

the world differently.<sup>82</sup> They all set out to declare the antecedent of the perception-percept relation to be real, and the consequent to be unreal. However, as the two are existentially dependent on one another, as the Mādhyamika argues, we cannot have one without the other. We cannot ground the perception in the percept (as the realist would like to do), and we cannot ground the percept in the perception (as the Yogācārin would like to do). In particular, we cannot have representational cognitive episodes without something that they represent. If representation intrinsically involves some of the represented's structure being mirrored in the representation, the representation being what it is will inevitably involve the represented. So one would either have to say that because there is nothing represented, there are also no representations (a point hard to maintain given that our perceptions appear to represent the world), or that both exist, but in a non-fundamental, mutually dependent manner. The Mādhyamika embraces the second alternative.

6:072

**Dependent nature and reflexive awareness** Another problem for the Yogācāra position is the epistemological status of the basis of all appearances it alone considers to be ultimately real, the dependent nature. This dependent nature is free of the distinction between observing subject and observed object characterizing our usual conceptualization of the world. But then, if there is such a thing as the dependent nature, how could we know it? It could not be known by anything other than the dependent nature since, *ex hypothesi*, there is nothing other. But it also could not be known by the dependent nature itself, since things cannot operate on themselves, as an acrobat cannot climb on her own

<sup>82</sup> In the Indian context this is usually phrased in terms of the example of a cup of water appearing like ambrosia to the gods, like molten metal to hell beings, and so on. For a contemporary incarnation of this idea see von Uexküll 1928: 2–3; Buchanan 2008: 13. The example gives rise to considerable discussion in Tibetan scholasticism. See, for example, The Yakherds 2021a: 280–291.

shoulders.<sup>83</sup> Hence the dependent nature would be necessarily unknowable, and to accept the existence of things that can never be cognized does not seem to cohere well with Yogācāra's criticism of cognition-independent, external objects.

Candrakīrti denies that the mind can be reflexively self-aware, to which the Yogācārin replies that the dependent nature can indeed know itself, since there are cases of objects operating on themselves, as e.g. a lamp illuminates a room, and also illuminates itself. Moreover, we know that the mind is capable of operating on itself from the fact that there is memory. If you and I remember a lunar eclipse we both saw, the content of my memory cannot just be the eclipse, because this would then also be the only content of your memory, so that the contents would be the same. But my memory is not identical with your memory. Rather, I remember the eclipse-as-seen-by-me, and you remember it as-seen-by-you. But since a memory can only be a memory of what really happened, this implies that when seeing the eclipse we did not just experience it, but also our unique way of apprehending it. This means that our mind was both directed at the external content *and* at its own manner of representing this content. This latter function cannot be performed by a second mind-moment being aware of the first one, because we otherwise would also have to postulate a third being aware of the second, and so on, all the way up to an infinite regress.<sup>84</sup> If our mind was pursuing an infinite sequence of cognitions of an ever higher order all based around an eclipse, say, it could never move on to the cognition of anything else, another star, for example, but would be forever stuck in a never-ending series of 'cognitions of' based on some initial cognition. The only way to avoid this is if consciousness was in some way able to split up into different sequences, one stream

6:073

<sup>83</sup> Compare here Candrakīrti's discussion of this 'anti-reflexivity principle' in his *Prasannapadā* (MacDonald 2015: 2: 237–238).

<sup>84</sup> Moreover, assuming momentariness, by the time the second mind-moment becomes aware of the first, the first mind-moment has already passed out of existence, so that it would be unclear what the second mind-moment actually apprehends.

following ever higher order perceptions based on the eclipse-perception, another following ever higher order perceptions based on the star-perception, and so on. However, all contestants in this debate agree that there is only a single stream of consciousness, and though it may appear to us as if there are several things happening in our mind at the same time (simultaneously tasting *and* seeing the coffee, for example), we are simply misled by a quick succession of mental events, as when a needle pierces a hundred lotus petals in one instant:<sup>85</sup> the event might seem instantaneous, even though it is composed of a large number of shorter sub-events. Hence, in order to avoid the infinite regress the mind must be considered as reflexively aware of itself, thereby resolving the question how we can have epistemic access to the dependent nature.

This argument, however, will only be convincing if reflexive awareness is the *only* way of explaining the existence of memory, which Candrakīrti denies. He points out that “the unestablished does not at all serve the purpose of establishing” since memory understood in terms of reflexive awareness is itself contentious. As long as it, rather than memory understood in terms of alternative mechanisms generating it, has not been demonstrated, it cannot be used to establish reflexive awareness as its cause. Candrakīrti will present his own account of memory in 6:075.

6:074

Not only does Candrakīrti deny that reflexive awareness is the best explanation of memory (so that the existence of the latter would support the existence of the former), he also argues that it cannot, in fact, explain memory at all. Let us assume that every moment of consciousness is simultaneously directed at its object and at itself. Still, a given moment of consciousness and a later moment that remembers it are distinct entities, and in the present context of discussing production from another, these two moments have to be regarded as intrinsically distinct. That means that nothing about the nature of one can in any way involve anything about the nature

<sup>85</sup> See Chakrabarti 2020: 148.

of the other. But in this case there is no more of a connection between my memory  $m'$  and the earlier, reflexively aware cognition  $m$  that is now remembered than there is between  $m'$  and any other cognitive episode  $n$  of mine. Moreover, there is no more of a connection between Alice's cognitive episode  $c$  at  $t_1$  and its memory  $c'$  at  $t_2$  than there is between Bob's cognitive episode  $d$  at  $t_1$  and its memory  $d'$  at  $t_2$ . Assuming reflexive awareness does nothing toward explaining why there is a specific link between  $m$  and  $m'$ , but not between  $n$  and  $m'$ , and why there is a specific link between  $c$  and  $c'$ , but not between  $c$  and  $d'$ .

Arguing that the specific link results from the fact that  $c$  and  $c'$  belong to Alice's continuum, while  $d$  and  $d'$  belong to Bob's does not help here, since for the Buddhist there is nothing more to a mental continuum than a causally connected sequence of mind-moments.<sup>86</sup> However, making sense of an ultimately real causal connection between intrinsically distinct entities is just as difficult<sup>87</sup> as making sense of a mnemonic connection.

If reflexive awareness is not able to explain memory this does, of course, raise the question of how the Mādhyamika is going to explain it. Candrakīrti agrees that in everyday life, and hence at the level of conventional reality, we accept the identity of the one who remembers the lunar eclipse today with the one who saw it yesterday. Since the Mādhyamika does not endorse the existence of entities with intrinsic nature he also does not face the problem mentioned in the preceding verse, namely that of claiming the memory episode and the remembered episode to be intrinsically different. Agreeing to the ordinary conception of memory, however, does not imply accepting reflexive awareness as conventionally real. This is because the reason why reflexive awareness is introduced here in the first place is to provide an ontological foundation of an everyday phenomenon, specifying what

6:075

<sup>86</sup> Compare the discussion of 6:061.

<sup>87</sup> Compare the discussion of 6:017.

memory *really* is (namely a specific manifestation of the operation of reflexive awareness). But the Mādhyamika considers these kinds of attempts to analyze the conventions of everyday life as problematic, since such conventions are based on phenomena that are wholly deceptive. We can participate in the conventions of everyday life without analysis, but when we analyze them we find only emptiness. There is no justification for introducing a group of entities (even at the level of conventional reality) that is supposed to constitute the ultimate nature of conventional practices.<sup>88</sup>

6:076

If the opponent is not able to support the existence of reflexive awareness the epistemic status of the Yogācārin's dependent nature remains unresolved. How would we ever have any epistemic access to this entity which is supposed to be the only fundamentally real one? Moreover, if the dependent nature was somehow able to perceive itself the perceiver, perception, and perceived object (and, more generally, any agent, action, and object of action) should all be identical,<sup>89</sup> a position that is hard to align with the way the world appears to us and with the way it is usually conceptualized in, for example, grammatical analysis<sup>90</sup> which regards agent, action, and object as three distinct entities.

6:077

In the discussion beginning with 6:008b, Candrakīrti has argued that no entities with intrinsic nature could be caused by themselves, or by other things. The dependent nature, as a supposed bearer of intrinsic existence, therefore has to be unproduced. He also pointed out<sup>91</sup> that in the absence of reflexive awareness it must

<sup>88</sup> That is not to say that there is no justification for introducing a group of entities that explain how conventionally real things work. The Madhyamaka criticism does not apply to explanations of *how things function*, as opposed to explanations of *what things really are*. Arguably a significant amount of scientific explanations belong to the former, and not to the latter type.

<sup>89</sup> This is the position taken by Diñnāga in his *Pramāṇasamuccaya* 1:10 (Hattori 1968: 29, 106).

<sup>90</sup> For more on the discussion of the philosophical uses of the Indian *kāraka* system see Salvini 2008: 39–63.

<sup>91</sup> 6:073–6:076.