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CHAPTER ONE

Introducing *Svasamvedana* — and Its Two Types

In a paper 'On *rang rig*' published over ten years ago I noted an observation made by the Eighth Karma pa Mi bskyod rdo rje that there were many earlier commentators to the *Mahyamakāvatāra* who understood Candrakīrti's refutation of *inter alia* self-awareness (*svasamvedana* or *svasamvitti*; Tibetan: *rang rig*) to be a refutation solely from the ultimate, and not the conventional, point of view. Mi bskyod rdo rje refers in particular to the infamous (from a dGe lugs point of view) Sa skya pair Go ram pa bSod nam seng ge and Shākya mchog ldan, and in my earlier paper I briefly discussed among other things the defense of this way of reading the Prāsaṅgika refutation of self-awareness found in a commentary to the *Mahyamakāvatāra* by Go ram pa bSod nam seng ge.¹ An approach that sees the refutation of *svasamvedana* as occurring on only the ultimate level and not conventionally is also known to Tsong kha pa's pupil and suc-

¹ See Williams (1983), reprinted below as Appendix 2.

cessor rGyal tshab rje, for he mentions it disparagingly in the context of a discussion of the other great source for the Prāsāṅgika treatment of *svasamvedana*, Śāntideva's *Bodhicaryāvatāra*.² Not surprisingly, given his context, here rGyal tshab rje specifically mentions previous commentators to the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* as not properly understanding Śāntideva's purport on this issue. For Tsong kha pa the nonexistence of self-awareness *even conventionally* is one of the 'eight great difficult points' (*akā' gras chen po bryad*) of the Madhyamaka which serve to distinguish the correct understanding of Nāgārjuna, and therefore in fact Prāsāṅgika Madhyamaka, from other Buddhist philosophical traditions (see Tsong kha pa 1970). For Tsong kha pa and rGyal tshab rje the simple nonexistence on any level of *svasamvedana* is a particular feature of Prāsāṅgika Madhyamaka, and the two great Prāsāṅgika refutations are contained in the *Madhya-makāvatāra* and *Bodhicaryāvatāra* of Candrakīrti and Śāntideva respectively, both members (the principal members) of an identifiable (sub-)school of Buddhist thought, identified through their correct understanding of the eight great difficult points.³ As one of Mi

² See rGyal tshab rje (1973), p. 222: 'di ni rang rig med par dran pa skye ba'i rigs pa mkhas pa'i dbang pos mdzad pa phul du byung ba zhig snang ste spyod 'jug gi bshad pa byed pa rnam kyis ji bzhin du ma thon pa 'dra'o //...spyod 'jug gi dgongs pa ni tha snyad du rang rig 'gog pa mhn zhes pa ni rgyal sras chen po'i bzhed pa gran min zhes gsung ngo //.

³ Cf. the *Spyod 'jug shes rab le'u'i spyi don rim par phye ba Zab mo rten 'byung gi de kho na nyid yang gsal sgron me* by Thub bstan chos kyi grags pa (1990b), p. 756: gzhung 'di dang dbu ma 'jug pa gnyis kar don dam du ma zad tha snyad du 'ang rang rig bkag pa yin te /. This text was recently published in China together with two other texts on the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* by Thub bstan chos kyi grags pa (= Mi nyag Kun bzang bsod nams), who although

pham's vigorous dGe lugs pa critics, the 'Bras spungs lama blo bzang dpal ldan bstan 'dzin (Tre bo brag dkar sprul sku), put it in an attack on Mi pham's own defense of the conventional status of self-awareness, it is necessary to be able to explain the issue of *svasamvedana* without conflating the higher and lower tenet-systems.⁴

In order not to beg any questions, I have chosen at this stage to translate *svasamvedana/rang rig* by the reasonably literal 'self-awareness', understood here as consciousness aware *in some sense* of itself rather than consciousness aware of *a Self*, an *ātman*, which would of course be unacceptable to a Buddhist. We shall see, however, that the use of 'rang rig' by Mi pham—affirmed by him as existing conventionally and acceptable as such even for the Prāsāṅgika Mādhyamika—corresponds to a particular emphasis found in the interpretation given by Śāntarakṣita, and in that context I shall sometimes translate it, where I give a translation at all, more precisely by 'reflexive awareness' or 'the reflexive nature of awareness'. This switch in transla-

clearly a dGe lugs pa was a pupil of several 19th century rNying ma pa lamas associated with the *ris med* movement and appears to be a favorite writer on the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* with the present Dalai Lama. See Dalai Lama (1994), pp. 7-8. For a recent translation of his *Spyod 'jug shes rab le'u'i gzhung 'gral Zab mo rten 'byung gi de kho na nyid gsal ba'i sgron me* see Khenchen Kunzang Palden and Minyak Kunzang Sönam (1993).

⁴ Blo bzang dpal ldan bstan 'dzin's attack is contained in his *Zab mo dbu ma'i gnad bryod pa blo gsal dga' ba'i gam*. It is a rather impatient criticism of Mi pham's commentary (1975a) to the ninth chapter of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, and is quoted extensively by Mi pham in his reply (1975b). For the names of blo bzang dpal ldan bstan 'dzin and his text see *ibid.* p. 101. On not mixing up higher and lower tenet systems see his comment on pp. 199-200: grub mtha' gong 'og gi lugs [200] namns so so nas ma 'dres par 'chad dgos pa'i phyir ro //.

tion in the light of Śāntarakṣita's understanding corresponds, I suggest, to an ambiguity (or at least a systematic lack of clarity) in the use of the concept of *svasanvedana* in Buddhist writings.

This ambiguity can be seen reflected in a convenient explanation given by the dGe lugs lama Thubstan chos kyi grags pa (Mi nyag Kun bzang bsod nams) in his *Spyi don* to the ninth chapter of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. It takes as its starting point an exposition of the *pūrvavāpaka* by the Svātantrika Mādhyamika Bhāvaviveka:

As it is said in [Bhāvaviveka's] *Tarkajvālā*: 'According to the Cittamātrīn, consciousness has a twofold appearance. It appears to itself and it appears as the object. The consciousness which appears as the object—having taken on the aspect of an external object—becomes an object for the consciousness which appears to itself.' Thus is set forth the position of the *pūrvavāpaka*.

(i) That which is spoken of as appearing to itself is the subjective aspect. That which is spoken of as appearing as the object is the objective aspect. That very objective aspect which has taken on the aspect of the object is explained as the object of the subjective aspect. Therefore, the experience of the objective aspect by the subjective aspect is explained as the meaning of 'self-awareness'. Thus what is called self-awareness is a separate subjective aspect.⁵

⁵ Is the self-awareness the result of the cognition by the subjective aspect—the *experience* of the objective aspect by the subjective aspect—or identical with the subjective aspect itself? This lack of clarity is reflected also in other sources. Dignāga states that the self-awareness is the result of the perceptual situation, the

(ii) Accompanying all the consciousnesses that are aware of others there is also a mere luminosity, a mere awareness, of its own nature, turned solely inwards, without dependence on the external object, and [here] all the dual-appearances of object and subject are posited as a mistake.⁶

Thus in an experience of seeing blue (a) the eye-consciousness takes on the aspect (*ākāra/nam pa*) of blue. This eye-consciousness with the aspect of blue is the objective aspect (*grāhyākāra/gzung nam*).⁷ Such might

pramāṇaphala, and Dharmapāla appears to have taken Dignāga as distinguishing between the subjective aspect and the resultant self-awareness. See Hattori (1968), p. 28 (*Pramāṇasamuccaya* 1:9a and 10) and relevant notes, particularly 1:67. But other sources (as here, admittedly dGe lugs) are clear that the self-awareness is the subjective aspect itself. See, for example, I Gang skyā rol pa'i rdo rje cited in Klein (1991), p. 164 and text p. 119, and Phur bu loog in Newland (1992), p. 203.

⁶ Thub bstan chos kyi grags pa (1990b), p. 752: rtoḡ ge 'bar ba las / sems tsam pas nam shes ni gnyis su snang ste / rang snang ba dang yul du snang ba'o // yul du snang ba'i nam shes ni phyi rol gyi yul gyi nam par gyur nas rang snang ba'i nam shes kyi yul du 'gyur ro zhes phyogs snga'i 'dod pa bkod pa ste / rang snang ba zhes pa 'dzin rnam dang / yul du snang ba zhes pa gzung nam dang / yul gyi nam par gyur pa'i gzung nam de nyid 'dzin nam gyi yul du bshad pas 'dzin nam gyis gzung nam myong ba rang rig gi don du bshad do // des na rang rig ces pa ni 'dzin rnam yan gar ba ste gzhan rig gi shes pa thams cad kyi sieng na rang nyid gsal tsam dang rig tsam pa phyi rol gyi yul la ltos med du kha nang kho nar phyogs shing yul yul can gyi gnyis nam thams cad log pa zhiḡ la 'jog go // . Thub bstan chos kyi grags pa has taken most of this from mKhas grub rje's *sTong thun chen mo*. See mKhas grub rje (1972), pp. 418-9, and Caberón (1992), pp. 345-6.

⁷ According to Dignāga the objective aspect itself has two aspects, those of blue and cognition. See *Pramāṇasamuccaya* 1:11ab and *vyūhi*, and Hattori's note 1:70. See also Matilal (1986), pp. 151-2, and Klein (1986), p. 113. For Cittamātra (*pace* certain

be called 'seeing blue', but if it is only seeing blue then clearly its object is blue and it is not *conscious of* seeing blue, a mental act for which the object would be not blue but 'seeing blue'. That is, it is not seeing that one sees blue, it is not knowing that one knows. If consciousness of blue is 'seeing blue', then consciousness of seeing blue is 'seeing [seeing blue]', i.e., seeing *that* one sees blue. If it is seeing blue but it is not conscious of seeing blue then, it is argued, there is no real seeing blue at all. As Śāntaraksita put it in his *Tattvasamgraha*, if one does not know that one knows then the consciousness itself is unknown. If the consciousness itself is unknown then it could not know other objects.⁸

contemporary interpretations) it seems that the eye-consciousness with the aspect of (in this case) blue is *all* there is. There is no external object causing the eye-consciousness with the aspect of blue. The causes are internal 'seeds'. Thus the 'object' is in reality the objective aspect (at least for *sākāravāda* Cittamātra). For Sautrāntika there is still an external object acting as a cause for the eye-consciousness with the aspect of blue, although we know from the history of Western philosophy that once an 'objective aspect' (perception? sense-datum?) has been introduced between the perceptual object and its cognition some form of idealism becomes a strong temptation.

⁸ See *Tattvasamgraha* (Dwarikadas Shastri ed.) 2020-2021. For an extensive account drawing on the Nyāya critique of the Buddhist position see Matilal (1986), ch. 5. Śāntaraksita is going to use this point to show how in fact the only coherent real sense of 'self-awareness' is not a result of the subjective aspect experiencing the objective aspect, but is that inherent self-knowing, i.e., not being known by anything else, which is necessary at some point (and the sooner the better) in order to prevent an infinite regress here (knowing that one knows that one knows...etc.). That is obviously a different sense of 'self-awareness' from the subjective aspect experiencing the objective aspect. I shall be using 'self-awareness (i)' for the self-awareness we are discussing at the moment, a result of the subjective aspect taking the objective aspect as its object. I shall use 'self-aware-

In order for knowing that one knows to occur and therefore, it is maintained, for a proper perceptual act to take place, it is argued here that (b) the eye-consciousness with the aspect of blue has to become the object of an awareness *that* it is an eye-consciousness with an aspect of blue. This second awareness is said to be the result of a separate subjective aspect (*grāhakaṛa/dzin man*) which accompanies and experiences the eye-consciousness with the aspect of blue. Thus far it appears to be an awareness which takes an object, although that object is a simultaneous consciousness in the same person's mental continuum. Therefore, *this* model of self-awareness is patterned on an awareness of others (*gṛhan nī*), those things normally posited as outside the consciousness continuum. It is similar to, although apart from anything else because of its posited universality (it is always occurring wherever there is consciousness) it is not the same as, introspective awareness, an awareness which can sometimes be employed in order to observe one's own mental acts. Thus far also this form of self-awareness is dualistic in the sense that if this is what occurs then the subjective aspect and the objective aspect are not literally and in all respects the *same*, nor are they experienced as the same, even if they occur.

ness (ii)' or 'reflexive awareness' or 'the reflexive nature of awareness' for the sense of inherent self-knowing, i.e. not requiring a further knower, which terminates any tendency towards infinite regress. It seems that self-awareness (i) requires self-awareness (ii) but the latter is logically independent of it, for not all traditions accept self-awareness (i), although (Śāntaraksita and Mi pham are going to maintain) *any* explanation of consciousness—including crucially explanations even by Mādhyamikas of consciousness as a conventional phenomenon—will require self-awareness (ii).

cur in the same consciousness continuum.⁹ This point is made quite strongly in referring to a separate (*yan gar ba*) subjective aspect. Therefore, the subjective aspect here results in 'self-awareness (i)' in the sense that there is not as such an awareness of something outside its own mental continuum (the present stage of person *x*'s own aggregate continuum of *cittacaitta*).

⁹ As we shall see, in the technical language of later dGe lugs exegesis, they are one entity but different isolates (*ngo bo gzig ldog pa tha dad*). That is to say, the self-awareness is not a different consciousness from the (object-) perceiving consciousness, but they are not the same in the sense that their names have the same meaning (i.e., mean literally the same thing and their referents cannot be distinguished even by a conceptual consciousness). They are separable by thought. Although it is not difficult to see what the device of *ngo bo gzig ldog pa tha dad* is getting at, unraveling the exact logic of this much-used dGe lugs strategy (particularly with reference to explaining the relationship between the two truths—see Newland (1992), ch. 4) may not be easy. It is clearly not a case of Frege's distinction between sense and reference. To use Frege's example, it is not like 'the morning star' and 'the evening star', which are two expressions with different meanings that can occur in propositions with different truth values, and yet they have the same referent. Perhaps the matter is more one of psychology—an ability to make an often perfectly real mental distinction between two things versus the actual physical ability to separate them. Anyway, this dGe lugs device for explaining the relationship between self-awareness and the objective aspect is the result of a long consideration of the problem, and rests partly on further factors of reflexivity which I shall discuss subsequently. At this point in our discussion it also has problems given the reference to the subjective aspect as *separate* from the objective aspect. Clearly, the subjective aspect *does* take the objective aspect as an object, and if *x* takes *y* as an object their difference would appear *prima facie* to be more than just a difference for thought. What this means, and whether it is coherent, relates to some of the Prāsaṅgika criticisms of the notion of *svasamvedana* (see here, for example, Klein (1986), p. 113).

What self-awareness, self-consciousness, is aware of here is its own (object-taking) consciousness. But it is not said *here* to be nondualistically aware of *itself*, i.e. reflexive in a way which would render it meaningless to speak of its taking itself as an *object*. Rather, it is the result of a subject(ive aspect) aware of a conceptually (and also phenomenologically?) different object(ive aspect).

The principal argument for self-awareness—in fact what I have called self-awareness (i)—is said by Thub bstan chos kyi grags pa to be the argument from memory (1990b, pp. 752-3). It is an argument which appears to have originated with Dignāga (*Pramāṇasamuccaya* 1:11d), and is widely referred to both by those who advocate *svasamvedana* and those like Candrakīrti (*Madhyamakāvāta* 6:74-5) and Śāntideva (*Bodhicaryāvatāra* 9:23) who would deny it. I have dealt with this argument elsewhere, mainly with reference to its treatment in Candrakīrti's *Madhyamakāvāta* and Tsong kha pa's comments (see Appendix 2 below). I do not intend further to discuss the argument as such here. It is relevant to our current concerns, however, just to note its broad structure.

Dignāga tells us that 'one does not see the recollection of that object which has not been experienced' (*nyams su ma myong bar don dran pa ni mtshong ba med de*).¹⁰ To quote from my previous description of the argument:

¹⁰ From Kanakavarman and Dad pa'i shes rab's version of the *Ytū* on *Pramāṇasamuccaya* 1:11d (Hattori (1968), p. 185). Hattori (pp. 110-1) explains 1:11d with reference also to other sources as meaning that 'Whatsoever is recollected has been experienced before. The recollection is an effect (*kārya*) of the previous experience (*anubhava*). Thus the reason "mṛteḥ" [from recollection] (K. 11c) is *kārya-ketu*..., and effectively proves that the cognition itself has been experienced or self-cognised before....'

When I remember that I sensed blue at a former time the sensation is a cause, although not the only cause, of the memory. In remembering—and in the Buddhist discussion of memory—I think we can see an example of a particular case of *reflective* awareness, awareness taking as its object another awareness which occurred previously—the awareness which serves as the referent of the memory act is seen to have both subjective and objective elements. That is, Tsong kha pa explains, when we remember, the memory image is seen to be composed of ‘formerly *this* was seen’ and ‘it was seen *by me*’. Or, as Tsong kha pa expressed it elsewhere, when I remember that I truly saw blue there is a memory of blue and a memory of seeing blue. Thus in the original act there must have been the sensation of blue and also the sensation of seeing blue.¹¹

The argument is, therefore, an argument for two elements in the original experience irreducible to each other. There is an eye-consciousness of blue and there is another element in the consciousness experience which is taking that eye-consciousness of blue as an object. This is shown by the two elements in recollection. One can remember *that* one experienced blue because one not only experienced blue but also *knew that* one experienced blue. If a person did not know that he or she experienced blue, then how could that person remember *experiencing* blue, and therefore remember blue?

¹¹ Williams (1983) pp. 324-5; Appendix 2 below. The references to Tsong kha pa are to Tsong kha pa (1973), p. 175 and Tsong kha pa (1970), p. 25.

I have suggested that the model for self-awareness (i) is awareness of others, awareness of external referents. In Cittamātra the external referent as a cause for the eye-consciousness taking on the aspect of blue is simply eliminated, and one is left with only the subjective aspect taking as its referent the objective aspect in a resultant experience which is really simply *svasamvedana*. There is thus really a nondual flow of self-aware consciousness (the *paratantrasvabhāva*) experienced *as if* divided into subject and object.¹² Inasmuch as we unenlightened beings mistakenly think that there is a subject polarized against an external object (the *parikalpitasvabhāva*) this can be related to the structure of consciousness as subjective aspect (*grāhākāra*) polarized against the objective aspect (*grāhyākāra*). In other words not only is the model used to explain self-awareness (i) based on awareness of external others, it actually is indeed the Cittamātra explanation of the awareness of others as if external.

I have argued elsewhere (Williams 1994) for seeing the ontological opposition of Cittamātra to Madhyamaka as based on the (intuitively quite convincing) Abhidharma claim that there must be a real substance (*dravya*) in order for there to be conceptual constructs (*prajñapti*). To claim, as Madhyamaka clearly does, that literally everything is simply a conceptual construct (*prajñāpīnātra*, i.e. all *dharma*s are lacking in inherent existence (*nīsvabhāva*)) is in Vaibhāsika Abhidharma terms and, I suggest, Citta-

¹² This point is made quite clear by Dignāga in *Pramāṇasamuccaya* 1:10: yadābhāṣaṃ prameyaṃ tat-pramāṇaphalate punah / grāhākākrasamvitti trayam nātaḥ prthakkrtaṃ // = Tib. (Kanakavarman and Dad pa'i shes rab): gang lar snang ba de gsal bya / tshad ma dang de'i 'bras bu ni / 'dzin man rig pa'o de yi phyir / de gsum tha dad du ma byas // . See also Hatton's note 1:65.

mātra terms also, quite incoherent. No matter how clever the Madhyamaka arguments are, they must involve misusing the concept '*prajñāpiti*'; and if taken literally would amount to nihilism in spite of the Madhyamaka claim to deny nihilism in favor of an equation of emptiness and dependent origination. To say that all things are conceptual constructs is to say that *all* things are constructed but patently are not constructed out of anything. Ontologically in opposing a nihilism which it was sure resulted from complete *nīśvabhāvatā* Cītamātra had to involve a *dravya*, and this meant the inherent existence of something. Given the Abhidharma framework, not to mention the requirements of rationality, this was thought to be coherent and sensible.¹³

¹³ I want to dwell a bit further on these points, because they seem to me important. There has been a tendency in recent scholarship in both Japan and the West to portray the history of Buddhist thought as a series of footnotes to Nāgārjuna. I suggest this has seriously distorted our assessment of the material. It used to be common to portray Buddhism as divided into two 'schools', Hinayāna and Mahāyāna. Fortunately we are now beginning to appreciate that in its Indian origins, and probably always in India, Mahāyāna was a minority vision with multifarious associated practices within what could better be termed 'Mainstream Buddhism'. Those (almost certainly by far the majority) who failed to adopt the Mahāyāna vision were said polemically by the Mahāyāna to be followers of a 'Hinayāna'. In fact what we have is simply Buddhism, with Mahāyāna within it as a minority aspiration. Likewise I suspect it is wrong (even if, for example, it is done by Tibetans) to portray Buddhist thought as divided into equal rival schools of, for example, Vaibhāsika Abhidharma, Sautrāntika, Madhyamaka and Yogācāra. Rather, Sautrāntika, Madhyamaka and Yogācāra occur in different ways within a framework supplied by the Abhidharmas. In a sense, Buddhist philosophical thought is Abhidharma, and it is to the Abhidharma framework that we must go if we are to understand what is

really going on. The history of Buddhist philosophical thought is actually a series of footnotes to the Abhidharma. The Abhidharma is an elaboration of a basic Buddhist division between the ways things are and the ways things seem to be, with the way things seem to be constructed through mental imputation, reification and conceptualization out of the way things are. In Vaibhāsika Abhidharma the constructs are referred to as conceptualized existents (*prajñāpīṭṭvat*), what I call 'secondary existents', and those reals out of which things are constructed are substantial existents (*dravyasat*), my 'primary existents'. In Vaibhāsika Abhidharma at least, entities which have primary existence are also *dharmas*, and said to have a *svabhāva*. Secondary existents, conceptual constructs, are not *dharmas* and are *nīśvabhāva*. Thus the Madhyamaka claim that all is *nīśvabhāva* is equivalent to a claim that all is *prajñāpīṭṭvat*, that there are no *dravyas*, and even *dharmas* are not *dharmas* in the (Vaibhāsika) Abhidharma sense. As is well-known, the Madhyamaka seems to see an implied incompatibility between having a *svabhāva* and dependent origination. This is an argument derived within Madhyamaka. It would not be acceptable to a Vaibhāsika. It is self-evidently absurd from an Abhidharma point of view to argue that *all* things are conceptual constructs, for that would mean that they are constructs but not constructed out of or upon anything. Madhyamaka reasoning must be at fault somewhere, and the place to look is in the equation of *nīśvabhāva*—if the term *svabhāva* is being used in the Vaibhāsika sense—with dependent origination. One reason why some modern scholars have wanted to argue that there is no fundamental ontological difference between Madhyamaka and Yogācāra Cītamātra, I suspect, is that the nondual consciousness stream (= *paratantrasvabhāva*) in Cītamātra is a stream, a continuum, and therefore in Madhyamaka terms must be *nīśvabhāva* and should therefore have the weakest possible rather than strongest possible ontological status. Each moment of that continuum is the result of causes and therefore impermanent. Thus each moment too must be *nīśvabhāva*. Therefore, Cītamātra could not be teaching an inherently existent (*śasvabhāva*) nondual consciousness continuum. These, however, are precisely *Mādhyamika* arguments, resting on an equation of dependent origination and emptiness, *nīśvabhāvatā*. Once this equation is granted, of course, the ar-

gument follows and we soon find that all things have only *prajñāpīṣat*. If we return the debate to the Abhidharma framework, however, and look at Cittamātra ontology within that context then the issues begin to appear a little different. Within the Abhidharma framework, quite reasonably, it is absurd for all things to have only *prajñāpīṣat*, for all things to be constructs. If literally all things were constructs this would indeed be quite simply equivalent to saying that nothing exists at all. I was once asked why it was, since the Madhyamaka arguments seem so clear and to some so compelling, all Buddhists did not adopt Madhyamaka? The answer is that for an Abhidharmika—and, I suggest, a follower of Yogācāra—the conclusion that Madhyamaka amounted to nihilism did not rest on a misunderstanding of Madhyamaka (a failure to understand that emptiness does not equal nothing at all, but is an equivalent of dependent origination). It rested rather on an understanding that there is something very strange in maintaining that *all* is a conceptual construct (i.e., *nīsvabhāva*). Even if the Mādhyamika says he or she is a not a nihilist, in fact, if the Mādhyamika does not accept any *dravya* at all, then he or she is playing with words and must be a nihilist nevertheless. The Buddhist opponents of Madhyamaka knew their Madhyamaka perfectly well, including the equation of emptiness and dependent origination. They just felt (with at least arguably good reason) that it was all absurd. Thus the crucial opposition for understanding the relationship between Madhyamaka and Cittamātra ontology is not *svabhāva::nīsvabhāva* (= dependent origination), which loads the dice in Madhyamaka terms, but the central Abhidharma opposition between *dravyasat* and *prajñāpīṣat*. In terms of *this* opposition, whoever says that it is not the case that all things have *prajñāpīṣat* must be saying that at least one thing is a *dravya*. This is a crucial ontological opposition, for *dravyasat* is the strongest sort of ontological status. Thus if any tradition says that not all things are *prajñāpīṣat* (because this amounts to nihilism) that tradition is marking the strongest sort of ontological difference with Madhyamaka. We do not need to focus on the issue of *svabhāva* as such in order to identify strong ontological opposition. Nevertheless, *in Abhidharma terms* this *dravya* must have a *svabhāva*, whether it is dependently originated or not. It is clear that early Yogācāra Cittamātra texts were attacking a

What we are seeing now in the argument for self-awareness (i) is an epistemological theory showing that the one *dravya* which serves as a substratum for conceptual construction in Cittamātra is, as a matter of fact, nondual self-aware consciousness, self-aware because there is no other thing for it to be aware of, and therefore self-aware in that a subjective aspect of consciousness takes an objective aspect of consciousness as its object. The argument for *svasamvedana* in this Cittamātra context is intimately involved with the argument for nondual consciousness-only, and combines with the need for a *dravya* to give what seems to me to be the characteristically Cittamātra perspective of an inherently-existing nondual consciousness continuum which is the substratum for that polarization into postulated inherently separate subjects and objects, a polarization which forms the root delusion, the illusion of duality. In arguing for *svasamvedana* in this

tradition which held that all things have only *prajñāpīṣat* (See my paper 'An argument for Cittamātra'. See also Williams (1989), ch. 4). Thus they can only be attacking Madhyamaka, for Madhyamaka was the only Buddhist system which maintained that all things have only *prajñāpīṣat* (= *nīsvabhāva*). In holding that at least one thing is not *prajñāpīṣat* the Yogācāra clearly marked the strongest possible ontological difference from Madhyamaka. Alternatively, if Yogācāra also held that all things are *prajñāpīṣat* (note that the question here is whether they hold that all things are *prajñāpīṣat*, not *nīsvabhāva* which is a term 'contaminated' by Madhyamaka associations), then Yogācāra is not a complementary philosophical tradition to Madhyamaka. It actually is Madhyamaka. What we find in Yogācāra Cittamātra, therefore, is a reassertion of the Abhidharma *prajñāpīṣat::dravyasat* opposition which had been overruled (through *dravyasat* as a null category) by Madhyamaka in a way which in Abhidharma (= 'Mainstream' Buddhist philosophical) terms must equal nihilism. It is perhaps not entirely surprising, therefore, that we have also a Yogācāra Abhidharma.

sense of self-awareness (i) one is thus close to arguing for *cittamātra*, and an argument for *cittamātra* involves a vision of ontology in opposition to Mādhyanaka which (with the exception of Śāntarakṣita and his followers) usually led to a view of the ultimate and inherent existence of *citta* when correctly understood in its nondual sense. Therefore, in opposing *svasamvedana* in general, and the memory argument in particular inasmuch as it is involved with this vision of *svasamvedana* (self awareness (i)), Mādhyanika writers like Candrakīrti and Śāntideva were opposing both something which could serve as an example in the reasoning proving *cittamātra* (an example where consciousness takes as its referent not an external object but itself, consciousness), and also an element closely involved in the demonstration of one inherently-existing ultimate nondual self-aware consciousness.¹⁴ It is important to appreciate this point

¹⁴ See, for example, *Bodhicaryāvatāra* 9:16-17: yadā māyairva te nāsiti tadā kim upalabhyate / cittasyairva sa ākāro yady apy anyo'sti tattvataḥ // cittam eva yadā māyā tadā kin kenā drśyate / uktam ca lokanāthena cittam cittam na paśyati //. The reference in this context to the Buddha's saying that the mind cannot see the mind is a critique of the view that the mind can take a cognitive object in a subject-object relationship, where the object itself is also the very same mind. In other words it is a critique of a situation where there is (as it were) a subject-object relationship and both subject and object in that relationship are consciousness. It is an argument directed at self-awareness (i). As we shall see, the sense in which mind sees mind in self-awareness (ii) is not really a subject-object relationship at all, and is therefore not a relationship of mind seeing mind. This sort of language is at most metaphorical. This difference is at the root of appreciating that there is a difference between self-awareness (i) and self-awareness (ii). That this difference was rarely appreciated explains the move from the *Cittamātra* argument that subject and object are both consciousness and therefore there is self-awareness, to the exis-

early in our analysis, since Mi pham is going to argue that Candrakīrti's and in particular Śāntideva's arguments against *svasamvedana* are directed against *svasamvedana* as inherently-existing, in other words an ultimate reality, and not against the conventional everyday existence of *svasamvedana*. Mi pham's principal influence is Śāntarakṣita, and in accepting the Prāsaṅgika Mādhyanika critique of the memory argument Mi pham is going to suggest that it is directed against an argument for an inherently-existing separate self-awareness (through inherently-existing experiences and memories) which clearly does not exist even conventionally. Since in Prāsaṅgika Mādhyanaka to exist inherently is to exist ultimately, and is equivalent to being found as the terminating point of a critical analysis which searches for ultimates, Mi pham is going to argue that the memory argument does not work as an argument for *svasamvedana* in the context of a critical analysis of *Cittamātra*, which is precisely a critical analysis searching for ultimates, an inherently-existing nondual *svasamvedana* which is intimately involved in the specific *Cittamātra* ontological and epistemological project. And Mi pham is going to want to suggest that it simply does not follow from this Mādhyanika critique of *svasamvedana* in general and the memory argument in particular in the context of a debate with the *Cittamātrin*, that the Mādhyanika is also committed to saying that there is no such thing as *svasamvedana*

tence of self-awareness of consciousness on the model of a lamp illuminating itself as well as others (as will become clear, a 'self-awareness (ii)'-type example of reflexivity). See, for example, this move in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* discussion. The example of the lamp occurs in the Sanskrit text at verses 22-3. We are back to the memory argument (a 'self-awareness (i)'-type argument) at verse 24.

even on an everyday conventional level. Mi pham is helped in his argument by what seem to me to be the elements of an alternative perspective on *svasamvedana* which I shall call for the time being 'self-awareness (ii)'; an alternative perspective that, while helping Mi pham (in this context a Mādhyamika), is arguably, and certainly for Mi pham, separable from the Cītamātra ontological and epistemological project, an alternative perspective which is initially and usually mixed in with self-awareness (i) but comes into its own in certain innovations in the theory of *svasamvedana* which were stressed by and probably originated with Śāntaraksīta. Self-awareness (ii) is one of reflexivity as the defining characteristic of consciousness. Consciousness is in its own essential or inherent nature as consciousness reflexive.¹⁵

¹⁵ My use of 'essential or inherent nature' here is to be distinguished from inherent existence (*svabhāva*) in a sense not acceptable to a Mādhyamika like Śāntaraksīta. It is rather like the uniquely-defining characteristic (*svalakṣaṇa*) found in the Abhidharma but understood in an everyday conventional sense (the 'quiddity' of *x*) as it would have been acceptable I think to Śāntaraksīta or even Nāgārjuna.

CHAPTER TWO

Śāntaraksīta on the Reflexive Nature Of Consciousness

I want now to return to our quotation from Thub bstan chos kyi grags pa (pp. 4-5 above) in which I separated into two paragraphs his description of *svasamvedana* after his citation of Bhāvaviveka's *Tarkajvāla*. In terms of our analysis so far, there appears to be some problem, or at least unclarity, with the second of these paragraphs. The 'mere luminosity' or 'mere awareness' which accompanies consciousnesses that are aware of others would seem to be itself a form of *svasamvedana*, a form of consciousness accompanying the objective aspect but characterized by self-awareness in the sense of reflexivity, rather than taking the objective aspect as an object. It is not obvious that what is being referred to here with 'mere luminosity' and so on is the subjective aspect, or even a result of the subjective aspect. The subjective aspect experiences (and is, therefore, aware of) the objective aspect. Here, however, we have a 'mere awareness' said

to be aware of its own nature 'turned solely inwards'. The objective aspect which is experienced by the subjective aspect is dependent upon an object which, if not actually external, is at least (more often than not) *as if* external. The subjective aspect in experiencing the objective aspect is involved in a situation of at least some sort of duality, and inasmuch as it depends on an objective aspect which depends upon an 'external' object, it can itself be said to be dependent upon the external object insofar as there is one. But here the mere luminosity is said to be without any dependence on an external object, and completely uninvolved in any dualistic appearances of subject/object. Thus even if the 'mere luminosity' and 'mere awareness' here were connected to the subjective aspect, they could not be identical with it. Rather, 'mere luminosity' (a common image used in Indian philosophy for reflexivity—a light illuminates itself at the same time as it illuminates others) must relate to Śāntaraksita's discussion from the *Tattvasaṅgraha* mentioned earlier (esp. ch. 1, n. 8 above), which would see in the self-validating factor of reflexivity an answer to the problem of an epistemological infinite regress. Consciousness validates its own existence because to validate its own existence is constitutive of its very being as consciousness. That is, consciousness is self-referring in a non-objectifying way, just as a lamp illuminates itself not as one object among others to be illuminated, but through the very act of *being* a lamp, an illuminator of others. This is reflexivity—to be conscious of others *is* to be conscious of oneself as well, because otherwise it would not be consciousness and therefore not consciousness of others. That is just what consciousness is.

'Mere luminosity' here, I suggest, is reflexivity and this is patently a different sense of 'self-awareness' from 'self-awareness (i)'. Self-awareness (i) *in*

some sense takes an object, and in some sense that object is itself. The issue of an object is not relevant to reflexivity *qua* reflexivity. What the object of consciousness is, is an additional issue to the nature of consciousness itself. For example, in the case of an eye-consciousness seeing blue, we know that since it is a consciousness it must be reflexive. That it takes as its object blue, or indeed anything else (including itself as an object, if that were possible) is completely irrelevant to the issue of reflexivity.¹ I have, therefore, called reflexivity when applied to consciousness 'self-awareness (ii)'.²

In his *Madhyamakālamkāra*, and again with the same verses in his *Tattvasaṅgraha*, Śāntaraksita introduces *svasamvādana* not through argument—through recourse to, say, the memory argument—but through assertion, an appeal to its fundamental obviousness. Consciousness is to be understood structurally as 'not-insentience' (that is, as not *jada/bens po*), and the issue is what defines consciousness as not-insentience for, Śāntaraksita comments, 'consciousness occurs as the very opposite of that the nature of which is insentience'. In actual fact, Śāntaraksita explains, the very quality of not being insentient is something's self-consciousness or self-awareness.² That is what

¹ From which it should follow, incidentally, that in the case of self-awareness (i) the objective aspect as a consciousness has self-awareness (ii) as reflexivity, and the subjective aspect as that which experiences the objective aspect also has self-awareness (ii) as reflexivity ('experiences' is a consciousness-term), and these two reflexivities are the same *qua* reflexivity of consciousness, but not the same *qua* the same consciousness-instant. This again makes it quite clear also that self-awareness (i) cannot be the same as self-awareness (ii).

² *Madhyamakālamkāra* 16, ed. Masamichi Ichigo (1989): r nam shes bems po'i rang bzhin las // bzlog pa rab tu sbye ba ste //

self-awareness is—it is the consciousness-quality of consciousness; it is the very quality which makes consciousness not unconsciousness. According to the elaboration in Śāntaraksīta's *Madhyamakālamkāraṭṭi*, consciousness is posited as being of the nature of self-awareness because it is essentially luminous by nature. This in turn is because it is the very opposite from that the nature of which is absence of awareness, such as a chariot and so on.³ Elsewhere, Prajñākaragupta has observed that some things require something else to illuminate them, that is, to render them knowable. Some, such as a pot (or here, a chariot), require both a lamp (light) and the visual organ. The lamp itself, on the other hand, requires only the visual organ. But there are other things—consciousnesses—which do not require anything else to render them knowable. They are accordingly self-aware. They are known (their existence is known) by their very occurrence. Thus consciousnesses are the opposite of things which require something else to render them knowable, and this quality of oppositeness lies in their self-

bems min rang bzhin gang yin pa // de di'i bdag nyid shes pa yin //.

This equals *Tattvasaṅgraha* 1999: vijñānam jadarūpebhyo vyāvṛttam upajāyate / iyaṁ evānmasaṁvītīr asya yā jadarūpatā //.

³ *Madhyamakālamkāraṭṭi* (Taipei Derge edition) p. 120: 'di rang rig pa'i rang bzhin du rnam par gzhas pa ni rang bzhin gyis gsal ba'i bdag nyid yin pa'i phyir te / shing ra la sogs pa la rig pa med pa'i rang bzhin las bzlog pa'i phyir ro //'. Unless noted otherwise, all bsTan 'gyur references in this monograph will be to the Taipei Derge edition (SMC Publishing Inc., 1991). Note here, incidentally, the close connection between luminosity and awareness. Since consciousness is in its very being as consciousness not [not-aware] it is luminous by nature, and this luminosity by nature is what we mean by 'self-awareness'. See below, note 10, and cf. also Dharmakīrti's *Pramāṇavaiśiṣṭya* (Vetter ed. p. 98).

awareness.⁴ The appeal here is not to an epistemological theory, but to the obviousness of this for everyone. As Kamalaśīla puts it, the quality of not needing to depend on another possessed of illumination (i.e., the fact that illumination by consciousness is self-validating) occurs in accordance with the everyday way of

⁴ On Prajñākaragupta see his *Pramāṇavaiśiṣṭyālamkāra* (R. San-kriyayana ed.), p. 353, as discussed in Matilal (1986), p. 156. Matilal points out that in reply Bhāsarvajña accuses Prajñākaragupta with the fallacy of *avidhi*, essentially in this context question-begging. Perhaps Prajñākaragupta is not putting forward a formal argument here, but is rather appealing to an obvious self-giveness. It is interesting also that the Naiyāyikas argue against the Buddhist position that consciousness is distinguished from insentience, not through self-awareness but through the fact that consciousness, unlike insentient entities, illuminates (i.e., renders known) others. Cf. Tsong kha pa's response to the memory argument, discussed in Williams (1983), pp. 325-6 (and Appendix 2 below): 'Tsong kha pa points out that one can infer simple sensation from memory, but one is unable to infer self-consciousness. On the basis of sensing blue one can conclude in memory that formerly there was the awareness of blue, but this only allows the establishment of simple awareness, not self-awareness. On the other hand if there is a memory of simple awareness of blue it is unnecessary to postulate self-consciousness.' The reference is to Tsong kha pa's *dKa' gnas chen po bnyed*, pp. 26-7. Saying 'I am conscious of seeing blue, Tsong kha pa wants to argue, does not add anything to saying that I see blue. But Śāntaraksīta might respond that while he does not deny the points made by the Naiyāyika and Tsong kha pa, the question still remains concerning what makes consciousness different from insentience? Against the Naiyāyika, what enables consciousness to be aware of others when pots are not? The answer, Śāntaraksīta wants to say, is that quite patently consciousness (unlike pots) is the sort of thing the existence of which is known in the very act of knowing others. This is simply patently the case, obvious to anyone, and this is what we mean by *svasamvedana*.

things.⁵ And elsewhere Kamalaśīla comments that it is not fitting to criticize this self-awareness, since it is established even for cowherders.⁶ Moksākaragupta makes the essentially same point in claiming in his *Tarkabhāṣā* that *svasamvedana* is established on the strength of our own experience.⁷ This appeal to *svasamvedana* in a pre-reflective sense, a self-awareness which is felt to be obvious even to peasants (G.E. Moore's 'man-in-the-street'), shows the difference between this sense of 'self-awareness' (self-awareness (ii)) and the previous sense (self-awareness (i)) which is bound-in with a particular philosophers' epistemology. It will also show for Mi pham the possibility of separating *svasamvedana* in this sense from its Citta-mātra origins and connotations and arguing for its obviousness in conventional terms in a way which it

⁵ *Madhyamakālamkārapañjikā*, p. 188: gsal ba gzhan la mi ltos pa nyid du tha snyad kyi lam la 'jug pa yin no //'. Of course, 'illumination' here refers to illumination by consciousness, for which the illumination of a lamp serves as a metaphorical example. We have seen that even the illumination of a lamp depends on consciousness in order to render it knowable, in a way that consciousness itself does not. Also there should be no confusion between the self-validating nature of consciousness (i.e., that one cannot be in doubt whether one is conscious or not, whether one is experiencing at all), and a claim that experiences are self-verifying (i.e., that all or certain experiences are indubitable). The categories may overlap, but we are not concerned here with claims of self-verification.

⁶ rang rig pa yang gnag rdzi yan chad la grub pa'i phyir klan kar yang mi rung ngo //'. Cited from the M.A. *Pañjikā* by Ichigo (1989), p. 234 n. 64.

⁷ Moksākaragupta (1988), p. 24: anubhavaprasiddham ca svasamvedanāyām katham apahnuṣyat? See too the translation by Yuichi Kajiyama p. 51 (1989 reprint, p. 238), who also gives a reference to Vidyākaraśānti's *Tarkasopāna*.

is felt will not conflict with even Prāsāngika Madhyamaka.

The idea of portraying self-awareness as the quality of consciousness understood as the reverse of insentience (*bems po*) may well have originated with Śāntaraksita.⁸ Mi pham wrote a detailed commentary to the *Madhyamakālamkāra*, and its influence on his discussions of the status of *svasamvedana* can be seen also every time Mi pham refers to self-awareness in his other works, and defends its acceptability conventionally as the defining quality of consciousness understood as the opposite of insentience (*bems po'i rang bzhin las bzlog pa*).⁹ Mi pham expands *Madhya-*

⁸ It may have been influenced by the comment of Dharmakīrti in *Pramāṇaviniścaya* 1:38cd: grāhyagrāhakaavadhuryāt swayam saiva prakāśate (cited by Ichigo, *ibid.*, p. 235 n. 71. Cf. p. 175). It is noticeable, though, that when Prajñākaramati (on *Bodhicaryāvatāra* 9:21) and Moksākaragupta (1988, p. 23) want to refer to this way of seeing *svasamvedana*, as the reverse of insentience (*yi da/bems po*), it is Śāntaraksita they quote.

⁹ See for example Mi pham's *Madhyamakālamkāra* commentary (Mi pham 1976a), p. 143: shes pa 'di ni rang gi ngo bo bem po la bu ma yin pas rang gi ngo bo rig par bya ba rkyen gzhan la ltos mi dgos pa de phyir rang rig ces bzhang pa tha snyad ches 'thad de /. And his commentary to the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* (Mi pham 1975a), pp. 21-2: mdor na rang rig pa 'gog pa ni don dam par 'gog pa yin gyi bem po las log tsam la [22] tha snyad du rang rig par 'dgos pa'i tshul de 'gog pa ma yin te / Mi pham cites *Madhyamakālamkāra* 16-17 in his reply to Blo bzang dpal ldan bstan 'dzin (Mi pham 1975b), p. 203, and also the *bdde mdzog 'byung ba sogs snyags kyi rgyud* to the same effect (p. 212): bems po min phyir bdag nyid rig //'. The tantra's use of this expression, incidentally, strongly suggests its influence either directly or indirectly by Śāntaraksita's tradition (had it been the other way round, Śāntaraksita or Kamalaśīla would surely have quoted the tantra (as *buddhavaana*) in their support). Also, in an independent work on Madhyamaka (Mi pham 1976b), p. 795, he says: de phyir shes pa ni shing rta dang risigs pa sogs

makālamkāra 16 with reference to the developed Tibetan psychology familiar also in the dGe lugs monasteries where he had spent some time. Actually, he says, whatever is a consciousness occurs as having the defining characteristic of luminosity and awareness, and is the opposite of those things which are free from luminosity and awareness and have the nature of insentience, such as a chariot, a wall and so on. Thus what is by nature not insentient is thereby said to be conscious of its very own self, or to be self-aware, self-luminous.¹⁰

las bzlog ste /. The additional example of a wall (*rtsig(s) pa*) comes from Kamalaśīla's *Madhyamakālamkārapañjikā*, p. 188, and is again used by Mi pham in his *Madhyamakālamkāra* commentary, p. 142.

10 Mi pham (1976a), p. 142: don la nman par shes pa gang zhig shing rta dang risig pa la sogs pa bem po'i rang bzhin gsal rigs dang bral ba dag las bzlog pa gsal zhing rig pa'i mshan nyid can du rab tu sbye ba ste / de lhar bem po min pa'i rang bzhin gang yin pa de lta bu 'di ni bdag rang nyid shes pa'am rang rig rang gsal zhes pa yin no //. The definition of consciousness as luminosity and awareness is common in dGe lugs texts. See, for example, Geshe Kelsang Gyatso (1993), p. 16. But luminosity is essentially thought of in Indo-Tibetan philosophy as reflexive. Otherwise it is difficult to understand exactly what is being referred to by the expression 'luminosity'. Geshe Kelsang comments that 'clarity' [luminosity] refers to the nature of the mind [consciousness], while 'cognizes' [awareness] refers to its function. Thus the mind is essentially luminous. Since for dGe lugs Madhyamaka only emptinesses are ultimate truths, the mind is of course a conventional truth. But as a conventional truth, in order for its nature to be luminosity it would seem that it should conventionally be reflexive, i.e. there should be *svasamvedana* conventionally in the sense in which Mi pham, following Śāntaraksīta, is going to explain it. On the other hand it would not be incoherent for a dGe lugs pa to reply that he grants the conventional existence of luminosity but denies that this is *svasamvedana*, since one cannot speak of self-awareness where there is no subject-object relationship, and, there-

Thus far Śāntaraksīta and his commentators have portrayed self-awareness as the very characteristic of consciousness, what distinguishes it from insentience, and this is said to correspond to the usage of the 'person-in-the-street'. But consciousness can take itself as an object without this being 'self-awareness' in the sense in which Śāntaraksīta is using the expression here. Such occurs for example in introspection, where we direct our attention at another (previous) consciousness-event. Clearly this could not itself be the defining characteristic of consciousness, for if all consciousnesses required themselves to be known by introspection we would have an infinite regress and, as Śāntaraksīta puts it in his *Tattvasaṃgraha* (following Dignāga and Dharmakīrti), in such a case there would be no awareness at all. Alternatively, if the series ends at some point, that terminating consciousness would have to be self-justifying, i.e. self-aware, and the same could therefore be said of other con-

fore, the expression 'self-awareness' has been given no meaning apart from saying it is what consciousness has that other things do not. 'Luminosity' is of course a metaphor. Incidentally, the need for consciousness to be defined in terms of luminosity *and* awareness (of something) is interesting. I have argued elsewhere (on Kantian grounds) that I have difficulty making sense of a state of consciousness which is literally non-conceptual and nonconceptualizable (see Williams, 1992a). Here, if we take a hypothetical case of a pure nonconceptual consciousness it would seem that in fact it would have to be luminous but not aware (of anything). In this hypothetical case, mere luminosity with no content could still not be distinguished from no experience at all. Thus the need to define consciousness in terms of luminosity (i.e., following Śāntaraksīta, reflexivity as its nature which distinguishes it from insentience) *and* awareness (i.e., intentionality, it takes an intentional object as content) would appear philosophically to be a sensible move.

consciousnesses. They are all the same in respect of being consciousnesses.¹¹ Śāntaraksita sums up, therefore, his vision of *svasamvedana* in a manner which Matilal (1986, p. 156) refers to as a 're-definition from the Buddhist point of view'. What is meant by '*svasamvedana*' is (i) that consciousness does not depend on another thing in order to be known, and (ii) it is nevertheless known.¹² Therefore, it follows that it is self-known.

Thus the character of self-awareness here has nothing to do with taking itself as an *object* in a way which might lead to an infinite regress. Rather, self-awareness *means* reflexivity, where there is no sense of referring to an actual subject/object relationship and, therefore, no stage of validation beyond the consciousness itself. Kamalaśīla implies that it would not be correct to think of self-awareness on the model of 'x is aware of y' where $y = x$. In other words, the epistemological model based on act and agent where an agent acts on itself is inappropriate, and, therefore, the common criticism of self-awareness found in other Buddhist sources, grounded on the impossibility of an action directed towards itself, simply does not apply in

¹¹ See *Tattvasaṃgraha* 20247. For Dignāga and Dharmakīrti see *Pramāṇasamuccaya* 1:12 in Hattori (1968), and Hattori's accompanying notes.

¹² *Tattvasaṃgraha* 2011: svarūpavedanānyad vedakam na vyapekṣate / na cāviditām asīdam ity artho'yaṃ svasamvidāh // . Note that although on balance it seems likely that this self-awareness (ii) strategy originated with Śāntaraksita, it may have been a common interpretation in his time (8th century), or originated with someone else. It appears to be found very nicely stated in Vinitadeva's *Nyāyabinduṭīkā* (Vinitadeva 1971, p. 107). Consciousnesses reveal their own nature because that is their very nature. Like a lamp, they do not require another to render them known. Vinitadeva was perhaps an older contemporary of Śāntaraksita.

this case.¹³ *Svasamvedana* is essentially *not* a case of a subjective aspect (*grāhākāra*) experiencing an objective aspect (*grāhyākāra*). Kamalaśīla comments that 'By self-cognition we do not mean the nature of a subject ("the perceiver"; *grāhaka*). Then what is it? It has as its nature illumination by itself, intrinsically; it is just like the glow in the sky.'¹⁴ Likewise in his *Madhyamakālamkārahanyīkā* Kamalaśīla observes that when we refer to *svasamvedana* we are not maintaining that it has the nature of object or subject (p. 188: *de bhīn du gzung ba dang 'dzin pa'i dangos por yang mi 'dod pa nyid do*). Both categories are inapplicable.¹⁵ The crucial verse on this issue is *Madhyamakālamkāra* 17, in which Śāntaraksita explains that in the case of self-awareness of consciousness it is not to be treated on the model of activity and agent, since as regards what is

¹³ See, for example, *Bodhicaryāvatāra* 9:17 where we find a common reference to the Buddha's saying (in the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* and elsewhere) that the mind cannot see the mind, any more than a sword can cut itself. Śāntaraksita wants to say that the model here is wrong. Mi pham is able to refer to the *Chanaṅyūhasūtra* where the Buddha says that the mind is seen by the mind (in good Cittamātra manner), although unrecognized (sna tshogs snang ba rang sems te // lus can rnam kyī bdag nyid gnyis // phyī dang nang dang thams cad du // gzung dang 'dzin pa lta bur gnas // sems kyis sems ni mthong yin yang // khong du mi chud dus pa nams // kha gnyis sems de lus can gyī // yin yang shes par ma gyur pa // . See Mi pham (1975b), p. 211. That the act/agent model is inappropriate is made quite clear by Śāntaraksita at *Madhyamakālamkāra* 17.

¹⁴ Translated by Ichigo (1989), p. 173. This is Kamalaśīla's commentary to *Tattvasaṃgraha* 1999 (cited *ibid.*, p. 234 n. 63): na hi grāhakahāvenātmasamvedanam abhipretam / kim tarhi / svayam prakṛtyā prakāśāmatayā nabhasalavartya'lokavat // .

¹⁵ He refers to this as also being the view of the *Pramāṇauarttika* (*nam par 'gral pa las kyang de bhīn nyid du sion to*). Cf. the *Pramāṇasamuccaya* 1:38cd cited above, note 8.

by nature a partless unity a threefold division (into action—'that which is done'—agent, and activity—the actual doing) is unacceptable.¹⁶ Thus when we refer to self-awareness in this sense (self-awareness (ii)) it is not *self* awareness in the sense of an awareness that takes itself as an object. What referent a consciousness takes is another issue. But in its own nature as consciousness it is always reflexive.

Let me summarize now what it is I am saying about the relationships between self-awareness (i) and self-awareness (ii). They are clearly not the same, and things can be said about the one which cannot be said about the other. Self-awareness (i) is the result of a particular epistemological situation. It has an intentional structure ('intentional' in Brentano's sense of intending an object, i.e. taking a referent)—self-awareness (i) involves the subjective aspect experiencing the objective aspect. It is self-awareness in the sense that consciousness takes consciousness as an object. Because it is the result of a particular epistemological situation, in a hypothetical case of pure consciousness, i.e., consciousness which is not of anything, which has no epistemological content, there would also be no self-awareness (i), for there could be no case of a subjective aspect taking as an object the objective aspect, since there could be no objective aspect. In a case of literally pure consciousness there would be no perception of anything, and, therefore, no objective aspect, no consciousness taking-on the aspect of

16 *gciḡ pa cha med rang bzhin la // gsum gyi rang bzhin mi 'thad phyir // de yi rang gi rig pa ni // bya dang byed pa'i dngos por min // = Tattvasaṅgraha v. 2000: kṛiyākara bhāvena na svasamvitir asya tu / ekasyānamśartu pasya tṛair- rūpyānupapattitah //*. For more on action, etc., see below ch. 3, n. 1 and references.

any object. Self-awareness (i) taken by itself, without the addition of self-awareness (ii), also suggests the problem of an infinite regress.¹⁷ Self-awareness (ii) on the other hand is the essential characteristic of consciousness itself. For Śāntaraksita this does not seem to be primarily a matter of argument. His tendency is to simply assert it. It is an articulated basic presupposition. There must be something which distinguishes *sui generis* consciousness from everything else, i.e. that which is insentient. This is reflexivity. Thus wherever there is consciousness there is that characteristic of reflexivity, and in the sense in which 'reflexivity' is being used here it can only characterize consciousness. It is what makes consciousness consciousness. It has nothing to do with a particular epistemological situation or theory as such, and the reflexivity of consciousness does not *in itself* involve any intentional situation. In other words 'self-

17 See here Klein (1986), p. 113, writing from the dGe lugs Prāsaṅgika point of view: 'In any case, because the self-knower [*svasamvedana*] is a factor of experience that is one entity [*ngo bo gciḡ*—see ch. 1, n. 9 above] with the perceiving consciousness, the difficulty remains of explaining more fully how the two factors of a single directly perceiving consciousness relate to one another. For example, it is said that the self-knower observes the subjective apprehension aspect; yet, why should one consciousness or factor of consciousness need to appear to another one? Is the self-knower itself then generated in the image of the apprehension aspect? The Prāsaṅgika system rejects the existence of a self-knower because it considers that if a self-knower had to be posited in order to explain the self-awareness of an eye-consciousness, then that self-knower would also have to possess a self-knower, and so on infinitely.' Śāntaraksita does not explain *svasamvedana*, either in the *Mādhyama bhāṣyamāhāra* or in the *Tattvasaṅgraha*, on the model of the subjective aspect experiencing the objective aspect (self-awareness (i)). His alternative model of reflexivity (self-awareness (ii)) is precisely intended to avoid these problems of infinite regress.

consciousness' here has nothing to do with a subject-object relationship, it essentially does *not* involve in itself consciousness of anything, and, therefore, is nothing to do with consciousness of (it)self. In a hypothetical case of pure consciousness there would be no definition still be self-awareness (ii), since otherwise it would not be consciousness at all. Likewise, although self-awareness (ii) may have other problems associated with it, still, by definition again, it would avoid the difficulty of an infinite regress. Reflexive consciousness is self-validating in its occurrence, and does not require regress to a further validator. On the other hand to say that consciousness is reflexive is in itself to say nothing about particular perceptual situations. It is only to say that if there is a perceptual situation then inasmuch as *any* perceptual situation involves consciousness—including any ordinary everyday perception—that consciousness is reflexive, because such is what any consciousness must be in order to be other than insentience.

It should also be clear, however, that although I am arguing self-awareness (i) is different from self-awareness (ii), I do not wish to maintain that the one cannot be reduced to the other through a combination of (sometimes debatable) presuppositions and inference. Quite the reverse. It might be argued, for example, that in the case of self-awareness (i), since for Citamātra there is no external reality causing the aspect of blue when the eye-consciousness takes on the aspect of blue, it follows that in reality the eye-consciousness cannot take on the aspect of blue.¹⁸ Thus when the sub-

¹⁸ Internal 'seeds' (*bīja*) will not help here, since where (without an infinite regress) do the seeds come from? What distinguishes the seed for blue from that for, say, yellow? What causes one rather than another to occur at time *?

jective aspect experiences the objective aspect, pure awareness experiences pure awareness. If this is the case, there is no longer any differentiation into subjective and objective aspects. Therefore, if we have consciousness at all we must be left simply with self-reflective consciousness with absolutely no differentiation into subject and object—that is, it would seem, self-awareness (ii).

One could also argue for the reverse, and this was important for Śāntaraksita himself. Śāntaraksita wants to argue that since consciousness is by its very nature the exact opposite of insentience, it is not possible in reality for consciousness to contact insentient objects. Thus in knowing an object, consciousness must really be apprehending itself in the form of the object.¹⁹ Therefore, from the reflexive nature of con-

¹⁹ See *Madhyamakālakāṅkara* 18: *de'i phyir 'di ni shes pa yi // rang bzhin yin pas bdag shes rung // don gyi rang bzhin gzhan dag la // de yis ji lear shes par 'gyur // = Tattvasaṃgraha* v. 2001: *tad asya bodharūpavād yuktam tāvāt svavedanam / parasya artharūpasya tena samvedanam katham //*. Cf. also Kamalaśīla (quoted Ichigo, p. 234 n. 60, trans. p. 173): *tasmād āmasamvedanam eva sadāiva jñānam sayi api bāhye santāntara iti siddhyati vijñāpimātrā*. As Ichigo puts it (p. 176), for Śāntaraksita and his followers 'Knowledge, since it is immaterial, cannot grasp the insentient and material object which is distinct from knowledge.' Consciousness can only apprehend something of the same type, i.e. consciousness. Matilal (1986, p. 159) has observed that 'the usual mentalistic strategy is to introduce an insurmountable barrier between the mental and the non-mental (material) and then claim that the mental (a cognitive event, a mode of consciousness) cannot be connected with the material object unless it transforms the latter into a mental object. This would, therefore, create what has sometimes been called the 'veil of ideas'. An argument can usually be developed to show eventually that this veil of ideas becomes in fact our veil of ignorance about the external, material world: if this is so, then, in our explanation of knowledge

consciousness as its uniquely defining quality one moves to an epistemology where consciousness apprehends itself in the form of the object. That is, one moves from self-awareness (ii) to self-awareness (i). It is clear that Śāntaraksita finally does want to argue from *svasamvedana* to a *cittanātra*-like position. However, Śāntaraksita is a Mādhyamika, and as such he is not going to adopt the other Cittanātra (Yogācāra) premiss, that of the need for a *dravya* in order to explain the possibility of conceptual construction (see, for example, *Mādhyanakālakāra* 1). A complete universality of conceptual construction (= *prajñāpīśat* = *nīśvabhāvatā*) at least ultimately is the defining characteristic of all Mādhyamaka. Therefore, Śāntaraksita is left with a *cittanātra* position as an explanation of the *conventional* world, and his discussion of the reflexive nature of consciousness and its use in order to argue for mind-only is all occurring on the conventional level. Whether consciousness is reflexive or not, and whether it is coherent to speak of *cittanātra* conventionally, are thus on this level not issues of the Mādhyamika search for putative ultimates. They are in fact empirical issues (perhaps issues of science—the nature of consciousness, and whether it is reflexive or not, would be on this basis a matter of psychology). Mi pham is going to take from Śāntaraksita the reflexive nature of consciousness and argue on such a foundation that whether consciousness is reflexive or not is nothing to do with the Prāsaṅgika critique of ultimate, inherent, existence. But Mi pham is certainly also going to want to deny (as himself a Prāsaṅgika Mādhyamika) that he is required to give a *cittanātra*-type explanation of the conventional world based on

and awareness, a reference to the external world would seem to be dispensable.

the reflexivity of consciousness. Having pointed out that the Prāsaṅgika critiques do not entail a denial of the conventional status of *svasamvedana*, it is not necessary for Mi pham as a Prāsaṅgika to explain exactly how a reflexive consciousness knows material objects. Mi pham simply wants to argue for the obvious givenness of the fact that consciousness is reflexive. As Kamalaśīla said, it is obvious even to cowherders. Even conventional *cittanātra* does not have that same obvious givenness.