic result? The action laid down a trace, which becomes activated later. What explains the appearance to consciousness of a dream image, when nothing in the external world around the dreamer corresponds to the image? The activation of a latent impression. These latent impressions are stored in an unconscious part of the self for the non-Buddhists, and in an unconscious part of the mind-stream for the Buddhists.

On the one hand the representationalist attributes to latent impressions the power to produce images within consciousness both in the context of dreaming and of memory. On the other hand, the representationalist’s claim that external objects are forever imperceptible prevents him from claiming knowledge that external objects can produce images within consciousness. Given these two, it appears that for the representationalist the best candidate for the producer of images within consciousness, when we are awake and perceiving, should be latent impressions. The representationalist asserts that, when remembering and dreaming, X produces images within consciousness; so surely it is more reasonable to assert that, when perceiving too, X produces images, than that some imperceptible Y produces those images.[50]

2.3 The Difference of the Representationalist’s Inference from the Sense-Faculty Inference and the Crystal Inference

Those are the two interlocking idealist arguments—that from the impossibility of establishing causation and that from the superior candidacy of latent impressions over external objects—against the representationalist’s inference of external objects. Let us finish by considering the salient differences between the representationalist’s inference and the two abovementioned, similar but sound inferences.

The inference of the existence of the sense-faculties notes that despite all other causes of perception being present, perception does not arise in the absence of a functioning sense-faculty, so that the rise of a perception entails the existence of a functioning sense-faculty. Similarly the representationalist's inference of external objects notes that despite all other causes of perception being present (light, functioning sense-faculty, etc.), no form appears in consciousness in the absence of an external object, so that the rise of a form in consciousness entails the existence of an external object. Sense-faculties were regarded as imperceptible, so the fact that external objects are imperceptible for the representationalist does not mark the representationalist's inference as different or objectionable. Why, then, *is* the representationalist's inference different? Because, in these inferences of something imperceptible, it is crucial that the inferred is the best explanation of the phenomenon in question. In the case of the sense-faculty inference, no one doubts that the presence and absence of a functioning sense-faculty is the best explanation of occurrence of perception in the non-blind and its nonoccurrence in the blind. But there is doubt over whether the presence and absence of an external object is the best explanation of the occurrence and nonoccurrence of a form within consciousness. A rival explanation is the presence and absence of an activated latent impression—I perceive a table when a table-latent-impression is activated, and not when one is not. And as we have just seen, there are reasons for supposing an activated latent impression to actually be a better explanation than an externally existing table.

Now let us consider the crystal inference: When no colored object is placed next to a crystal, the crystal looks colorless. Therefore, when a crystal looks colored, we can infer that a colored object has been placed next to it. The representationalist's inference looks exactly parallel: When no external object is placed next to a sense-faculty, no form will appear in cognition. Therefore, when a form appears in cognition, we can infer the presence of an external object.

But in the case of a crystal, we can perceive both the presence and absence of a colored object placed next to it. We might not always be able to do so. But an occasion on which we see only the colored crystal—the colored object being hidden from us—will enable us to infer the presence of the colored object only because of numerous past perceptions of a colored crystal in the presence of a colored object, and of a colorless crystal in the absence of any object in the vicinity. The parallel perceptions of co-presence and co-absence (of external object, and form within cognition) are not available to the representationalist.

Now the representationalist may reply along the following lines. (1) It is not fair to criticize me for not being able to perceive the co-presence (of external object and form), because my inference is based only on co-absence. (2) I admit that the co-absence cannot be perceived, but it can be arrived at through the hypothetical consideration expressed by (ii-H), namely: If no external object were there, we would not experience a cognition with form.

The representationalist will need to provide justification for this hypothetical claim, which he can do by claiming that cognition in its true nature is clear and transparent (*svaccha*), like a colorless piece of glass or crystal. If that were the case, then it would be true that in the absence of external influence, no form would appear in cognition, just as when no colored object is placed in the vicinity of the crystal, there is no appearance of color in the crystal. Form in cognition, like color in crystal, could only be inherited from outside.

Where have we got to? The representationalist has admitted that they can perceive neither the co-presence nor the co-absence, but claimed they can establish the co-absence by stating it hypothetically and supporting that hypothetical claim by appealing to cognition's intrinsic formlessness and transparency. So far so good. But now the difficulty comes: How will they support the claim that cognition is intrinsically clear and transparent, like a crystal? The disanalogy between cognition and a crystal mentioned above presents itself here again as an obstacle. We can inspect the area around the crystal, but we cannot perceptually inspect the area "around cognition," by the representationalist's own admission. We are able to perceive not only the crystal and its color, but also external objects close to it. And because we can perceive external objects close to it, we can determine that when we do not perceive them, they are not there. We can then correlate both situations—presence and absence of external objects—with, respectively, color in the crystal and non-color in the crystal. Thus we can arrive at the view that when unaffected by external objects, the crystal is colorless. But how can the representationalist arrive at the view that when unaffected by external objects, cognition lacks form?

All the representationalist can perceive are cognition and its forms. Parallelism would thus dictate that all we can perceive are the crystal and its colors. It has different colors at different times, but we have no way of knowing when an object is placed next to it, or what color such an object may be. If that were the situation, we would not know if the changes in the crystal's color were produced by its own nature or something extrinsic to it. We would not know that it is intrinsically colorless.

The crystal inference is sound because we can perceive the relevant co-presence, the relevant co-absence, and we can easily establish that the crystal is transparent in its intrinsic nature. The representationalist can perceive neither the relevant co-presence, nor the co-absence, nor establish the transparent nature of cognition which could enable him to infer the co-absence.

But it needs to be pointed out that the idealist agrees with the representationalist that cognition is transparent in its true nature. In claiming that cognition is like a crystal in that respect, the representationalist is not asserting anything that the idealist will object to. So if the idealist grants to the representationalist that cognition is clear and formless in its true nature, is the representationalist not home and dry? They can then use that to support the hypothetical statement of the co-absence, which can serve as the major premise in their inference of external objects. The problem is that what the idealist and the representationalist mean by "clear and formless in its true nature" differs.[51] For the representationalist cognition is clear and formless *in the absence of external objects*; only if that is true will the presence of form in cognition entail the presence of an external object. For the idealist it is not clear and formless in the absence of external objects, as it can be muddied by latent impressions. So what the idealists mean when they assert that cognition is clear in its true nature is: clear in the absence of latent impressions.[52] If that is what is meant by the purity and clarity of cognition in its own nature, then we cannot say that in the absence of an external object there is no cognition with form (for the form can be derived from a latent impression even in the absence of an external object). And if we cannot say that, then the representationalist's inference fails: We can conclude nothing from the presence of form in cognition.

There is one additional consideration—embarrassing for the representationalist in its simplicity—that discredits the major premise of the representationalist's inference, thus distinguishing it from the two sound ones. It is not true that in the absence of external objects cognition lacks form, for cognition has form in such cases as remembering, dreaming, and imagining, when no external object is exerting causal influence.[53]

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This article has considered arguments in favor of the two halves of Buddhist idealism: (1) What we directly perceive are forms within consciousness. (2) There is no good inference from those forms to external objects, as they are better explained by latent impressions. What it has not done is consider how Buddhist idealists would then respond to objections such as the following, that are provoked by their idealist conclusions.

(1) They explain waking perception as caused by the same mechanism as dreaming and remembering: latent impressions. But there is no mystery as to the provenance of the latent impressions that are active in dreaming and remembering: They can be explained as laid down by earlier perceptions. What, however, is the provenance of the latent impressions that, according to the Buddhist idealist, cause our perceptions? The problem seems particularly acute in the case of something perceived for the first time—something, say, that has only just been invented (so impressions laid down by perceptions in a past life cannot be appealed to).[54]

(2) The Buddhist is not a solipsist, believing rather in the real plurality of individual streams of consciousness. So this brand of idealism might escape Bertrand Russell's arguments about the difficulties posed to idealism by cats and other people. If a cat is not just my own sense-data, but a separately existing being, albeit one consisting ultimately only of a mind-stream, then perhaps its hunger and its movement across the room pose less of a problem for the idealist? And if the noises we hear when we take it that a human being is speaking do indeed emanate from another sentient being, then Russell's point about the implausibility of these not being the expression of a thought can be neutralized.

But if cats and people are nonphysical mind-streams, why and how do I experience them as moving and speaking? And if the world I experience is projected by my own latent impressions, how can anything enter that world from outside of me, and be experienced by me, whether it is a physical object *or a mind-stream*?[55] Perceiving each other and communicating with each other looks to be impossible for two different mind-streams without abandoning the principle that everything I perceive is the result of the maturation of a latent impression within my own mind-stream. As long as that principle is adhered to, it looks like the only two brands of idealism available are ones that are disavowed by the Buddhist: (i) the solipsistic view that I am the only mind-stream in the universe, everyone I meet being only figments in my dream-world; (ii) the assertion of a plurality of mind-streams combined with the claim that they can never encounter one another or communicate. How can the Buddhists defend their version of idealism according to which different mind-streams can meet and interact, without compromising the above-mentioned principle?

If it seems hard to make sense of the possibility of one Buddhist mind-stream perceiving another, it seems even harder to make sense of one mind-stream perceiving objects projected by the latent impressions in another mind-stream. But if I cannot see anything that another mind-stream sees, how can we communicate successfully?[56]

(3) If the Buddhist idealist denies the existence of a physical spatio-temporal world, so that different mind-streams cannot be assigned to different bodies or different locations, how can we differentiate mind-streams? How, in principle, could they be individuated? And what, in practice, keeps them separate from one another, such that one does not experience the latent impressions produced by the perceptions and actions of another?[57]

There are many possible accounts of the story that has been told in this article. One, not the only, is as follows. The stage 1 arguments show that there are difficulties with direct realism that may motivate a move to representationalism. The stage 2 arguments show that representationalism will be forced to slide into idealism. The representationalist middle ground is not stable, for its own presuppositions render problematic the move from mental representations to the existence of external objects that purportedly cause the representations. The difficulties with idealism pointed to in the concluding remarks have not been explored in this article. But if further exploration were not to lead to satisfactory solutions, this could motivate four possible moves. (1) Attempt to modify idealism in such a way as to make room for satisfactory solutions. (2) Resuscitate direct realism. (3) Seek a kind of representationalism that asserts that we *do* have perceptual access to external objects. (4) Retain the representationalist admission of perceptual access only to forms within cognition, but argue for the existence of external objects by means of abductive reasoning to the best explanation (*arthāpatti*), rather than through a deductively valid *modus tollens* inference (*anumāna*) that aims at certitude.[58]

NOTES

1 In the light of these three differences, I regard it as surprising that Duckworth (2017) uses "panpsychism" rather than "idealism" for the view of Yogācāra Buddhism.

2 Some may be used to "content" being used of internal representations and "object" being used of external objects. I resist that usage for it leaves us with no common term that can be used by all three of these groups to refer to whatever it is that is the immediate object of perception, which makes it very difficult for them to talk to each other and for their views to be articulated in non-question-begging ways. I thus use "content" and "object" synonymously to refer to the immediate object of perception, which for the direct realist is an external object, and for the other two groups is an image internal to consciousness. This also accords with Sanskrit articulations of these debates, where words like *grāhya* are used in this neutral sense to refer to whatever it is that is the immediate object of perception, whether an internal image or externally existing object.

3 For further elaboration of what these "latent impressions" are, see p. 160.

4 Cf. Matilal (1986: 223–7) and Ram-Prasad (2002: 238–40).

5 The common characterization of the Vaibhāṣikas as direct realists in fact requires a significant qualification. Although for them the five sense consciousnesses indeed make direct contact with an external object, the mental consciousness (*manovijñāna*) that sits above them and recognizes or discerns the physical object is presented only with a representation: It thus perceives the external object not directly but indirectly. I owe this qualification to Robert Sharf (2018), who deals with the Vaibhāṣika theory at length; see especially pp. 830–52.

6 Advaita Vedānta is not straightforward to place. It is true that for it there is nothing real other than consciousness, which makes it look like idealism, but its proponents make a firm distinction between the objects or contents of our experience and consciousness; they never claim that objects are just consciousness taking a certain form, or that objects are of the nature of consciousness, as the Buddhist idealist and the non-dualistic Śaiva assert. Indeed Advaita Vedāntins argue firmly against Buddhist idealists on this point. Buddhists collapse the

distinction between objects and consciousness; for Advaita Vedāntins that distinction is fundamental. Without it, their view of the unreality of objects but reality of consciousness would be harder to maintain.

7 For a particularly well-expressed description of Naiyāyika direct realism, see Matilal (2002: 105–6).

8 The passage of the *Nyāyamañjarī* that this article discusses was edited by Kataoka (2003), translated into Japanese by Kataoka (2006), and translated into English by Watson and Kataoka (2010).

9 For which of Jayanta's Buddhist arguments go back to which earlier author, see Watson and Kataoka (2010) and Watson (2014: 401, note 1). Kumārila, as mentioned, was not a Buddhist idealist, but rather a Mīmāṃsaka direct realist, so the idealist arguments that go back to him are found in passages where his Buddhist opponent is speaking. Kumārila preserves a stage of Buddhist argumentation that falls between Dignāga and Dharmakīrti in its level of development and sophistication: See Taber (2010), Watson and Kataoka (2010: 292–8, 303–11), Watson (2014: 405), and Watson (forthcoming, b).

10 One slight falsification or "tidying up" in my presentation is that the arguments in *Blossoms of Reasoning* are not as neatly divided into stage 1 and stage 2 as they are in this article. Some stage 1 arguments are presented as not only capable of establishing that the forms we perceive are not external objects, but as capable of discrediting the existence of external objects altogether. This is true not only of Jayanta's *Blossoms of Reasoning*, but also of many other sources—both non-Buddhist and Buddhist—that present stage 1 arguments (such as that from necessary co-perception).

11 There are two questions here, not always clearly distinguished. (1) *Do the arguments given by Yogācāra Buddhists, if successful, yield the conclusion of* the non-existence of any objects external to consciousness, or merely the nonexistence of external objects that are the content of, or cause the content of, perception? (2) *Did Yogācāra Buddhists take their arguments to establish* the non-existence of any objects external to consciousness, or merely the nonexistence of external objects that are the content of, or cause the content of, perception? See Hayes (1988), Kapstein (1988), Oetke (1992), Lusthaus (2002), Schmithausen (2005), Arnold (2008), Kapstein (2014: 128ff.), Kellner and Taber (2014), Ratié (2014a), Kellner (2017), Perrett (2017: 62ff.).

12 On Vasubandhu's explicit naming of *citta, manas, vijñāna* and *vijñapti* as synonyms at the beginning of the *Viṃśikā*, see Kachru (2021: 26–9).

13 On the precise use to which Vasubandhu puts dreaming in his proof of idealism, see Kachru (2021: 43–84).

14 Just as it is mistaken to think that the idealists' thesis commits them to the view that objects *are experienced* "in the head" or "inside the subject," so too it is at best misleading and at worst mistaken to attribute to the idealist the view that objects *exist* "in the head." If one makes the mistake (from the idealists' point of view) of thinking that cognition/consciousness is spatially located within the head/body, then one will take the idealists' thesis to commit them to the view that objects exist inside the head/body. In order to enter the view of the idealist, one should rather think of cognition as filling the space between one's body and

the object, and indeed as comprising the nature of one's body and the object and everything else in the universe.

15 Here and for the rest of the article I am setting aside the complication of the existence of a Yogācāra Buddhist idealist *nirākāravāda*, such as that held by Ratnākaraśānti.

16 Prābhākara Mīmāṃsakas held that we perceive both cognition and an object outside that, but they are not involved in the particular debate that I am writing about—between Naiyāyika and Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṃsaka direct realists, Sautrāntika representationalists, and Yogācāra Buddhist idealists.

17 To avoid sexist language I use "they," "their" etc. to refer to "the idealist," "the representationalist" and "the direct realist." Third-person pronouns, plural in form but singular in meaning, have been a part of English since at least the sixteenth century.

18 *Nyāyamañjarī* § 3.1.3. Numbers following § refer to the section numbers given both in Kataoka's (2003*) edition and Watson and Kataoka's (2010) translation.

19 *Nyāyamañjarī* § 3.1.1. For other appeals to parsimony (or "simplicity" or "lightness") in proofs of idealism, see Siderits (2007: 157–8) and Perrett (2017: 62ff.). Siderits, Finnigan (2017: 182–3) and Kachru (2021: 145ff.) all take Vasubandhu to be using parsimony as an argument against external objects at *Viṃśikā* 6–7. Although Vasubandhu does not name parsimony (*kalpanālāghava*) as the principle involved in his argument, that is indeed a reasonable way to interpret it.

20 Jayanta takes the argument from Kumārila's *Ślokavārttika, śūnyavāda* 10–20. Dharmakīrti does not give an argument for idealism from parsimony; thanks to Birgit Kellner for this piece of information (email June 2nd, 2019).

21 For more on what these "latent impressions" are, see p. 160.

22 *Nyāyamañjarī* § 4.7.1.

23 Siderits (2007: 173) considers a realist response to idealist claims of parsimony that partly resembles this, and partly resembles Taber's abovementioned response—that there is a complexity to the idealist theory that means it is not actually more parsimonious.

24 This argument comes from Dharmakīrti. Cf. *Pramāṇavārttika* 3:301–19 (on which see Kellner 2017: 108–9 and Taber 2005: 197–8, note 98) and *Pramāṇaviniścaya* 1:34–7. Jayanta's Yogācāra Buddhist exponent of the argument cites *Pramāṇavārttika* 3:302: *tatrānubhavamātreṇa jñānasya sadṛśātmanaḥ | bhāvyaṃ tenātmanā yena pratikarma vibhajyate* || "A cognition [focused] on a [particular blue object] (*tatra*), having a similar nature [to other cognitions of other objects] insofar as it is [like them] a mere cognition, must have a nature in virtue of which it is differentiated in accordance with its object." See Watson and Kataoka (2010: 313) for some evidence that Jayanta's formulation of the argument has also been influenced by Dharmottara's *Nyāyabinduṭīkā*.

A particularly rich, and as yet completely unstudied treatment of the argument is found in the *Nareśvaraparīkṣāprakāśa* (pp. 17,3–26,19; see Watson 2006: 333, note 2) by Rāmakaṇṭha (*c.* 950–1000), who like Dharmottara and Jayanta was writing in Kashmir. A precursor of the argument is found in *Ślokavārttika*, *śūnyavāda* 19–20 (see note 26).

25 In the *Pramāṇavārttika* verses from which this argument derives (3: 301–19), Dharmakīrti is clearly arguing for a representationalist view against a direct realist one. See Kellner's (2017: 108) description of those verses as defending "a Sautrāntika-style theory of perception based on causation and resemblance against Brahmanical interlocutors."

26 A precursor of this point is found in *Ślokavārttika*, *śūnyavāda* 19–20: *tasmād ubhayasiddhatvāj jñānasyākārakalpanā | jyāyasī bhavatas tv arthaṃ kalpayitvā bhaved iyam || tadasiddhāv aśaktatvāt, tenaivaṃ viprakṛṣṭatā | pratyāsannaṃ ca sambaddhaṃ grāhyaṃ mama bhaviṣyati ||*. [Idealist:] "Therefore because it (i.e. cognition) is established for both of us, it is better to postulate a form belonging to cognition. [The difference between us is just that] for you [realists] this [postulating of form in cognition] is something you have to do after postulating an external object, because if a [form within cognition] were not established [cognition] would be incapable [of perceiving the object]. On the view that [cognition lacks form], the [thing to be perceived] is far away [from cognition]. [But] on my view the thing to be perceived is very close and connected [it being internal]." Jayanta echoes this wording in his formulation of the argument (§ 3.3.1).

27 Though not occurring in *Blossoms of Reasoning*, this is effectively the move that the Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṃsaka direct realist makes at *Tattvasaṅgraha* 244–5 (citing, with minor variation of wording, *Ślokavārttika, śabdanityatā* 406–7). See Ratié (2014b: 77–9, 288).

28 For more on the opposition between the form view and the causation view, see Watson and Kataoka (2010: 313).

29 This point was already contained, in condensed form, in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* (p. 134,5–7): *kiṃ punar asya sādṛśyam? tadākāratā. ata eva tad indriyād apy utpannaṃ viṣayaṃ vijānātīty ucyate, nendriyam.* "What then is [cognition]'s similarity [to its object]? It is the fact that it takes on the form of [its object]. That is why although [cognition] arises from a sense-faculty it is said to perceive the object, not the sense-faculty." For similar but slightly different remarks about sense-faculties in this same context of Buddhist rejections of direct realism because of considerations of object-specificity, see *Pramāṇavārttika* 3:303–305 and *Pramāṇaviniścaya* ad 1:34, p. 31, 10ff. (On *Pramāṇavārttika* 3:305, see Kellner 2009–2010: 187–91). Those remarks are different insofar as here sense-faculties feature as a counterexample to *causation* as a possible explanation of object-specificity, whereas there sense-faculties are being discussed as themselves the explanation of object-specificity.

30 *Nyāyamañjarī* § 3.3.2.

31 *Nyāyamañjarī* § 4.8.1.

32 *Nyāyamañjarī* § 4.8.2.

33 My thinking here was helped by an exchange with Birgit Kellner (email August 25th, 2021). She also pointed me to the following passage where Dharmakīrti makes fun of the direct realist's position on similar grounds (it remains shrouded in mystery insofar as it does not provide any feature *of cognition* that accounts for object-specificity): *Pramāṇaviniścaya ad* 1:34, pp. 31,13–32,3.

34 I am here adapting an argument used by the Buddhist Śāntarakṣita against a Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṃsaka direct realist. The latter, while defending a Mīmāṃsā conception of the self, asserts that cognition is permanent and one, all diversity falling on the side of external objects (*Tattvasaṅgraha* 242, citing *Ślokavārttika, śabdanityatā* 404). The Buddhist responds by pointing to the case of seeing a patch of ground first as an elephant and then as a horse (*Tattvasaṅgraha* 249 and *-pañjikā ad loc.*). See Ratié (2014b: 76, 80, 286–7, 290–1).

35 There is a fifth stage 1 argument that I will have to skip altogether, that from the impossibility of incompatible properties residing in an external object: see *Nyāyamañjarī* § 3.7 and Watson and Kataoka (2010: 321–2).

36 *Pramāṇaviniścaya* 1:54ab: *sahopalambhaniyamād abhedo nīlataddhiyoḥ.*

37 See, for example, *Pramāṇaviniścaya* p. 40,2–3: *na hy anayor ekākārānupalambhe 'nyopalambho 'sti.*

38 See also Matsumoto (1980), Kellner (2017: 113–15) and Saccone (2018: 106–11, 279–92).

39 See also brief remarks by Finnigan (2017: 188–90) and Kachru (2019: 66ff.).

40 *Nyāyamañjarī* § 3.2.4.

41 *Nyāyamañjarī* § 3.2.1–3.2.3.

42 *Pramāṇasamuccaya* 1:11cd. See Watson and Kataoka (2010: 308–10) on the evolution of this argument as it passes from Dignāga to Kumārila to Jayanta. On the argument in Dignāga, see Kellner (2010) and (2011).

43 *Pramāṇaviniścaya* 1:54cd: *apratyakṣopalambhasya nārthadṛṣṭiḥ prasidhyati*; "For someone who does not perceive a cognition, the perception of its object is not established [either]." See also *Pramāṇavārttika* 3:443ab and 3:446 for the point that perception of an object necessarily entails perception of cognition.

44 Taber (2010) focusses more on the argument as articulated by Kumārila; the other two publications on the argument as articulated by Jayanta. I disagree with two features of Taber's interpretation of Kumārila's argument. When Kumārila's Buddhist idealist speaker states that cognition must be perceived *before* the object is perceived, I take this to be an unwanted consequence (*prasaṅga*) that follows from realist presuppositions (see Watson and Kataoka 2010: 311–12; Watson 2014: 405). It is contradicted by Buddhist presuppositions: Since cognition and object are non-different for the Buddhist, cognition clearly cannot be perceived before the object is perceived. The fact that Taber does not keep in view that this is a consequence of realist presuppositions is a significant factor in his dismissal of the argument: "Moreover, the notion that cognitions arise by themselves prior to cognizing their objects seems gratuitous and dogmatic as well and presents the spectacle of a kind of double event. First the cognition, aware of itself and its specific form, arises, then it 'apprehends' an object, which apprehension has exactly the same structure as the initial self-apprehension of the cognition—for the form that is evident when the object is apprehended supposedly belongs to the cognition!" (2010: 290). I think the argument is not as flawed as he sees it. It is not that it postulates two events with the same structure; rather it claims just that if an object existed outside of cognition, cognition would have to perceive itself before perceiving that object. (*Vaḥ* in *Ślokavārttika, śūnyavāda* 21b, meaning "for you [realists who hold that cognition illuminates an external insentient object],"

underlines that what follows is a consequence that falls undesirably to the realist, not something seriously asserted by the Buddhist.) As to why it follows that cognition would have to perceive itself before it could perceive an external insentient object, see Watson and Kataoka (2010: 306, 308) and Watson (2014: 408).

Secondly, Taber (2010: 286) takes *na copalabdhir astīha nirākārāsu buddhiṣu* (*Ślokavārttika, śūnyavāda* 31cd) to mean: "Moreover there is no perception [of an object] when cognitions are without form." I understand it rather as: "Moreover there is no perception with respect to (i.e. perception *of*) cognitions that are without form." On the first understanding cognitions are featuring as the subject of perception, on the second they are featuring as the object. The argument comes out as significantly different depending which of these two understandings one goes for. And if the second is correct, then support for one of Taber's historical theses (p. 292) is removed.

These two ways in which I understand Kumārila are how Jayanta understands Kumārila. But that is of course not sufficient in itself to decide the matter.

45 See *Ślokavārttika, śūnyavāda* 40–55 and *Nyāyamañjarī* § 3.6 for a Sautrāntika view according to which the form we perceive does not belong exclusively to cognition, but rather jointly to both cognition and the external object, being produced by their contact.

46 See *Pramāṇaviniścaya* 1:58c'd: *bāhyasiddhiḥ syād vyatirekataḥ*, "External [objects] could be established from co-absence." This is cited at *Nyāyamañjarī* § 3.4.1. For the text and translation of Dharmakīrti's commentary on it, see Krasser (2004: 142–3) and Kellner (2017: 115–16, and note 62).

47 See *Nyāyamañjarī* § 3.4.1–3.4.2.

48 See *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, p. 36,7–11: *sati kāraṇe kāraṇāntarasyābhāve kāryasyābhāvo dṛṣṭo bhāve ca punar bhāvas tadyathāṅkurasya. saty eva cābhāsaprāpte viṣaye manaskāre ca kāraṇe viṣayagrahaṇasyābhāvo dṛṣṭaḥ punaś ca bhāvaḥ, andhabadhirādīnām anandhābadhirādīnāṃ ca. atas tatrāpi kāraṇāntarasyābhāvo bhāvaś ca niścīyate. yac ca tat kāraṇāntaraṃ tad indriyam.* "When [most] causes are present [but] one further cause is absent, the effect is found to be absent, and when [that further cause is also] present, [the effect], for example a sprout, is then present. Now when a manifest object and a [second] cause, attention [on the part of a perceiver], are present, perception of the object is found not to occur for the blind or deaf etc., but to occur for the non-blind, non-deaf etc. Therefore in this case too the absence and presence [respectively] of a further cause is determined. And that further cause is the sense-faculty."

49 Cf. Ratié (2014a: 363): "… a causal relationship presupposes the invariable co-presence (*anvaya*) and co-absence (*vyatireka*) of the two related entities; but in the case at hand, we cannot ascertain that whenever there is an external object, there is a cognition bearing a particular objective aspect, and that whenever there is no external object, there is no such cognition, because we cannot experience these two entities separately."

50 See Manorathanandin's *Pramāṇavārttikavṛtti*, p. 220: *ko hi viśeṣo bāhyo vā niyāmakaḥ pratibhāsasya prabuddhavāsanāviśeṣaḥ samanantarapratyayo vā. tatra vāsanāyāḥ sāmarthyaṃ svapnādāv upalabdhaṃ na tu bāhyasya, nityaparokṣatvāt.* Ratié (2014a: 358) translates: "For what is it that determines the appearance [of cognition]: a particular external [entity], or rather, a particular imprint (*vāsanā*)

that has [just] been awakened [and functions as an] immediate and similar antecedent (*samanantarapratyaya*)? Among these two [candidates, we] see that the imprint has this capacity in a dream for instance, but [we do] not [see] that an external [entity may have this capacity,] since it is forever imperceptible." (I have removed a small misprint. And perhaps worth considering is that *prabuddhavāsanāviśeṣaḥ* is a *bahuvrīhi*.) Ratié discusses how her interpretation of this and the following passage differs from that of Arnold (2008).

51 See *Nyāyamañjarī* § 3.4.4.2.

52 See Tomlinson (2021: 277–8).

53 See, for examples of the idealist making this point against the representationalist but in a slightly different context, *Ślokavārttika, śūnyavāda* 51cd and *Nyāyamañjarī* end of § 3.6.

One way the representationalist could respond is by availing himself of a claim made more commonly by direct realists (see e.g., *Ślokavārttika*, *nirālambanavāda* 108ab): Cognition has form in dreaming and imagining only because of previous encounters with external objects; so it remains true that cognition would lack form if there were no external objects. Thanks to Birgit Kellner and Mark Siderits for suggesting this move to me.

54 Here are two possible Buddhist idealist answers. (1) Since the background cosmology accepted by not only Buddhists but also many of their non-Buddhist opponents was that the universe is beginningless and cyclical, anything "newly invented" can always have been invented in a previous cosmic cycle. (2) An invention is necessarily partite. Its ultimate parts can have been cognized earlier, so that what one newly learns is just the convention for conceptualizing this collection of parts as a single entity. I thank Roy Perrett and Mark Siderits for these two suggestions.

55 See the last sentence of the *vṛtti* on *Viṃśikā* 10: *itarathā hi vijñapter api vijñaptyantaram arthaḥ syād iti vijñaptimātratvaṃ na sidhyeta, arthavatītvād vijñaptīnām*.

56 Some sources to be consulted in considering Yogācāra solutions to these problems are: *Viṃśikā*, especially verses 18ab, 19, 21, and the *vṛtti* thereon, *Santānāntarasiddhi*, *Santānāntaradūṣaṇa*, Yamabe (1998), Moriyama (2010), Perrett (2017), Tzohar (2017a) and (2017b: 268–75), Prueitt (2018), Kachru (2019). The common Buddhist idealist appeal to shared karmic seeds stored in the *ālayavijñāna* seems only capable of establishing that I can see something qualitatively similar but numerically distinct from what another person sees. For each mind-stream has its own separate *ālayavijñāna* with its own separate karmic seeds, and I can only see what is projected by my own karmic seeds. As Garfield (2019: 85) puts it, shared karma enables parallel subjectivity but not intersubjectivity.

57 See Oetke (1992: 220).

58 See Siderits (2020: 294–6) for the view that the inference of the sense-faculties (to which I compared the representationalist's inference of external objects) is best seen as abductive reasoning to the best explanation (*arthāpatti*). See Watson's (2021: 498–9) remarks on the way that Indian inferences (*anumāna*) were typically but mistakenly presented and understood as either yielding certainty or as fallacious.

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