Self-Awareness in Tibetan Buddhism
The Philosophical Relevance of *Rang rig* and Its Contribution
to the Contemporary Debates on the Nature of Consciousness
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2 The Buddhist Historical and Doctrinal Background of *Svasaṃvedana* and Its Pre-Dignāga Developments

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2.1 Introduction

Part One of this volume is based primarily on Yao's monograph (2005), retracing his line of reasoning as it unfolds through the analysis of Chinese, Pāli, Sanskrit, and Tibetan sources. The aim here is to provide a brief survey of key early issues concerning the emergence of the idea of self-awareness.[1] As will be demonstrated, some of these topics have shaped the historical development of this concept, while others have endured and continue to spark debate in contemporary

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[1]   Before starting this survey, a general doxographical structure that will underlie and guide the present investigation should also be borne in mind. According to the doxography that was first formulated by later Indian philosophers and then adopted by Tibetan scholars with a few changes in its further subdivisions, (i) Vaibhāṣika, (ii) Sautrāntika, (iii) Yogācāra, and (iv) Madhyamaka make up the four major Buddhist philosophical tenets or schools (SKT *siddhāntāḥ*; TIB *grub mtha'*). In order to follow the structure of Yao's monograph, this classificatory schema should be kept in view throughout. Furthermore, it should be noted that the chronological references to individual thinkers will follow the dating proposed by Yao.

philosophy of mind. To structure the discussion, this chapter will adopt a framework outlined by Yao, supplemented by additional insights drawn from other authors and further critical reflections.

Yao traces the development of the idea of self-awareness through two main phases – the pre-Dignāga and post-Dignāga periods – each comprising two cycles of 'refutation', 'synthesis', and 'systematization'.

The first phase stems from the emergence of the notion of self-awareness, while the second begins after its Yogācāra systematization, primarily owing to Dignāga's contributions. Understandably, whereas the first refutation targets the Mahāsāṃghika doctrine, the second has the Yogācāra position in its sights. The Mahāsāṃghikas are regarded as the originators of the concept of self-awareness.

However, their view faced criticism from the Sarvāstivāda school, who refuted the notion. The Sautrāntika school, in turn, synthesized elements of the Mahāsāṃghika and Sarvāstivāda positions, while the Yogācāra school later systematized the concept, turning it into a more structured and comprehensive framework.

Turning to the second phase, that is, the philosophical debate sparked by Dignāga's epistemological formulation of self-awareness, based on the Yogācāra systematization, the refutation was led by the Madhyamaka school. Bhāvaviveka (490-570), Candrakīrti, and Śāntideva are the three figures Yao mentions in connection with the Madhyamaka refutation of the Yogācāra systematization of *svasaṃvedana*. While these three thinkers share this common agenda within the broader Madhyamaka tradition, the Yogācāra-Madhyamaka branch assumes a different approach – what Yao refers to as 'synthesis'. Here, the two principal scholars, Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla (740-795), neither follow their predecessors' arguments against self-awareness nor simply accept Dignāga's Yogācāra systematization.

> By rejecting the articulated epistemological formulations, they have returned to a Mahāsāṃghika-like position, according to which self-cognition is more simple, fundamental and soteriologically oriented. (Yao 2005, 149)

The final phase of the Indian history of the idea of self-awareness is represented by the Sākāravāda position, initiated by Dignāga, Dharmapāla, and Dharmakīrti. Prajñākaragupta (ca. 750-810) and Jñānaśrīmitra, the two principal voices in this strand, exhibit a Sautrāntika-like tendency in their understanding of self-awareness, situating it within an epistemological framework. Thus, the Sākāravāda branch of Yogācāra extended Dignāga's formulation by further systematizing it within their doctrinal framework.

This evolution underscores the dynamic interplay of critique, synthesis, and refinement in the treatment of self-awareness across these Buddhist traditions. Since this summary relies on doxographical distinctions between schools and sub-schools, it fails to delineate these phases precisely. Nevertheless, the framework will serve as a useful structure in this chapter and the next (chs 2-3), providing a guide to the ebb and flow of the historical development of the idea of self-awareness.

Before examining the cycles of the two phases in detail, however, it is important to consider first what the origin of the idea that the mind knows itself in Buddhism might be. Following May, "L'origine de la thèse, que la pensée se connaît elle-même, est rapportée aux Sautrāntika […] ou aux Mahāsāṃghika" (1959, 113-14 fn. 284).

May's position is particularly significant as it brings together two references: La Vallée Poussin[2] for the former option, which attributes the origin of this thesis to the Sautrāntika school (also supported by Tibetan doxographical schemas), and Bareau[3] for the latter, which links its origin to the Mahāsāṃghika tradition. These two scholars are often cited as the earliest and primary authorities in Buddhist scholarship for tracing the historical development of the concept of the mind knowing itself. However, La Vallée Poussin (1928, 129) also claims elsewhere that discussions on this topic originate from the *Mahāvibhāṣā* (henceforth *MV*), specifically in the context of refuting the Mahāsāṃghika theory of self-awareness.

As for modern East Asian scholarship, building on Yao's insights, it is possible to outline the main opinions regarding the origin of the concept of *svasaṃvedana*.[4] The studies by Lü (1991) and Katsura (1969) are based primarily on La Vallée Poussin's statements relating to the origins of the *svasaṃvedana* issue within the Mahāsāṃghika context. Yamaguchi (1951) reaches similar conclusions independently, without referencing other contemporary studies, while Kajiyama (1983) builds on Yamaguchi's claims.

Yao's perspective embraces both possibilities. He argues that the concept of self-awareness originates with the Mahāsāṃghika, the earliest Buddhist school to emerge after the first schism, and was later refined within the Sautrāntika school as a more technical category. Thus, while Dignāga was the first to use the term in a strictly technical sense, the idea itself predates his work by a significant margin.

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2   See La Vallée Poussin 1909, 181-3. In particular, for the references to Candrakīrti's (ca. 600-650) discourse about awareness knowing itself, see La Vallée Poussin 1909, 182 fn. 2; for the correction of La Vallée Poussin's reference page, see May 1959, 114 fn. 284.

3   See Bareau 1955, 64, where this issue is addressed in relation to thesis no. 29 of his list of Mahāsāṃghika theses.

4   Since the language barrier limits access to sources in Japanese and Chinese, reference is made to Yao's overview of these works.

2.2 Mahāsāṃghika

To revisit Yao's analysis of the Mahāsāṃghika view of self-awareness, the starting point is the *MV*, an encyclopedic Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma work that provides information about Mahāsāṃghika by refuting its stances. This text has become the best-known source for tracing the origins of the concept of self-awareness in the Mahāsāṃghika context. In this work, the issue arises within the larger discourse on *buddha*'s omniscience. First, the composers of the *MV* (42c) question whether an awareness can know all *dharma*s, and thereafter they express the Mahāsāṃghika view that "mind (*citta*) and mental activities (*caitta*)"[5] are capable of "apprehend[ing] themselves" (Yao 2005, 15).[6] This is followed by a discussion (*MV* 42c) about the reflexive nature of 'awareness' – it should be noted that in this passage, 'awareness' is employed as the translation of *jñāna*, which, in the remainder of these pages, is consistently rendered as 'gnosis':

> It is the nature (*svabhāva*) of awareness (*jñāna*) and so forth to apprehend, thus awareness can apprehend itself as well as others. This is like a lamp that can illuminate itself and others owing to its nature (*svabhāva*) of luminosity. (Yao 2005, 15)[7]

The relation between self-awareness and omniscience becomes clear when it is acknowledged that, in Mahāsāṃghika doctrine, the latter entails the cognition of all *dharma*s in a single moment. Thus, this school holds a view in direct contrast with the more widely accepted Buddhist position, which denies the possibility of knowing all *dharma*s in one instant, as the perceiving mind cannot know itself, its co-emerging mental factors, and the sense organs correlated with it in that same moment. This point indicates that, in this case, self-awareness is linked to 'gnoseological' controversies, namely, issues related to the potentials of gnosis's (SKT *jñāna*; TIB *ye shes*), its limits, and time of engagement with its objects. Here, 'gnosis' refers to the high-level mind at the stage of a *buddha* or at other phases of the path towards enlightenment. To clarify this term and its implications further, Wangchuk explains:

> Gnoseology, here primarily in the sense of a theory of meditative insight or gnosis (*jñāna*; *ye shes*) within the Buddhist context,

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5 Note that Yao translates *caitta* (TIB *sems byung*) as 'mental activity'. The term 'mental factor' is preferred here, following the rendering that is chosen by Hopkins (1983) and Napper (Lati Rinbochay 1980), among others.

6 For the original Chinese, see Yao 2005, 37 fn. 52.

7 For the original Chinese, see Yao 2005, 37 fn. 52.

> may simply be understood as a kind of "higher epistemology". In a certain way, if one were to make a distinction between mind (*citta*: *sems*; *manas*: *yid*: *vijñāna*: *rnam par shes pa*) and gnosis (*jñāna*: *ye shes*), as is done, for example, in some Mahāyāna and rDzogs-chen sources, epistemology may be said to encompass the theory of knowledge mediated by the mind, and gnoseology a theory of transcendental knowledge, or gnosis. Soteriologically, as the concept of the four types of reliance (*pratisaraṇa*: *rton pa*) suggests, gnosis is clearly ranked higher than the mind. (Wangchuk 2007, 43)

Thus, the context in which debates on self-awareness first emerged is closely tied to the issue of omniscience, understood as the possibility of knowing all *dharma*s in a single moment, which also requires awareness to be able to know itself.

This raises the question of why the topic of omniscience is formulated in these terms within Mahāsāṃghika discourse. To shed light on the underlying need for such a view of omniscience as held by the Mahāsāṃghikas, and to understand the theoretical context in which this doctrine emerged, it is important to recognize the broader effort undertaken immediately after the historical Buddha's death to come to terms with the loss of such a pivotal figure. Schmithausen (2000, 12-15) identifies six approaches employed during that period to reestablish the presence of the Buddha. Among other approaches, these include practices such as worshiping the Buddha's relics, introducing portraits of the Buddha to serve as objects of veneration and as aids for visualization and meditation, and fostering the belief in the simultaneous existence of multiple *buddha*s within countless world systems. Moreover, it is worth noting the tendency to

> transpose the dignity the teachings were treated with onto the teacher, thereby destining the Buddha to become an object of reverence in his own right [and it is] this tendency [that], in the course of time, led to ever increasing supramundane qualities being ascribed to the Buddha, particularly in the school of the Mahāsāṃghikas, where he is extricated from the earthly domain and divinized into a transcendent realm. (Wangchuk 2007, 209)

Because of this process, his powers and knowledge were radically reinterpreted:

> Originally, his knowledge was considered superior to that of others only because he had won his liberating insight (into the wholesome and unwholesome) by dint of personal capacity. Now his knowledge was elevated to total omniscience. While other non-Mahāyāna schools saw in the Buddha's omniscience merely the ability to

cognise any desired object at any time, just as a fire has the ability to burn all kinds of fuel without having to bum perpetually, the Mahāsāṃghikas went so far as to postulate that every moment the Buddha is cognisant of each individual phenomenon. (Wangchuk 2007, 209)

This helps contextualize the conceptual drive underlying the specific and unusual Mahāsāṃghika doctrine of omniscience, within which the idea of self-awareness is situated.

Yao also takes into consideration another important text, the *Samayabhedoparacanacakra*, composed by the Sarvāstivāda scholar Vasumitra (dated to either the first century BC or the second or fourth century AD). Available in a Tibetan and three Chinese translations, this work presents the doctrine of self-awareness in relation to the Mahāsāṃghika tradition. Here, however, the discussion is framed with reference to the soteriological category of *srota-āpanna* 'stream-winner', the first of four stages leading toward the attainment of Arhatship.[8] Yao (2005, 16) compares his translations of that specific passage with the four extant versions of the text,[9] though the key-term corresponding to the Sanskrit *svabhāva* is by no means easy to render, posing a challenge in translating the relevant statements about self-awareness.[10] As a consequence, the passage may be too vague to provide any concrete help. In fact, especially in light of the extant Chinese versions, it is open to two main interpretations. The first, more soteriologically oriented, views self-awareness as a tool of the mind and mental factors, acquired by stream-winners in their practice and enabling them to recognize their own identity (*svabhāva*) as stream-winners. The second, more epistemologically oriented reading, considers self-awareness a general characteristic of all minds and mental factors which enables them to cognize their own nature (*svabhāva*), thus bracketing the specific situation or identity of stream-winners.[11]

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8 The other categories are, in Sanskrit: *sakṛdāgāmin* 'once returner', *anāgāmin* 'non-returner' and *arhat* 'worthy one'.

9 For Yao's translations and all the references, see Yao 2005, 16.

10 Vasumitra, *Samayabhedoparacanacakra* 143a3: "*rgyun tu zhugs pa'i sems dang sems las byung ba rnams kyi ngo bo nyid shes so* |" (apprehend[ing] the *svabhāva* of mind and mental factors of the stream-winners).

11 Another text that could be mentioned is the *Samayabhedoparacanacakre nikāyabhedopadeśanasaṃgraha* by the Yogācāra scholar Vinītadeva (645-715), which extensively comments upon the works of Vasubandhu (400-480) and Dharmakīrti (600-660). The text is extant only in its Tibetan translation. There, Vinītadeva uses the technical term *rang rig* with reference to Mahāsāṃghika, but the rendering of the relevant passage in translation is the subject of long debates among interpreters. For a summary of the various versions held by modern scholars, see Yao 2005, 18-19.

Exploring the connections between the Mahāsāṃghika theory of self-awareness and its later developments, Yao concludes that, although Dignāga, Dharmakīrti and their commentators never explicitly acknowledged their Mahāsāṃghika sources, it seems highly likely that they drew upon them:

> The Mahāsāṃghika doctrine of self-cognition can be summarized as a general assertion about the mind and mental activities being self-cognizant and its illustration through the simile of the lamp. This has been verified by the limited sources of Mahāsāṃghika [...]. However, in some later Yogācāra texts, we also come across similar expressions. I see them as the Mahāsāṃghika influence on the Yogācāra doctrine of self-cognition. (Yao 2005, 19-20)

A strong indication of this Mahāsāṃghika influence is Dharmakīrti's brief statement in *Nyāyabindu* 1.10: "All mind and mental activities are self-cognizant" (Yao 2005, 15).[12] When compared with the aforementioned passage from the *MV* (42c), the similarity becomes evident. While the metaphor of the lamp is not mentioned here by Dharmakīrti, we find it in Vinītadeva's *Nyāyabinduṭīkā*, an early commentary on the *Nyāyabindu*, where the author explains self-awareness in the Mahāsāṃghika style using the lamp metaphor:

> Whatever illuminates the own entity of those [mind and mental factors, all of them,] is [their] self-awareness. In this way, all mind and mental factors arise while they make known their own entity, because they have the nature of cognition, just as a lamp arises while it illuminates itself, because it has the nature of illumination, and in order to illuminate its own entity it does not depend on another lamp. Likewise, also mind and mental factors do not depend on another cognition to make their own entity known;

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12   Dharmakīrti, *Nyāyabindu* 1.10: "*sarvacittacaittānām ātmasaṃvedanam ||*".

therefore, things that are established in their own right are direct *pramāṇa*s for themselves.[13]

Moreover, Yao considers the possibility that not only Dharmakīrti but also Dignāga shared this Mahāsāṃghika legacy. In arguing for this, Yao finds some possible traces of this heritage in Dignāga's thought, particularly in one line of reasoning that is ascribed to his *Pramāṇasamuccaya* (henceforth *PS*) and quoted in the *Buddhabhūmyupadeśa*, a work attributed to Bandhuprabha (fl. sixth century AD) et al. The passage (*Buddhabhūmyupadeśa* 303a) confirms the two key features of the Mahāsāṃghika theory of self-awareness: that the mind and mental factors know themselves, and that self-awareness is illustrated through the metaphor of the lamp. Moreover, it situates this theory within the broader context of the memory argument, which is characteristic of Dignāga's doctrine of self-awareness.[14] However, as Yao notes, the first part of the quotation, which refers to mind and mental factors as being able to know themselves, is not found in any of the Tibetan versions or the Sanskrit fragments of *PS*. Nor is there any trace of it in any of Dignāga's works. "So we are left with a mystery" regarding whether Dignāga himself had articulated or referenced a Mahāsāṃghika-like notion of self-awareness (Yao 2005, 22). Although certainty is lacking, the possibility that Dignāga and Dharmakīrti's theory of *svasaṃvedana* was influenced by the Mahāsāṃghika tradition warrants consideration.

The Andhaka school, a sub-school of the Mahāsāṃghikas that played an important role in the later development of Mahāyāna Buddhism, is also among the forerunners of the idea of self-awareness. The main sources relating to its doctrine of self-awareness are the *Kathāvatthu*, an Abhidharma work of the Pāli tradition ascribed to Moggaliputta Tissa (327-247 BC), and the *Kathāvatthuppakaraṇ*

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[13]   Vinītadeva, *Nyāyabinduṭīkā* 6b (Tibetan version): "[*sems dang sems las byung ba'i thams cad] de dag gis rang gi ngo bo rab tu gsal ba gang yin pa de ni rang gi rig pa yin no || 'di ltar sems dang sems las byung ba thams cad ni rtogs par bya ba rang bzhin can yin pa'i phyir rang gi ngo bo rig par byed bzhin du skye ste | dper na mar me ni rab tu gsal ba'i rang bzhin can yin pa'i phyir bdag nyid rab tu gsal bar byed pa bzhin du skye'i | rang gi ngo bo rab tu gsal bar bya ba la mar me gzhan la mi ltos so || de bzhin du sems dang sems las byung ba rnams kyang rang gi ngo bo rtogs par bya ba la shes pa gzhan la mi ltos pa yin te | de'i phyir rang grub pa'i ngo bo rnams ni bdag nyid la mngon sum gyi tsad ma yin no ||*". Cf. the Sanskrit reconstruction by Gangopadhyaya (1971, 107): "[*sarvacittacaittānām] teṣāṃ ca yat svarūpaprakāśanaṃ tadātmasaṃvedanam | sarve hi cittacaittāḥ pratītisvabhāvatvāt svarūpajñāpakā bhavanti | yathā pradīpaḥ prakāśasvabhāvatvād ātmano 'pi prakāśako bhavati | svarūpaprakāśe ca pradīpāntaraṃ nāpekṣate | tathā cittacaittā api svarūpāvabodhe jñānāntaraṃ nāpekṣante | tataśca svasiddhabhāvāḥ svayaṃ pratyakṣapramāṇaṃ bhavanti ||*".

[14]   For different translations of this passage, cf. Yao 2005, 21; Keenan 1980, 569; La Vallée Poussin 1928-29, 130.

a-aṭṭhakathā, Buddhaghosa's (fl. fifth century AD) commentary on the *Kathāvatthu*.[15] One significant difference between the Andhaka view on self-awareness and the aforementioned position of the Mahāsāṃghikas is that the former denies self-awareness to *caittas*.[16] Moreover, whereas the Mahāsāṃghikas (*MV* 47b) claim that two minds can function simultaneously, this position is probably refuted by the Andhakas (Buddhaghosa, *Kathāvatthuppakaraṇa-aṭṭhakathā* 5.9). Consequently, the former hold that omniscience occurs in a single moment[17] while the latter assert that awareness operates sequentially, with each moment of awareness cognizing the preceding one – for example, A_2 knowing A_1, A_3 knowing A_2, and so on.[18] Yao highlights the concept of having, as a consequence, an awareness of self-awareness and comments on it by stating that

> we cannot find any reference to it in the extant Indian texts. Now, as we have seen, this Pāli passage is probably the earliest source that has discussed the issue of the awareness of self-awareness. (Yao 2005, 28)

Among the Andhakas' contributions to the discourse on self-awareness, a key point is the debated issue of awareness taking itself as an object (P *ārammaṇa*). The Andhakas admit the possibility of awareness being both subject and object, albeit in successive moments: awareness must first become an object in order to be cognized by itself in the subsequent moment.[19]

Moreover, in the *Kathāvatthu* (5.9) other metaphors appear that are commonly used in Sarvāstivāda and Madhyamaka refutations of self-awareness. A proponent of the Sakavāda school, debating with an Andhaka opponent, challenges the latter's position using various images that frequently reappear in later developments of the debate:

> Does one cut a sword with that sword, an axe with that axe, a knife with that knife, an adze with that adze? Does one sew a needle with that needle, handle the tip of a finger with that finger, kiss

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15 The *Kathāvatthu* passages that Yao identifies as relevant to the topic of self-awareness are the following: 5.9 (on awareness of the present), 13.7 (on enjoying meditation), and 16.4 (on self-awareness itself).

16 See Moggaliputta Tissa (ascribed), *Kathāvatthu* 5.9. For Yao's translation, see Yao 2005, 28; for the corresponding original text in Pāli, see Yao 2005, 40 fn. 113.

17 For all the references to the texts, see Yao 2005, 11.

18 See Moggaliputta Tissa (ascribed), *Kathāvatthu* 5.9. See Yao 2005, 25 for the translation of the passage and see Yao 2005, 40 fn. 99 for the original text in Pāli.

19 See Yao 2005, 25 for his translation and Yao 2005, 40 fn. 99 for the original text in Pāli.

the top of the nose with that nose, handle the head with that head
[...]? (Yao 2005, 29)[20]

Unfortunately, given the limited sources available for the Andhaka
theories of self-awareness, it is impossible to delineate a precise
and detailed account. It is noteworthy, however, that their approach
to this issue frequently appears in the later developments of the
Indo-Tibetan tradition. These parallels include references to mind and
mental factors in discussions of self-awareness, the use of the simile
of the lamp and other metaphors, considerations on the simultaneous
functioning of one or multiple minds, reflections on 'awareness' (P
ñāṇa) in relation to 'self-awareness', and mind or 'cognition' (P *citta*) in
relation to 'self-cognition', explorations of awareness as both subject
and object, and connections with the concept of self-awareness in the
contexts of omniscience, epistemology, and soteriology.

2.3   Sarvāstivāda

Turning now to a brief examination of the Sarvāstivāda position
on the subject, as presented in Yao's research (2005, 42 ff.), the
term 'Sarvāstivāda' will be used as an umbrella term that includes
the Vaibhāṣikas, the Mūlasarvāstivādins and, to some extent, the
Dārṣṭāntikas. Scholars from the Sarvāstivāda sub-groups share a
common agenda in refuting self-awareness, albeit from different
perspectives, by contrast with the Sautrāntikas, who regard
self-awareness as one of their major doctrines.

   As noted above, the Sarvāstivādins and Mahāsāṃghikas debate
this issue primarily on soteriological grounds, particularly in
relation to the *buddha*'s omniscience. Whereas the Mahāsāṃghikas
maintain that it is possible to know all *dharma*s in a single moment,
other schools, including the Sarvāstivāda, reject the notion of
instantaneous omniscience, as previously explained. From the
Sarvāstivāda perspective, it is not possible to know all *dharma*s
within a single moment; therefore, self-awareness does not imply
that the mind simultaneously knows itself but rather that it knows
previous moments in its own *continuum*. While the Sarvāstivādins aim
to reject self-awareness, they must still address how omniscience can
encompass all *dharma*s, given that the omniscient mind itself must be
included within the scope of what is known. They resolve this problem
by asserting that omniscient awareness knows all *dharma*s except
itself, its 'associates' (SKT *saṃprayuktāḥ*, that is, mental factors that
share the same object with the mind, e.g. feelings), and its 'co-existed'

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20   For the original Pāli text, see Yao 2005, 40 fn. 115.

(SKT *sahabhavaḥ*, that is, its accompanying material elements and accompanying *dharma*s that are not part of the mind itself, e.g. the sense-organs). Instead, these are known by subsequent moments within the same *continuum* of that omniscient consciousness. In fact, as stated by Vasubandhu:

> We [the proponents of the Sarvāstivāda view] do not say that the Buddha is omniscient in the sense that he knows all in a single moment. (Yao 2005, 45)[21]

Kātyāyaniputra's (fl. first century BC) *Jñānaprasthāna*, one of the seven Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma works, discusses this topic in the form of a dialogue, answering an opponent who expresses the Vaibhāṣika point of view. One passage (Kātyāyaniputra, *Jñānaprasthāna* 919b) is particularly relevant, as the opponent points out that, in holding the view that all *dharma*s are no-self, one's awareness (*jñāna*) must know all *dharma*s. The Sarvāstivāda reply maintains that an omniscient awareness knows all *dharma*s except itself, its 'associates', and its 'co-existed'. Each moment of awareness, along with its 'associates' and 'co-existed', is known by the subsequent moment of awareness.

In commenting on this significant passage, Yao offers an important observation:

> In other words, [in the Sarvāstivāda view] the mind knows itself through a *reflection* of the past mind. In contrast, the Mahāsāṃghikas hold that the mind can know itself at the same time that it knows other objects because the mind is endowed with a *reflexive* nature. These two views represent two different models of self-cognition: one is *reflective*, while the other is *reflexive*. (Yao 2005, 47; italics added)

This distinction between the reflective and reflexive models of self-awareness echoes a differentiation found, for instance, in Matilal (1986a, 148-9), who includes it within the topic of knowing that one knows,[22] and later in Williams (1998), who adopts it as the main framework in his monograph on *rang rig*, using it to articulate and organize how the Indo-Tibetan philosophical tradition approaches this issue.[23] As this structural distinction remains widely used to

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21 Vasubandhu, *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* 9.935: "*naiva ca vayaṃ sarvatra jñānasammukhībhāvād buddhaṃ sarvajñam ācakṣmahe |*".

22 Actually, Matilal (1986a) suggests a broader, three-fold presentation of the ways Indian philosophers deal with the awareness of the awareness. This will be introduced when discussing the two categories Williams outlines.

23 Yao explicitly refers to those two authors in Yao 2005, 90 fn. 15.

address such a complex issue, including in contemporary philosophy of mind, it will be examined in greater detail in the discussion of Williams's significant contribution to the topic of self-awareness. For now, this distinction will serve as an effective tool for highlighting the differences between the Sarvāstivāda and Mahāsāṃghika doctrines. By introducing these two interpretative models (reflexive *versus* reflective), Yao suggests that, according to the Mahāsāṃghikas' idea of self-awareness, the mind is aware of itself as the knowing subject, rather than as an object – whereas the Sarvāstivāda school asserts the opposite.

In order to appreciate this difference fully, particularly in relation to awareness (*jñāna*) or consciousness (*vijñāna*) being self-aware, it is first necessary to investigate how this mental feature or ability is conceived. For Sarvāstivāda proponents, present awareness can take a previous awareness as its object while still considering it as itself. However, how is it possible to argue that a preceding cognitive event is still the present one? To answer this question, one must examine the Sarvāstivādins' conception of the three times: past, present, and future. For Sarvāstivāda proponents, the three times are equally real;[24] therefore, when something falls into the past, it does not perish but rather changes its status.[25] Consequently, each previous moment of awareness can easily be argued to belong to the same awareness that is manifest now, since present and past cognitive events equally exist as parts of the same mental *continuum*. The Sarvāstivāda school thus proposes a gradual model of omniscience consisting of a mental *continuum* capable of knowing everything, just as fire is capable of burning everything through continuous combustion. In a passage from Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* (9.935), quoted by Yao, it is stated:

> The Omniscient One is like a fire that burns everything through a process (*santāna*) [of burning]. He does not know everything all at once. (Yao 2005, 48; square brackets in the original)[26]

Here, the identity of any present awareness appears to shift dramatically towards the mental *continuum* to which it belongs.

Continuing to follow Yao (2005, 48 ff.), the argument then connects this particular notion of omniscience to the sophisticated theory of

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24   With regard to that, cf. Yao 2005, 47. Note that Yao (2005, 158) uses the effective expression 'pan-realism'.

25   Although, with respect as to how the three times differ from each other, there are differing opinions held by various Sarvāstivāda authors, it is most commonly expressed in terms of a 'difference of state' (SKT *avasthānyathātva*).

26   Vasubandhu, *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* 9.935: "*santānena samarthatvād yathā 'griḥ sarvabhug mataḥ | tathā sarvavid eṣṭavyo 'sakṛt sarvasya vedanāt ||*".

causality developed by the Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma, demonstrating that awareness cannot know itself in a single moment. A key aspect of this reasoning is that no *dharma* can observe or know itself; it can only serve as a condition for others. This notion of causality is also central to Vaibhāṣika literature, in particular, where it is asserted that nothing can, in a broad sense, act upon itself. For awareness to know itself, it would need to exist in a causal relation with itself. However, since a distinction must exist between cause and effect, and nothing can be different from itself, it is impossible for any awareness (or anything in general) to stand in a causal relation with itself. This rules out the possibility of awareness acting as the knower of itself.

The Vaibhāṣikas also employ a variety of metaphors to reject self-awareness, such as those found in the *MV* (43a):

> What we see in the world is the following: the finger-tip cannot touch itself; the knife-blade cannot cut itself; the pupil cannot see itself; a strong man cannot carry himself. Thus [awareness] in itself cannot know itself. (Yao 2005, 52; square brackets in the original)[27]

However, unlike the Mahāsāṃghikas, who rely exclusively on supportive examples to argue for self-awareness, the Vaibhāṣikas (*MV* 43c) maintain that "one should not dispute the teachings of the Sage [i.e., the Buddha] with worldly similes" (Yao 2005, 53; square brackets in the original).[28]

Metaphors are therefore only a secondary tool in supporting their main argument, which is causality.

Among these images, two – the finger and the knife – were already discussed in § 2.2, where they were listed among various examples used in a debate between a Sakavāda and an Andhaka (Moggaliputta Tissa [ascribed], *Kathāvatthu* 5.9). The Vaibhāṣikas note that the lamp metaphor is unsuitable as an illustration of self-awareness, given their understanding of the lamp's illumination. They point out that a lamp is composed of material particles, lacks sensory faculties, cannot take anything as its object, and is not a faculty of a sentient being. As an example of this, Yao explains how Saṃghabhadra's (fl. fourth-fifth century AD) *Nyāyānusāra* (742b), representative of an orthodox Vaibhāṣika position, strongly objects to the lamp metaphor as an effective illustration or proof of self-awareness. Saṃghabhadra argues that an independent entity, such as illumination, cannot be found: when something becomes illuminated, it is due to the conjunction of various factors, such as an object, a lamp, eyes

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27 For the original Chinese text, see Yao 2005, 91 fn. 36.

28 For the original Chinese text, see Yao 2005, 91 fn. 37.

and light. Therefore, since the lamp does not possess the nature of illumination, how can it illuminate itself? Even assuming that it has the nature of illumination, the lamp could not illuminate both itself and others. In fact, this would absurdly imply that fire, not only burning other things, would also have to burn itself, and that darkness, besides preventing one from seeing objects, would paradoxically have to obstruct the perception of darkness itself. However, since this is not the case for fire or darkness, the lamp cannot act this way either. Saṃghabhadra's line of reasoning echoes the one expressed by Nāgārjuna (150-250), which will be clarified in the discussion of his *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* (7.8-12) (see § 2.6).

Despite these considerations, the Mahāsāṃghika scholars Bandhuprabha et al. (*Buddhabhūmyupadeśa* 303b), among the proponents of the metaphor of a lamp illuminating itself in relation to self-awareness, defend the appropriateness of this image:

> One can directly perceive the absence of darkness and the apparent luminosity [in lamps]. If they did not illumine themselves, they would be enveloped in darkness, and would not be directly perceptible. Therefore, I know that lamps illumine themselves. (Yao 2005, 55; square brackets in the original)[29]

This straightforward argument unfolds as follows (Bandhuprabha et al., *Buddhabhūmyupadeśa* 303):

> Things like a jar or clothes are not darkness in their essence, but when they are not illumined by lamps their edges (*anta*) are enveloped in darkness and are not directly perceptible. When lamps illumine them, those lamps expel the darkness on their edges and cause them to be directly perceived. And so we say that they are illumined. It is just the same with lamps. When their nature [of being luminous] arises, the darkness on their edges is expelled, and they become directly perceptible. Thus we say that they illumine themselves. (Yao 2005, 55; square brackets in the original)[30]

Reaching a definitive conclusion about Bandhuprabha et al.'s argument may be challenging; however, it is evident that their approach introduces an empirical perspective to the issue. In this framework, luminosity and darkness intertwine in such a way that their boundary corresponds to the edges of objects: luminosity exists where the edges of something are directly perceptible while darkness is present where they are not. This provides a criterion for identifying both. Still, it

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29 For the original Chinese text, see Yao 2005, 91 fn. 45.

30 For the original Chinese text, see Yao 2005, 91 fn. 46.

remains unclear whether the descriptive accuracy of this account of light and darkness can legitimately be extended to self-awareness, thereby making it a valid metaphor. Moreover, as will be shown (§ 2.6), Nāgārjuna's logical analysis fundamentally challenges the very possibility of any contact between darkness and light.[31]

Another significant contribution can be found in the work of the Sarvāstivāda scholar Vasumitra of Gandhāra, a key center of orthodox Vaibhāṣika thought. Vasumitra was highly regarded by other Vaibhāṣikas: most of his views gained favor and were adopted by them. His work sought to systematize the Sarvāstivāda doctrines as well as to formulate new arguments against self-awareness. These arguments can be categorized into two main groups: the first focuses on epistemological aspects; the second addresses issues that are relevant to soteriology (Yao 2005, 56).

In order to appreciate the epistemological arguments, one must first recall the Vaibhāṣika view (*MV* 558b) of the relationship between awareness or cognition, broadly understood as an object-possessor, and its objects:

> Awareness and the knowable are established as a pair. So there is no awareness that does not know the knowable, and there is no knowable that is not known by awareness. If there is no awareness, there is no knowable, and if there is no knowable, there is no awareness. (Yao 2005, 56)[32]

The significance of this view is further emphasized by Vasumitra's (*MV* 43b) arguments against self-awareness:

> If [awareness] in itself (*svabhāva*) knows itself (*svabhāva*), the following cannot be established: grasper and the grasped, knower and the known, the one who is aware and what it is aware of, object and that which possesses object, image and object of cognition, senses and object of senses, and so forth. (Yao 2005, 56; square brackets in the original)[33]

Given the importance of the reciprocal foundation between cognition and the knowable, Vasumitra's statements align with similar arguments found later in the Tibetan tradition, which will be examined in § 5.1 during the analysis of the dGe-lugs critique of *rang rig*.

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[31] See Nāgārjuna, *VV* 38-9.

[32] For the original Chinese text, see Yao 2005, 91 fn. 48.

[33] For the original Chinese text, see Yao 2005, 91 fn. 49.

Within this subject-object framework, Vasumitra (*MV* 43a)[34] raises another objection to self-awareness by refuting the very idea that awareness can be regarded as an object – an objection that Yao finds to be as problematic as it is effective:

> On my view, this is the most clear and effective refutation of self-awareness in terms of epistemology. It reflects Vasumitra's style of clear definition, his conceptual coherence and his fondness for systematization. Examining *Mahāvibhāṣā* carefully, though, I find that Vasumitra contradicts the Vaibhāṣikas on this point. When discussing which have a greater number, awarenesses or objects, the Vaibhāṣikas explicitly say: "Awareness can also be an object [...]. Because the associates and co-existents of the awareness and the awareness itself can all be an object" [*Mahāvibhāṣā* 228b-c]. For this reason, we always have a greater number of objects than awarenesses. This contradiction may indicate a difference between Sarvāstivāda masters in Kaśmīra and Gāndhāra. (Yao 2005, 57)

Whether awareness can serve as an object is a pivotal and widely debated topic, particularly in discussions on self-awareness. Originally affiliated with the Sarvāstivāda tradition in Gāndhāra, Vasubandhu follows Vasumitra on this point. In his *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* (7.18), Vasubandhu refutes self-awareness with a single move: the object-possessor (SKT *viṣayin*), i.e., the subject or awareness, must be distinct from the object and, as such, cannot itself be an object.

Vasumitra finds self-awareness problematic for an additional epistemological reason: subject and object are distinct entities, and cognition arises only when the two interact; neither can produce it independently of the other (Yao 2005, 58 ff.). However, in the case of self-awareness, cognition would arise from a single cause: the awareness itself. Since this contradicts the Buddhist tenet of dependent origination (SKT *pratītyasamutpāda*; TIB *rten 'brel*), this option must be refuted. The significance of this argument resurfaces in various phases of the historical debate on this issue (chs 4-5).

Alongside these epistemological concerns, Vasumitra also addresses several critiques of self-awareness that relate to soteriological issues – such as wrong views, negative mental attitudes, the four mindfulnesses, awareness of the Four Noble Truths, memories of past lives, and awareness of others' minds.

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34 "Why does [awareness] in itself (*svabhāva*) not know itself (*svabhāva*)? Because it is not of the objective realm" (Yao 2005, 57; square brackets in the original). For the original Chinese text, see Yao 2005, 92 fn. 53. Yao (2005, 57) points out that the term 'objective realm' (Chinese *jing jie*) is rarely used in the text. When it does appear, it is within the discussion of the interdependence between subject and object, where the terms 'objective realm' and 'object' are effectively synonymous.

However, since not all of these arguments are directly relevant to the present discussion, only the first one (*MV* 43b) will be examined, as it raises reflections that remain central to ongoing debates in the philosophy of mind.

> If [awareness] in itself knows itself, the World Honored One would not admit the existence of wrong views. If a wrong view can know itself as wrong, then it becomes a right view. This is to say that if the wrong view can observe itself as wrong, then it should be called a right view rather than a wrong view. (Yao 2005, 59-60; square brackets in the original)[35]

The Buddha's refusal to deny the existence of wrong views raises questions about the acceptance of self-awareness, a stance that involves several problematic aspects. One issue, only implicitly addressed here, concerns how one accesses one's own mental state. Specifically, how can a view 'observe itself'? Does this occur through conceptual means or in a non-conceptual, direct manner? Furthermore, the reasoning suggested in the passage assumes that when a view observes itself, it simultaneously recognizes its own status as either true or false. This assumption is problematic, as the term 'observe' seems to imply a complex evaluation of the content of a view. On the other hand, a fundamental and widely accepted notion of self-awareness holds that, regardless of the potential falsity of a belief or mental state, one is still aware of having that belief or being in that state. The recognition of falsity is not typically considered an inherent feature of basic self-awareness.

Before further examining the Sarvāstivāda soteriological perspective on self-awareness, it is important to revisit the relationship between self-awareness and omniscience as discussed in Kātyāyaniputra's *Jñānaprasthāna*. This dialogue, previously cited in relation to the Vaibhāṣika perspective, explores the cognition of all *dharma*s as a capability of *jñāna*. However, other sources, such as the *MV*, address the same topic but attribute this ability to *vijñāna*. This raises questions about the relationship between *jñāna* and *vijñāna* and, consequently, whether the Vaibhāṣikas reject self-'consciousness' (*vijñāna*) in the same way they refute self-'awareness' (*jñāna*).[36]

Continuing the line of inquiry inspired by Yao (2005), it is now necessary to summarize some key terminological aspects highlighted in his work. Certain Sarvāstivāda scholars distinguish *jñāna* from

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35   For the original Chinese text, see Yao 2005, 92 fn. 66.

36   Please note that in this paragraph, the term 'self-consciousness' is intentionally distinguished from 'self-awareness' to reflect the difference between self-knowing as related to *vijñāna* and *jñāna*.

vijñāna, attributing the former to all mental activities and the latter specifically to the mind (*MV* 44c). Thus, mind (*citta*) and *vijñāna* are considered synonyms. The Vaibhāṣikas also recognize another distinction between awareness and consciousness: the former is essentially an undefiled *dharma* and serves as the foundation for all undefiled ones while the latter is a defiled *dharma* and forms the basis for all defiled *dharma*s (*MV* 44c). Even though their natures differ, awareness and consciousness share the same function and can take all *dharma*s as their objects. However, when discussing the omniscience of consciousness, certain items are excluded: consciousness itself, as well as the *dharma*s that are associated with and co-exist alongside it – the same exclusions mentioned earlier. Although consciousness does not know itself or its associated mental factors, it is still regarded as omniscient because it encompasses the majority of *dharma*s. For the Vaibhāṣikas, therefore, it is not contradictory to affirm the omniscience of consciousness while rejecting self-consciousness. The resulting model of omniscience does not require cognition of every single *dharma*; rather, knowledge of the majority.

A further issue emerges when comparing the Sarvāstivāda rejection of self-awareness with the Mahāsāṃghika stance: the simultaneity of multiple minds. For the Mahāsāṃghikas, the reason to admit the possibility of two minds functioning simultaneously lies in their observation that processes such as seeing and hearing can occur at the same time. By contrast, the Sarvāstivāda view (*MV* 719c) holds that these consciousnesses "come and go rapidly and only appear to be simultaneous, but actually are not" (Yao 2005, 74).[37] According to this perspective, two minds cannot exist simultaneously in the same mental *continuum*, nor can identical types of mental factors operate at the same time. However, different types of mental factors can function concurrently. This difference clearly highlights how the Vaibhāṣika understanding of omniscience diverges notably from the Mahāsāṃghika account.

2.4   Sautrāntika

To contextualize the Sautrāntika position on self-awareness, Harivarman's (310-390) *Satyasiddhiśāstra* proves to be a valuable source. Recognized as a significant text reflecting Sautrāntika doctrines in their formative phase, it offers insight into the development of a theory of self-awareness through a synthesis of Mahāsāṃghika and Sarvāstivāda views (Yao 2005, 97 ff.).

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37   For the original Chinese text, see Yao 2005, 92 fn. 124.

In this text, Harivarman addresses the topic of self-awareness by presenting a series of arguments that challenge the Mahāsāṃghika position. His critique unfolds within a broader epistemological framework which engages with a central issue in Buddhist thought: the question of whether the mind is one or many. By contrast, as previously noted, the Mahāsāṃghikas and Sarvāstivādas approach the issue from a soteriological perspective, specifically in relation to the topic of omniscience. Harivarman supports the Sautrāntika position on self-awareness, holding that the latter is possible only in successive moments of cognition. He critiques what he identifies as the Mahāsāṃghika account of mind, which, in his understanding, posits a single substantial mind that manifests itself in various forms of consciousness and through different mental factors. Instead, he argues for the 'multiplicity' of minds by denying the existence of mental activities or, more precisely, elevating them to the same status as the mind, thus positing multiple minds (Harivarman, *Satyasiddhiśāstra* 278b).

> There are multiple minds. Why? Consciousness refers to the mind. The consciousness of visual objects is a different [mind], and the consciousness of odors is another different [mind], hence there are multiple minds. (Yao 2005, 101; square brackets in the original)[38]

Yao's commentary on this passage is particularly effective for fully appreciating Harivarman's perspective:

> Harivarman is saying that there exist multiple minds because of the multiplicity of their objects. To a certain extent, every particular object requires a different mind to perceive it. These multiple minds have no chance to arise simultaneously because each of them possesses an independent substance. These minds arise and cease successively the same way as their objects arise and cease successively. (Yao 2005, 101)

The main elements entailed in this line of reasoning are as follows: different objects require different minds, and different minds have distinct substances and occur in different moments. These are key-factors that will always play an important role in discussions on self-awareness, as they constitute the fundamental structure of all cognitive processes.

When discussing whether the mind is one or many, that is, whether it arises as one continuous mind or as multiple successive minds, Harivarman (*Satyasiddhiśāstra* 278b-c) argues as follows:

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[38]   For the original Chinese text, see Yao 2005, 119 fn. 15.

> The grasper differs on account of the difference of the grasped. For instance, a certain person knows his own mind sometimes. How does [the mind] in itself (*svabhāva*) know itself? Eyes do not see themselves; a sword does not cut itself; a finger does not touch its own tip. Hence the mind is not one. (Yao 2005, 102; square brackets in the original)[39]

The two metaphors, the finger and the sword, as seen in the context of the Andhakas and the Vaibhāṣikas, might initially suggest a rejection of the doctrine of self-awareness. However, upon closer examination, it becomes clear that the issue at hand concerns, rather, the singularity or multiplicity of minds. Therefore, the question is not "*whether* the mind can know itself" but rather "*how* it knows itself" (Yao 2005, 103; italics in the original). Whereas the Mahāsāṃghikas hold the view that a single mind knows both itself and other objects, Harivarman maintains that a single mind cannot have two objects, and that different objects (for instance, an external object and the mind knowing it) require distinct minds. This claim recurs frequently throughout the history of Buddhist philosophy and also plays a crucial role, for instance, in phenomenological discourse within the European tradition.

How, then, does Harivarman explain the cognitive phenomenon of self-awareness? In *Satyasiddhiśāstra* 279c, he employs the well-known simile of the lamp – though in a way that has not appeared in the sources examined thus far:

> When a lamp expels darkness, eye-consciousness arises. The eye-consciousness, after arising, can see the lamp as well as things like a jar. (Yao 2005, 103)[40]

In this image, the mind that illuminates other objects corresponds to the lamp, while the mind that knows itself corresponds to eye-consciousness. These are clearly two different minds, reflecting Harivarman's 'different objects-different minds' principle. This, however, leaves unresolved the problem of their different times of occurrence: since eye-consciousness arises following the lighting of the lamp, the implication appears to be that self-awareness occurs after the cognition of other objects (Yao 2005, 103). According to the Sautrāntika view, in a sequence of cognition, mental consciousness (third moment) arises after the emergence of a sense organ and its sensory object (both in the first moment), and after the subsequent arising of a sense consciousness (second moment). When mental

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[39]   For the original Chinese text, see Yao 2005, 119 fn. 17.

[40]   For the original Chinese text, see Yao 2005, 119 fn. 19.

consciousness arises (third moment), it can never directly access the sensory object (first moment) because the latter already belongs to the past. This is because the Sautrāntikas do not share the Sarvāstivāda view of the real existence of the three times mentioned above. Therefore, a past (or future) *dharma* cannot serve as an object of cognition.

This raises the question of how the past and the future can become objects of knowledge. For the Sautrāntikas, this is precisely where the notion of image or aspect (SKT *ākāra*) plays a crucial role, alongside the cognitive function of memory. Memory arises from grasping the cognitive image of an object (Harivarman, *Satyasiddhiśāstra* 288b); in the specific case of mental consciousness, memory enables the conceptualization of this consciousness. According to Yao (2005, 109), since both memory and mental consciousness take past experiences as their object, they are largely identical. Memory itself, given its importance, serves as the fundamental argument for the existence of both self-awareness and external objects.

Harivarman seems to be rejecting the idea of self-awareness but then, in apparent contradiction, applies it to mental consciousness alone – consciousness that is free from dependence on sense organs and sensory objects. Indeed, in *Satyasiddhiśāstra* 364b, Harivarman links self-awareness to yogic practice, thereby introducing a phenomenological perspective on this inner function of mind. In doing so, he appears, at least at first glance, to suggest a potential contradiction with what has previously been claimed regarding the sequential arising of minds over time:

> Here is a saying that mental [consciousness] is self-cognizant. In other words, a yogi, by following his mind, observes that there is no mind in the past or the future, so he knows that the present mind takes this very present mind as object. (Yao 2005, 106; square brackets in the original)[41]

The above passage may help approach self-awareness as pertaining only to mental consciousness, and it does so from a phenomenological standpoint: when yogis observe their own mind, they cannot find it in the past or the future, only in the present. Mental consciousness becomes the object of a mind that arises simultaneously with it. Yao (2005, 106) draws on this passage from Harivarman to explore further the connection with the inner laboratory of yogic practice by proposing a link between self-awareness, understood as an epistemological concept, and 'self-realization' (SKT *pratyātmasaṃvedya*), a specific term with strong soteriological focus, commonly found in Buddhist

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41   For the original Chinese text, see Yao 2005, 119 fn. 28.

texts, particularly within the Yogācāra tradition. Within such a framework, this meditative practice consists in the yogi's mind observing itself and realizing that only the present mind serves as its object; this appears to be the way the yogi establishes self-awareness. In fact, the central thesis of Yao's entire monograph is that self-awareness evolves from being a soteriological issue to an epistemological concern. The pages in which Yao (2005, 123-7) explores this point in greater depth will be revisited in the following chapters, particularly in the context of a more detailed discussion about the connection between self-realization and self-awareness.

Even though, as just seen, Harivarman affirms the existence of self-awareness, in a particular passage (Harivarman, *Satyasiddhiśāstra* 331b), he explicitly states that mental consciousness cannot know itself. This is not contradictory, though, as Harivarman introduces an important conceptual filter that deepens the analysis of self-awareness: the two truths, namely, *saṃvṛti-satya* 'conventional truth' and *paramārtha-satya* 'ultimate truth'. These represent two different levels of reality. For Harivarman, self-awareness is denied at the ultimate level whereas it still exists at the conventional level. Self-awareness is a provisional construct employed by individuals to articulate the mind's capacity for self-knowledge – a conceptual designation that operates at the level of conventional truth. From the standpoint of ultimate reality, however, it is considered nonexistent. The doctrine of the two truths will come to serve as a key lens through which the ontological status of *svasaṃvedana* or *rang rig* is examined throughout the various phases in the historical development of the concept.

Summarized in this brief overview, the main elements of Harivarman's philosophical view of self-awareness illustrate how the Sautrāntika position on this issue began to take shape and be formulated. Yao identifies Harivarman as the earliest Sautrāntika scholar – although generally considered a divergent one – who developed his theory of self-awareness in response to controversies with the Mahāsāṃghika and Sarvāstivāda schools. Harivarman's early project must, therefore, be distinguished from the later and more mature systematization of the Sautrāntika doctrine of self-awareness reported in Candrakīrti's *Madhyamakāvatārabhāṣya*. In this text, while refuting the Yogācāra doctrine, Candrakīrti presents arguments for self-awareness attributed to both the Sautrāntika and Yogācāra traditions, reflecting the outcome of several centuries of philosophical discussions. For now, a brief outline will suffice to grasp the mature arguments proposed by the Sautrāntika advocates of self-awareness and to provide an introductory overview of the main lines of reasoning that will appear in the subsequent Indo-Tibetan discourse on the topic.

As reported by Candrakīrti (*Madhyamakāvatāra*, henceforth *MAv*, 6.73 ff.), the view of the proponents of self-awareness provides three

proofs: one refers to the use of appropriate metaphors, another consists in the memory argument and a third denounces the problem of infinite regress. The first reflects the Mahāsāṃghika tendency to use similes as a means of conceptualizing self-awareness, employing the familiar image of a flame that illuminates both itself and other objects. The second proof relies on one of the most recurrent, effective and well-known arguments developed within the Indian Buddhist tradition in relation to self-awareness. The central point here is that memory pertains to objects that have been experienced, and memories of objects, or of experiences of objects, would not be possible without self-awareness. That is, self-awareness enables awareness to cognize its own experience. The role of memory in Sautrāntika thought has already been mentioned; in the following chapters (§ 3.1.4 and § 3.2.1), it will be shown how the structure of this argument was also employed, albeit in a different way, by Dharmakīrti and Dignāga. The third proof, involving the problem of infinite regress, recurs in nearly every instance of the debate on this topic, both in the Indo-Tibetan Buddhist tradition and in modern discussions. If a consciousness (that sees an object) is not perceived by itself but has to be known by another consciousness, then this second consciousness would, in turn, require yet another to be known. This would lead to an infinite regress that calls into question the very possibility of any knowledge whatsoever, including that of objects, insofar as their apprehension would necessitate knowing the consciousness that apprehends them.

In summary, this section presents Harivarman as an exponent of the Sautrāntika perspective, which synthesizes elements of both the Mahāsāṃghika and Sarvāstivāda traditions. For the first time, the focus on self-awareness shifts from soteriology – where the Mahāsāṃghika and Sarvāstivāda views emerge in connection with the notion of omniscience – to epistemology. Here, in fact, the central debate revolves around whether the mind is single or multiple, as well as questions concerning the timing, object, and substance of consciousness, along with the mental function of memory. Nonetheless, soteriology returns to the forefront when Harivarman suggests that yogic practice is the context in which self-awareness is both experienced and established, perhaps moderating these epistemological concerns by situating the discussion within the realm of meditative self-realization. Finally, Harivarman's contribution to the theme of self-awareness also includes an ontological dimension, namely, the introduction of the two truths framework as a decisive criterion for determining the degree of reality that can be ascribed to self-awareness.

2.5 Yogācāra

Yogācāra accounts of self-awareness necessarily involve consideration of their doxographical subdivision into the Sākāravāda and Nirākāravāda positions. This differentiation is based on the former school's assertion that cognition occurs through an image or aspect (SKT *ākāra*; TIB *rnam pa*) while the latter rejects this view. Thus, before addressing the Yogācāra view of self-awareness, the following sections will offer a brief survey of this doxographical distinction, providing a foundation for its proper understanding.

The term *ākāra* literally means 'form' or 'shape', with a secondary meaning of 'aspect', 'appearance' or 'image'. Indian philosophers, both Buddhist and non-Buddhist, have long discussed the role of *ākāra* in cognition.[42] However, the most debated issue is, perhaps, its ontological status: do the images perceived as objects of cognition belong to awareness itself or do they serve as evidence of an external world?

Behind this single term lies a complex evolution of thought which encompasses not only ontological issues but also soteriological and doxographical ones. From a soteriological point of view, the term *ākāra* refers to the sixteen aspects of the Four Noble Truths (Eltschinger 2014) but can also denote *buddha*'s cognition (Matsuoka 2014), which, according to some Buddhist views, is ultimately free from the duality of an 'objective aspect' (SKT *grāhyākāra*) and a 'subjective aspect' (SKT *grāhakākāra*). With regard to Buddhist accounts of ordinary epistemic acts, in line with the epistemological turn initiated by Dharmakīrti, the notion of *ākāra* is debated in relation to its capacity to represent the true nature of mind or, alternatively, to its being ultimately false. When it comes to philosophical and doxographical concerns, the Sākāravāda position holds that external reality imprints its likeness on to consciousness. By contrast, the Nirākāravāda view maintains that consciousness remains clear and pure even in the act of perceiving external reality, as it is a substance that does not undergo change, despite revealing the forms and features of the objects it apprehends.

To complete this summary, it may be helpful to reconstruct a genealogy of these two branches and highlight the main figures, some of whom were deeply influential in shaping the development of the doctrine of self-awareness. Among the main proponents of the Sākāravāda school are Dignāga (the founder), Dharmapāla, and Dharmakīrti, while, for the Nirākāravāda branch, the lineage begins

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42 On the issue of *ākāra*, cf. Dreyfus 1996; 1997; 2006; Coseru 2012, 102 ff. For Śākya-mchog-ldan's (1428-1507) view on the topic, see Komarovski 2011. For the Sākāravāda and Nirākāravāda positions as they are described by Klong-chen-pa (1308-1364), see Almogi 2009. For further references to the topic of *ākāra*, see Kellner, McClintock 2014 and, in particular, Kellner 2014b.

with Asaṅga (395-470), followed by Vasubandhu and Sthiramati (475-555).

However, tracing the genealogy of the division between these two sub-schools remains quite problematic.[43] Funayama (2007)[44] offers a critical overview of the history of scholarship concerning the distinction between the Sākāra- and Nirākāravāda schools in the Yogācāra-Vijñānavāda tradition, noting that most of this research has been conducted within the context of Tibetan Buddhism. In the 1960s, Kajiyama (1965; 1966, 154-8) shed light on the final stage of Indian Mahāyāna philosophy by examining the controversy between Jñānaśrīmitra (980-1030), a Sākāravādin, and Ratnākaraśānti (ca. eleventh-twelfth century AD), a Nirākāravādin.[45] Other studies have also applied the definitions of *sākāra-* and *nirākāravāda* to earlier Indian texts, dating back to the time of Śāntarakṣita, Dharmakīrti, or even Sthiramati and Dharmapāla. However, as Funayama points out, it is not evident whether the same controversy can be found in these earlier texts. In fact, neither Śāntarakṣita nor his commentator, Kamalaśīla, explicitly employs terms such as *sākāra* or *nirākāra* when referring to the Yogācāra school (Funamaya 2007, 190). The same applies to Dharmakīrti: his *Pramāṇavārttika* (henceforth *PV*) suggests – according to Funayama – that Dharmakīrti was simply unaware of this distinction between the two Yogācāra sub-schools. Thus, Funamaya warns contemporary scholars against the risk of projecting later views on to earlier sources.[46]

Although the genealogies of the two Yogācāra sub-schools are complex and not easily delineated, one figure stands out in any comprehensive account for his role in mediating between their respective positions: Dharmapāla. Included by Katsura (1969) and Yao (2005) in the intellectual genealogy of the Sākāravāda tradition, Dharmapāla is noteworthy for his work on the texts of both Dignāga and Vasubandhu. Notably, Dharmapāla analyzes self-awareness from an

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43   Yao (2005, 122) reconstructs this genealogy relying on Katsura 1969.

44   In order to compare Funamaya's perspective on this genealogy (2007) with the account provided by Kajiyama and Frauwallner, see Kajiyama 1965, 32-4.

45   In the literature on this topic, Kajiyama's (1965) study is particularly worth mentioning, as it examines the controversy between Jñānaśrīmitra and Ratnākaraśānti, addressing the connection between self-awareness and the luminosity of the mind. For further details, cf. Yiannopoulos 2017, 190 ff. For a wider discussion on the topic of reflexive awareness as luminosity in Ratnākaraśānti, see Yiannopoulos 2012, 171 ff. Moreover, the 18th Congress of the International Association of Buddhist Studies devoted a panel to *Prajñāpāramitopadeśa*: "A New Study of Ratnākaraśānti's *Prajñāpāramitopadeśa*" (25 August 2017).

46   When discussing Dignāga's and Dharmakīrti's accounts of self-awareness in this volume, the epistemological role of *ākāra* with respect to self-awareness will be revisited, considering the main proponents and references of the Sākāravāda branch (see § 3.2.1 and § 3.2.3).

epistemological perspective, integrating it into the broader Yogācāra doctrinal framework and elaborating it as an important component of the system. Moreover, Dharmapāla is well-known for introducing an additional layer to the concept of self-awareness: the cognition of self-awareness. While closely following Dignāga's conception of self-awareness, he nevertheless incorporates distinctive features that reflect his own perspective.[47] For Dharmapāla, self-awareness is the substantial basis for the subjective and objective aspects of cognition, and serves as a prerequisite for memory. A mental event, therefore, comprises four main elements: the subjective and objective aspects, self-awareness, and the cognition of self-awareness.[48]

Having laid the groundwork with this brief survey of the two Yogācāra sub-schools, it is now appropriate to consider how self-awareness was understood in early Yogācāra thought, especially in relation to the (alleged) founding figures of the Nirākāravāda tradition. To that end, it is appropriate to begin with two relevant and representative *sūtra* sources, regarded as authoritative by this school. A typical Nirākāravāda position on the concept of self-awareness is cited by Yao (2005, 124) from the *Saddharmalaṅkāvatārasūtra* (10.567-8):

> When it is said that there is something resembling body, property, and abode produced in a dream-like manner, a mind, indeed, is seen under the aspect of duality; but Mind itself is not dualistic. As a sword cannot cut itself, or as a finger cannot touch its own tip, Mind cannot see itself. (Suzuki 1932, 268)[49]

Once again, the images of the sword and the finger appear, this time in a passage that could be seen as aligned with the Yogācāra doctrine, where self-awareness is explicitly denied. The second *sūtra* source Yao picks is the following passage from the *Saṃdhinirmocanasūtra*:

> "Bhagavan, if the image that is the sphere of action of *samādhi*[50] is not different from the mind, how does the mind itself observe the mind itself?"

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47 See also Williams 2009, 100 ff.

48 For specific references to Dharmapāla, see Yao 2005, 143-7.

49 *Saddharmalaṅkāvatārasūtra* 10.567-8: *"dehabhogapratiṣṭhābhaṃ svapnavajjāyate yadi | dvicittatā prasajyeta na ca cittaṃ dvilakṣaṇam || svadhāraṃ hi y athā khaḍgaṃ svāgraṃ vai aṅguliryathā | na chindate na spṛśate tathā cittaṃ svadarśane ||".*

50 This is the specific theme of the dialogue between the Buddha and Maitreya, but here this passage serves to consider the broader issue of the relationship between a mental object and the mind that observes it.

The Bhagavan replied: "Maitreya, although no phenomenon observes any phenomenon, nevertheless, any mind that is generated in that way appears in that way. Maitreya, for instance: given a form, in a perfectly clear round mirror one sees the *form* itself, but one thinks, 'I see an *image*'. The form and the appearance of its image appear as different things. Likewise, the mind that is generated in that way and the sphere of action of *samādhi*, that is, the 'image', also appear as different things". (Italics added)[51]

Yao demonstrates that this passage is not as straightforward as it may seem initially: it is unclear whether the Bhagavan's response can be directly connected with *svasaṃvedana* as the technical concept later formulated by Dignāga. Regarding the perspective expressed in the question, there appears to be an implicit difficulty in accepting that the mind sees – actually, 'observes' or 'understands' (TIB *rtog par bgyid pa*) – itself:

Maitreya's question challenges the fundamental thesis of Yogācāra idealism: the object of the mind is not different from the mind itself. On his view, this thesis faces the same difficulty as the mind seeing itself. (Yao 2005, 125)

51 The Tibetan reads (see Lamotte 1935, 90-1; for textual references, see Lamotte 1935, 9 ff.): "*bcom ldan 'das ting nge 'dzin gyi spyod yul gzugs brnyan de gal te gzugs sems de las tha dad pa ma lags na | sems de nyid kyis sems de nyid la ji ltar rtog par bgyid lags | bka' stsal pa | byams pa de la chos gang yang chos gang la 'ang rtog par mi byed mod kyi | 'on kyang de ltar skyes pa'i sems gang yin pa de ni de ltar snang ngo || byams pa 'di lta ste dper na | gzugs la brten nas me long gi dkyil 'khor shin tu yongs su dag pa la gzugs nyid mthong yang gzugs brnyan mthong ngo snyam du sems te | de la gzugs de dang | gzugs brnyan snang ba de don tha dad par snang ngo || de bzhin du de ltar skyes pa'i sems de dang | ting nge 'dzin gyi spyod yul gzugs brnyan zhes bya ba gang yin pa de'ang de las don gzhan yin pa lta bur snang ngo |*". As for the reading of *gzugs* in the passage "*gal te gzugs sems de las tha dad pa ma lags na*", Powers's (1995, 155) translation differs from the translations provided by Lamotte (1935, 211), Yao (2005, 125), and the Author. It seems difficult to make sense of the (a quasi-oxymoronic?) expression 'physical mind', with which Powers links *gzugs* and *sems*. As for the understanding of the passage "*gzugs nyid mthong yang gzugs brnyan mthong ngo snyam du sems te*", compare, on the one hand, the Author's translation and Powers's version (1995, 155: "form itself is seen […] but one thinks, 'I see an image'"), which entirely corresponds with Yao's translation (2005, 124), with Lamotte's rendering (1935, 212: "on s'imagine voir la matière et voir le reflet"), on the other. Here, whereas Powers, Yao, and the Author share the same reading, Lamotte seems to be conveying a different nuance. For a review of Powers's translation of *Saṃdhinirmocanasūtra* against Lamotte's, see Tillemans 1997.

If, despite holding an idealistic perspective, the early Yogācāra followers found it difficult to conceive of the mind as observing itself,[52] perhaps this is linked to the fact that their theory of self-awareness emphasizes a more soteriological perspective instead (Yao 2005, 123). They tended to interpret it differently, as 'self-realization' achieved through yogic practice – an aspect that will be explored in the next section. It was Dignāga, then, who first transformed this soteriological concern into an epistemological one.

2.6 Nāgārjuna's Specific Contribution

Before this chapter concludes, special attention should be given to Nāgārjuna, a key figure who, rather surprisingly, receives little attention in Yao's (2005) treatment of pre-Dignāga sources on *svasaṃvedana*. Nāgārjuna's approach to self-awareness revolves around the image of a burning lamp or fire in the context of the self-establishment of *pramāṇa*s – that is, epistemically valid cognitions. His work appears, therefore, to intersect with the theme of self-awareness by linking metaphors central to the Indian tradition with an epistemological reflection.

In the Indian tradition, one of the most frequently used analogies to illustrate self-awareness is that of a lamp, which not only illuminates the surrounding space but also simultaneously shines light on itself. In the same way, consciousness is said to be aware of itself at the very moment it perceives external objects. Nāgārjuna follows a similar line of reasoning in the two main sources where he addresses this topic: the *Vigrahavyāvartanī* (henceforth *VV*) (33-9) and the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* (7.8-12). The view Nāgārjuna (*VV* 33) argues against is that: "'Fire illuminates itself as well as other things. Likewise, the *pramāṇa*s establish themselves as well as other things'" (Johnston, Kunst 1978, 26).[53]

The philosophical issue at stake here is whether *pramāṇa*s can be established by themselves. Various arguments supporting this

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52   Yao (2005, 127 ff.) takes into account the figure of the (allegedly) late Vasubandhu referring to his **Buddhadhātu-śāstra*, a work preserved only in its Chinese recension. Yao also shows the proximity that his view about self-awareness has to Harivarman's, namely, in terms of arguing for self-awareness. However, he rejects the image of the lamp as inappropriate, positing only mental consciousness as self-cognizant. The author of **Buddhadhātu-śāstra* bears Sautrāntika influence, but also seems to be oriented towards the Yogācāra position, at least in terms of arguing for a mental consciousness that always accompanies the consciousnesses of the five senses. However, with the help of Yao's access to and comments on the text (Yao 2005, 127-30), no significant addition to the present discourse was found in relation to the implications of self-awareness.

53   Nāgārjuna, *VV* 33: "*dyotayati svātmānaṃ yathā hutāśas tathā parātmānam | svaparātmānāv evaṃ prasādhayanti pramāṇāni ||*".

hypothesis are raised and addressed by Nāgārjuna. To begin with, it is not possible to claim that fire exists initially in darkness, unilluminated, and is then subsequently illuminated. Therefore, it cannot be said to illuminate itself (*VV* 34). If that were the case, fire would also burn itself – an argument that underscores a fundamental philosophical principle: the subject cannot be the object of its own act (*VV* 35). Moreover (*VV* 36), "If, as you say, fire illuminates both other things and itself, then darkness will cover both other things and itself" (Johnston, Kunst 1978, 28).[54]

But this is absurd: darkness does not conceal both itself and other things. Moreover, since illumination is the destruction of darkness, but "there is no darkness in fire", how can fire possibly illuminate?[55] There is no light before fire exists, as there is only darkness, and there is no darkness once fire exists, since darkness and light cannot coexist (Nāgārjuna, *VV* 38). One may argue that fire can expel darkness even without reaching it, but, in response, Nāgārjuna (*VV* 39) states: "then this fire, standing here, would destroy darkness in all the worlds" (Johnston, Kunst 1978, 29),[56] which is clearly absurd (cf. Nāgārjuna, *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* 7.11). Thus, since fire does not expel darkness, it cannot illuminate itself. Nāgārjuna's equivalent assertion in *VV* 51, "The *pramāṇa*s are not established by themselves" (Johnston, Kunst 1978, 34),[57] would later be quoted frequently and "taken to mean that there is no self-consciousness" (Cozort 1998, 159) by subsequent Buddhist tradition.

Nāgārjuna's reasoning stands as a cornerstone in the Mādhyamika refutation of self-awareness, alongside the arguments outlined by Candrakīrti, and remains a pivotal reference in the dGe-lugs philosophical critique of *rang rig*, shaping the discourse on this issue for centuries to come.

2.7 The Problematic Link Between Self-Awareness and Self-Realization

To build on the overview presented in this chapter, a deeper examination of Yao's general thesis is in order. His argument focuses on the transition of *svasaṃvedana* from a soteriological concern to

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[54] Nāgārjuna, *VV* 33: "*yadi ca svaparātmānau tvadvacanena prakāśayatyagniḥ | pracchādayiṣyati tamaḥ svaparātmānaui hutāśa ivā ||*". Cf. Nāgārjuna, *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* 7.12.

[55] Nāgārjuna, *VV* 36; for a translation, see Johnston, Kunst 1978, 118.

[56] Nāgārjuna, *VV* 39: "*sarveṣu lokadhātuṣu tamo 'yamiha saṃsthito hānyat ||*".

[57] Nāgārjuna, *VV* 51: "*naiva svataḥ prasiddhirna*".

an epistemological one, as it gradually evolves from the first to the second phase in the development of the notion of self-awareness.

Yao (2005, 123 ff.) argues that, in the Yogācāra view, the emphasis on the soteriological aspect of self-awareness fully emerges through its connection to a specific aspect of yogic practice known as 'self-realization'. This concept is expressed, as referenced by Kapstein (2000, 110), through the equivalence between *pratyātma-vid* (SKT) and *so so rang rig* (TIB), paralleling Yao's (2005, 126) corresponding pair of terms, *pratyātmasaṃvedya* (SKT) and *so so rang gis rig pa* (TIB). With respect to this connection, two points must be considered.

The first point concerns how Yao introduces this topic within the Yogācāra view, specifically by referring to a short list of possible understandings of *rang rig* drawn from the Tibetan scholar Tsong-kha-pa Blo-bzang-grags-pa's *dBu ma la 'jug pa'i rang 'grel dang rnam bshad dgongs pa rab gsal* (2009, 347.11-13). Yao (2005, 127) quotes a particular passage from Tsong-kha-pa to interpret self-realization as an aspect of the broader concept of self-awareness within early Yogācāra thought. Thus, Tsong-kha-pa's quotation serves as a convenient tool for Yao to emphasize, or even lend legitimacy to, the inclusion of the soteriological theme of self-realization within the wider discourse on self-awareness. However, a closer examination of this quotation reveals that Yao's use of it is not fully substantiated:

> *de'i phyir de 'dra ba'i rang rig bkag pas rnal 'byor pa so so rang rang gis de kho na nyid rig pa'i rang rig bkag pa dang | 'jig rten pas ngas nga rang rig ces pa'i tha snyad kyi don gyi rang rig bkag zer ba ni blun po'i gtam mo ||.* (Tsong-kha-pa Blo-bzang-grags-pa 2009, 347.11-13)

> Therefore, it is foolish to claim that, by refuting such a [i] self-awareness, one refutes [ii] self-awareness in the sense of a yogi's individual realization of suchness and one refutes the [iii] self-awareness in the conventional sense, as when ordinary people say: "I understand by myself". (Numbers added)[58]

This passage contains three instances of the term *rang rig*, each with a distinct gloss: (i) *rang rig* in its technical sense (which is clear from the context); (ii) *rang rig* as 'the yogi's individual realization of suchness' (*rnal 'byor pa so so rang rang gis de kho na nyid rig pa'i rang rig*); and (iii) *rang rig* as a conventional expression meaning 'I understand by myself' (*ngas nga rang rig*). While refuting the first, Tsong-kha-pa does not refute the last two meanings.

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[58] Cf. Yao 2005, 123-4 for his translation.

Yao (2005, 124) identifies two key points in Tsong-kha-pa's statement. First, he notes that Tsong-kha-pa interprets (ii) self-realization as an element within the broader concept of self-awareness. Additionally, he observes that

> [Tsong-kha-pa] links it [self-realization] especially to the yogis (*rnal 'byor pa*). By 'yogi' he does not necessarily mean the Yogācāra (*rnal 'byor spyod pa*) because the yogi can refer to any yogic practitioner in various tradition of Buddhism. But it is also true that the Yogācāra tradition has a strong link to the practice of yogis. (Yao 2005, 124)

Thus, in an effort to strengthen the connection between yogic practice in general and the Yogācāra approach specifically, Yao introduces the overarching framework of a 'broader sense of self-cognition' to reinforce the arguably loose link between the epistemological and soteriological purposes for positing self-awareness, which correspond, respectively, to the first and second glosses of Tsong-kha-pa's quotation. However, in the lines of the text that precede those cited, Tsong-kha-pa does not indicate explicitly an intention to categorize or classify *rang rig* as a broader concept. Instead, the above quotation should be understood within the common tendency in Tibetan philosophical literature to present 'terminological divisions' (TIB *sgras brjod rigs kyi sgo nas dbye ba*) of a concept. This implies that, within such subdivisions, some items may not necessarily represent the concept itself but are simply designated by the same term. Therefore, unlike the first of the three meanings, the second and third glosses mentioned above can be labeled as *rang rig* without actually bearing that meaning. In fact, while the technical concept of *rang rig* emerges as a combination of 'reflexivity' and 'cognition', that is, some sort of cognition of oneself, the latter two do not refer to a 'reflexive' cognition but rather to a type of cognition that occurs 'within' a person, 'by' and 'for' themselves. Although Yao attempts to unify these three meanings under a broad overarching category of self-awareness, this book intends to focus on the term's most technical usage.

However, what has just been discussed should not preclude a second consideration regarding Yao's claim about the link between yogic self-realization and self-awareness. Broadly speaking, the relationship between the epistemological and soteriological implications of self-awareness is complex, a theme that will be explored in various contexts in the chapters to follow. In his insightful review, Kapstein remarks on Williams's monograph on self-awareness (1998), stating that

there is very good reason to hold that *pratyātma-vid* has no special relationship in Indian Buddhism with Cittāmatra and that the concept in question belongs even to very early Buddhism. (Kapstein 2000, 112)

This concept refers more broadly to the adept's intuitive realization that one "must make by and for [oneself]" and certainly, in its original meaning, has "nothing whatsoever to do with epistemological theories of reflexive self-awareness" (Kapstein 2000, 113).[59] Thus, the key point here, once again, is that technical terms must be properly distinguished. Yao is fully aware of Kapstein's perspective, which is grounded in Sanskrit and Tibetan texts, but he argues for a more nuanced and complex approach to the relationship between these two notions. He does so by examining the ambiguity found in Chinese sources – which Kapstein does not address – where the term *zi zheng* could refer to either *pratyātmasaṃvedya* or *svasaṃvedana*. For Yao (2005, 126), this ambiguity challenges a strict distinction between the two concepts. While textual sources and technical terminology must be approached with caution, the vast variety of contexts and the specific nuances of the accounts in which this connection is presented make it difficult to reach a definitive conclusion about the nature of this link.

At the close of this chapter on the doctrinal background of *svasaṃvedana* prior to its formulation in Buddhist epistemology, the philosophical elements and controversies explored thus far, guided by Yao's valuable survey, should be kept in mind as integral pieces of the broader philosophical puzzle surrounding the notion of self-awareness. In the next chapters, this will function as the foundation for the subsequent unfolding of the Indo-Tibetan tradition and, in the third and final part of the volume, for a consideration of the relationships between the Buddhist views and the contemporary studies on consciousness.

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59 On the distinction between the concept of *svasaṃvedana* (*rang rig*) and the general Mahāyāna Buddhist idea of *pratyātmavedya* or *vedanīya* (*so so rang* [*gi/gis*] *rig* [*par bya ba*]), that is, a sort of interiorized awareness, one's intuitive realization that one must make by and for oneself, cf. Yao 2002, 124, 126-7; Kapstein 2002, 109-18; Seyfort Ruegg 2002, 221-2 fn. 120.