A STUDY OF THE DEVELOPMENT
AND PHILOSOPHICAL IMPLICATIONS OF
THE BUDDHIST CONCEPT OF
SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS (SVASAMVEDANA)

by
CHAN Ngan Che

A Thesis Submitted to
The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology
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This is to certify that I have examined the above MPhil thesis
and have found that it is complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the thesis examination committee have been made.

Professor David Peter LAWRENCE, Thesis Supervisor

Professor Simon Man-ho WONG, Thesis Committee Chair

Professor Yiu-ming FUNG, Thesis Committee Member

Professor Samuel CHEUNG, Head of Humanities

Division of Humanities
30 November 2001
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A Study of the Development and Philosophical Implications of the Buddhist Concept of Self-Consciousness (*svaśaṃvedana*)

by CHAN Ngan Che

Division of Humanities
The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology

Abstract

The present study is an attempt to trace the development and philosophical implications of the Buddhist concept of *svaśaṃvedana* (self-consciousness or cognition of cognition). The philosophical discourses of cognition of cognition are related to the main issues of epistemology, ontology and soteriology and gradually generate a formulation of the self-cognition doctrine.

Chapter one sets out to give an account of issues to be discussed and the methodological approach for this research.

Chapter two focuses on the origin and the evolution of the concept *svaśaṃvedana* from the historical perspective of Indian philosophy. The viewpoints of four influential Buddhist schools concerning *svaśaṃvedana* are interpreted.

Chapter three establishes the framework of thematizing *svaśaṃvedana* through the efforts of Dignāga. The definitions of self-cognition found by Dignāga become the central theme of later Vijñānavāda (Mind-only) Buddhism.

Chapter four discusses the similarity and difference of Dignāga with Dharmakīrti in their doctrines of *svaśaṃvedana*. The contribution of Dharmakīrti is his advancement of Dignāga's postulation by providing a detailed exposition with sound logical grounding.

Chapter five elaborates the views of Dharmapala and Sthiramati on the issues of consciousness with object image and the mind structure. Their contentions are
directed to redefining the self-consciousness as the substance of mind and cause of knowledge so as to defend the idealistic premise of the Mind-only system in different perspectives.

Chapter six concludes the diversity of interpretation by different Buddhist scholars concerning self-cognition. The impacts of their discourses on some Buddhist philosophical issues are examined so as to identify their positions and contributions.

In the search of the evolution and the implicit meanings of the notion of self-consciousness, it is hoped that my work is able to expound the intelligent viewpoints of Buddhist philosophers who have contribution to new insights of the Buddhist doctrines.
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Characteristic of Svasaṃvedana

Many schools of Indian philosophy hold that knowledge reveals its object as it is. Apart from the knowledge of the object, we are also aware of our awareness of the object. In other words, while knowing the object, we also know ourselves as well. The terms denoting this self-luminosity of knowledge are called “svasaṃvedana” or “svasaṃvittai”. The meanings of these terms are self-consciousness, self-cognition or self-awareness in English. These imply “knowledge of knowledge” or in other words “a knowing that one knows”.

The characteristic of self-consciousness is indicated by metaphors such as ‘luminosity’ or ‘clear light’, and sometimes mirror-image as analogous for easy understanding of this technical term. The Vijñānavāda¹ (Mind-Only School), one of the Mahāyāna (the Great Vehicle) Buddhist school, likes to use a common image as an example. A lamp makes objects known in a dark room and in so doing makes itself known too. It is not necessary to bring another lamp ad infinitum in order to illuminate the first lamp. The mirror is known for its reflectivity when reflecting an image, it also makes itself known as a mirror. Similarly, a lamp has reflexive nature. It illuminates itself in the very act of illuminating others. Thus, reflexivity is the very characteristic of all mental states. It is the consciousness making itself known in the very act of knowing things that are other than itself. The nature and the modus operandi of self-knowledge have been the subjects of sharp controversy for some schools of Indian philosophy.

¹ There are several names for this school in Sanskrit, such as Cittamātra, Yogācāra, or in English as
The concept of self-consciousness is central to the understanding of the Vijñānavāda School. The Vijñānavāda succeeds the doctrines of early Buddhism, various so-called Hinayāna (the Small Vehicle)\(^2\) sects and Mādhyamika School of the Mahāyāna (the Great Vehicle). This school also develops, refines and elaborates the Buddhist philosophy. The *vijñāpti-mūtra* (Mind-only or Mere-consciousness) doctrine of Vijñānavāda School reveals the boundary of human cognition and investigates the deeper aspect of psychological mood as well as the cognitive structure, for the purpose of contemplating the truth and finding religious soteriology for all sentient beings as ultimate concern. In particular, self-cognition has gradually become a significant philosophical concept. Important Buddhist scholars such as Dignāga, Dharmakīrti, Dharmapāla and Sthiramati had put a lot of efforts in formulating and redefining this concept to comply with the ideological philosophy of the Vijñānavāda school. Vijñānavādins eventually established a sophisticated theory of *svasamprvedana* (self-cognition) for validation of knowledge. The long-lasting discourse of self-cognition relates to the main topics of epistemology, ontology, spiritual experience and life liberation. These show the importance of self-cognition in the development of Buddhist philosophy.

1.2 Purposes of the Thesis

This study attempts to expound the development and philosophical

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\(^2\) During the rise of Mahāyāna Buddhism in India around the first century, the Mahāyāna Buddhists use the contrast of “small vehicle” and “great vehicle” to distinguish the inferiority of Hinayāna and the supremacy of Mahāyāna. According to the Mahāyāna Buddhists, the ultimate goal of Hinayāna Buddhists is to achieve *Arhat* (the highest level of sainthood qualified) for life liberation. As for the Mahāyāna Buddhists, they devote to a higher religious aspiration of Buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings. But for the non-Mahāyāna Buddhists, they do not name themselves the given title as Hinayāna. It is not my intention to use the derogatory meaning of the term *Hinayāna* here but it used to be common to portray Buddhism as divided into two groups i.e. Hinayāna and Mahāyāna, among the Buddhist schools.
implications of the Buddhist concept of self-consciousness (*sva*ṣaṇṇvedana). *Sva*ṣaṇṇvedana is one of the main philosophical concepts of the Vijñānavāda School. It also brings in a number of challenging problems that need to be solved within the framework of the system. There are criticism and reconstruction in the course of the traditional exposition of *sva*ṣaṇṇvedana. Hence, this thesis attempts to inquire and analyze how this concept evolves through defining, refitting and proving by different Buddhist systems.

For the present philosophical inquiry of *sva*ṣaṇṇvedana, I will confine to four most influential Buddhist Schools. These are the schools of Vaibhāṣika, Sautrāntika, Mādhyamika and Vijñānavāda. The Vaibhāṣika and Sautrāntika are two famous realist schools of Hīnayāna Buddhism while Mādhyamika and Vijñānavāda are idealist schools of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Over many centuries, different schools of Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna created a sphere for themselves to argue their positions not simply by citing traditional authorities but also by using reason of justification. The inter-religious dialogues carried out by these four schools constitute significant facets of later Buddhist thought.

In terms of the theory of self-cognition, these four Buddhist schools can be divided into two rival camps. The idea of *sva*ṣaṇṇvedana (self-consciousness) was first proposed by Sautrāntika and inherited by Vijñānavāda school. On the contrary, the Vaibhāṣika and Mādhyamika schools refute the knowledge of self-awareness. This thesis will put forth genuine philosophical dialogues, argumentation and defenses in the traditional texts of these Buddhist schools in order to make justice to the complicated ontological and epistemological issues involved in the conception. I will examine whether different lines of thinking on the doctrine of self-cognition can be reconciled so as to offer a coherent account of Vijñānavāda’s standpoint. The
present study is a humble attempt to reconstruct and recapture the theory of knowledge presented by the Vijñānavāda School. The contributions of various Buddhist philosophers in the light of their theories evoked from their adversarial criticisms will be assessed. The objective of this research is to provide an overview of justification of these argumentation in order to give the readers a preliminary understanding of the Indian debates on the issues of *svāsāṇvedana*.

1.3 The Construction of the Thesis

In order to have a comprehensive study of the theory, the whole thesis is divided into six chapters including introduction and conclusion. Chapter one sets out to give an account of issues to be discussed in this thesis and the approach of the research. The second chapter deals with the evolution of ideas of *svāsāṇvedana* from the historical perspective of Indian philosophy. I will try to trace the preliminary meaning of self-cognition from some classical Indian schools with particular interests with Nyāya and Vedānta schools. The views on the knowledge of knowledge (*svāsāṇvedana*) of these two schools will be introduced as an appreciation of the philosophical concerns of the Buddhist scholars. Through tracing the origin and various meanings of the concept *svāsāṇvedana* under different systems of Buddhist Schools, it is hoped that this would shed more light on the background for understanding the underlying principles of the Vijñānavāda doctrines.

The third and fourth chapters are devoted to the central theme of self-cognition. The third chapter will present Dignāga's own postulation on the term of *svāsāṇvedana* and his defense of self-cognition. Dignāga demonstrates in his writings the importance of *svāsāṇvedana* in the knowing process. Dharmakirti
succeeds the doctrine of self-cognition propounded by Dignaga. In commenting on
Dignāga’s theory of self-cognition, Dharmakīrti presents his own thoughts to the
same issues in depth. In order to have an understanding of the distinct views of
Dignāga and Dharmakīrti, I will compare their similarity and difference and indicate
the relationship between the two philosophers in the fourth chapter.

After Dignāga’s effort in setting up the foundation of svasaṭṭhvedana, his
theory had great impact on later stage of the Vijñānavāda School. In particular, there
were two main streams of the intellectuals of Vijñānavāda, the Sākāra-vijñānavāda
(consciousness with the form of an object) and Nirākāra-vijñānavāda (consciousness
without the form of object). They put great effort in redefining and defending the
self-cognition theory against various criticisms. Representative of
Sākāra-vijñānavāda is Dharmapāla. Representatives of Nirākāra-vijñānavāda are
Sthiramati and Nanda. The exposition of the meanings of svasaṭṭhvedana in various
aspects will be the task of the fifth chapter.

In Ch’eng Wei-Shih Lun (The Treatise of the Doctrine of Mere-consciousness)\(^3\),
both streams of Vijñānavāda tried to give self-consciousness new insights to explore
the structure of cognition in deeper sense. According to these Buddhist philosophers,

\(^3\) *The great Chinese monk-scholar, Hsyian-tsang in the seventh century, translated Ch’eng Wei-Shih
Lun.* When Hsiian-tsang traveled to India for studying at the Buddhist University of Nalanda, he
discovered Vasubandhu’s *Trīṃśika* (Treatise of Thirty Stanzas or Thirty Verses) along with ten prose
commentaries by Dharmapāla, Sthiramati, Nanda, etc. The “Thirty Verses” and the ten commentaries
became the basis for Hsiian-tsang’s *Ch’eng Wei-Shih Lun.* Originally, Hsiian-tsang intended to
translate each of these Sanskrit commentaries into Chinese. Later on, Hsiian-tsang accepted the
suggestion from his disciple, K’uei Chi, to selectively translate the most important ideas of the ten
commentaries. Among the ten commentators, the views of Dharmapāla, Sthiramati and Nanda are
consistently used and Hsiian-tsang appreciates Dharmapāla’s interpretation as the most correct view.
That was how *Ch’eng Wei-Shih Lun* was compiled and translated. This treatise mainly elaborates
Vasubandhu’s *Trīṃśkā* and establishes the fundamental doctrines of vijñāpīti-mātra (Mind-only).
Therefore, *Ch’eng Wei-Shih Lun* includes the philosophical views of various Vijñānavādins and is
praised by the Chinese Buddhists as the most authoritative and comprehensive elaboration of the
Vijñānavāda system. In participating with the translation of this great work, K’uei Chi also recorded
down the verbal explanation of Hsiian-tsang. His notes were composed into the *Commentary of
Ch’eng Wei-Shih Lun* (abbr. The Commentary). Hence, this commentary preserves the important
thinking of Hsiian-tsang. K’uei Chi is well-known in the Chinese Buddhism because he establishes an
independent school known as Fa-hsiang School or Wei-shih School preaching the doctrines of
the composition of a consciousness can be divided into onefold, twofold, threefold and fourfold divisions under different interpretation. In support of the "Mind-only" theory, they apply the causal relation to explain the conformity of 'act and content' of cognition. These denote the coordination between cause of knowledge and result of knowledge. Chapter five will illustrate the different standpoints of Sākāra-vijñānavādin and Nirākāra-vijñānavādin and their contributions to the framework of viññāpti-mātra (Mind-only) system.

Self-awareness (svaṃnvedana) is one of the notable issues in the dialogues between various Buddhist schools and some other philosophical schools in India. Based upon the arguments and defense among the Buddhist scholars, I will analyze their points of view from the epistemological, ontological and soteriological perspectives and assess their importance in the Mind-only philosophical system in the final chapter. It is hoped to identify the essential features and the validity of Buddhist doctrine of self-recognition in relation with the other traditional Indian schools.

1.4 Research Methodology

The approach adopted in this thesis is mainly philosophical conceptual analysis together with textual commentaries. I plan to make a thorough inquiry of svaṃnvedana under the history of Buddhist thought, to trace the origin of this concept and the relationship with some important doctrines of Indian Buddhism. To furnish the historical background on the evolution of the notion of self-consciousness, I will track down the philosophical opinion and dispute over svaṃnvedana of some Buddhist schools. I will elucidate their views and arguments with respect to their

Mind-only (viññāpti-mātra).
assumptions, justifications and philosophical beliefs. As I believe this "self-consciousness" is the main doctrine of the Mind-only School, this research will center upon works of several Buddhist thinkers between the fifth and seventh centuries, representing the peak periods of philosophical inquiry, exegesis and systematic hermeneutics in India Buddhism. Through the plurality of interpretations from some influential Buddhist thinkers, I will demonstrate how their views proved to be advantageous to the understanding of Buddhist *svaśānvedana*.

Concerning the evaluation of the Buddhist thinkers' contributions to the doctrine of *svaśānvedana* in various stages of development, I will treat Dignāga's view on reflexive knowledge as the central theme of Buddhist theory of self-cognition. To put emphasis on Dignāga's thought as a frame of reference, it will be easier for us to know how Dignāga's framework is derived and to see the extent of advancement or drawback of those post-Dignāga Buddhist philosophers in refining the theory of self-consciousness. After exploring the inter-religious dialogue of the Buddhist thinkers, the main themes of various thoughts and their contributions to the Vijñānavāda philosophical system should be clear to the readers.

For the present research, the sources of major treatises come from existing English translations and commentaries of Buddhist scriptures, supplemented with literary works and research findings. There are also recent publications, academic dissertations and articles as reference. Since the details of *vijñāpti-mātra* (consciousness only) viewpoints and philosophical discourses are preserved in Hsüan-tsang's *Ch'eng Wei-Shi Lun*, this treatise would be the main source of reference in this research work. Presently there are one Chinese version in Buddhist canon⁴ and two English translation works available for reference.⁵ In addition,

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⁴ The Chinese translation of *Ch'eng Wei-Shi Lun* can be referred in the Japanese Taishō Tripitaka
both Chinese and English translation of Dignāga’s Pramāṇasamuccaya (A Collection on the Means of Cognition)\textsuperscript{6} and Dharmakīrti’s Pramāṇavārttika (A Commentary on Dignāga’s Pramāṇasamuccaya)\textsuperscript{7} will form the basis of the Vijnānavādin thinking of this thesis.

If the concept of self-cognition can be explained and organized in a comprehensive way, it will help to resolve some traditional epistemological problems concerning perceiving knowledge and to gain new insights on its philosophical implication and significance in Buddhist doctrines.

\textsuperscript{6} The English translations by the contemporary scholars include the following works: (1). Translated by Wei Tat, Ch’eng Wei-Shih Lun, The Doctrine of Mere-Consciousness, (The Ch’eng Wei-Shih Lun Publication Committee, Hong Kong, 1973). (2). Tr. by Francis H.Cook, Three Texts on Consciousness Only. One of the three texts is Demonstration of Consciousness Only by Hsiian-tsang, (Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research 1999.) The work of Wei Tat is the first complete English translation available for the Western readers. I will frequently refer this book because it includes some word of K’uei Chi’s Commentary that I consider to be more useful for this thesis.

\textsuperscript{7} Dr. Masaaki Hattori translated the first chapter in Dignāga, On Perception, (Harvard University Press, 1968) with detailed annotation.

CHAPTER TWO

THE CONCEPT OF SVASAṀVEDANA IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

As an important part of the Vedas, the Upaniṣads are the foundational texts of the classical Indian philosophy. For the Indian tradition, philosophy evokes a sacred pursuit of truth. The search for the truth itself implies a search for liberation as an end. Needless to say, the truth making one free from bondage signifies salvation in the domain of religion. For the Indian philosophers, knowledge (vīdyā) is central to philosophy as it inspires an insight into the reality. Specifically, it is understood as a light that dispels the gloom of darkness in the process of enlightenment. It signifies a process that involves a deepening or heightening of the consciousness that frees one from constraints and ignorance of ordinary life.

The foremost problem confronting an inquirer searching for the truth of life is the ascertainment of knowledge, its nature, its mode of activities and its validity. What are the means of valid knowledge? Is validity cognized from the sources of the perceiving self or from some other sources? Some hold that knowledge is cognized by itself and others maintain that it is cognized through an apperception. Some regard knowledge as a mental substance while others assume that it is a property. Since the Buddhist doctrine of self-cognition (svasamvedana) involves divergence of opinions on these interesting epistemological topics, I will put forth the inter-religious dialogues of the Buddhists with reference to philosophical views from

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1 The name Veda denotes sacred knowledge or wisdom. There are four Vedas, the Ṛg Veda comprises of hymns, the Yajur Veda deals with sacrificial formulas, the Śaṁa Veda refers to melodies and the Atharva Veda comprises a large number of magic formulas. Each of the Vedas contains four sections: Sāhītī (a collection of hymns, prayers, benedictions, sacrificial formulas, and litanies), Brāhmaṇas (prose treatises discussing the significance of sacrificial rites and ceremonies), Āranyaka (forest-texts), which are partly included in the Brāhmaṇas and partly reckoned as independent, and finally Upaniṣads (philosophical interpretation of the Vedas). These scriptures are looked upon by many Hindus as the original source of wisdom about truth and therefore claimed to be authoritative.

2 The Upaniṣads that provide the philosophic interpretation of the Vedas texts literally mean 'the end
some influential Indian schools concerning the same subject.

2.1 Theory of Self-cognition in Traditional Indian Philosophy

2.1.1 Self-revealing Knowledge found in Upaniṣads

The stories and dialogues in the Upaniṣads reveal inspired observations of the seers in the face of reality. The Upaniṣadic text says that the world is derived from Brahman as the creator or manifestator thereof. Thus the Upaniṣads advocate the realization of the self through a kind of mystical intuition can transcend all language as well as categories of understanding. This sort of knowledge evokes a feeling of pure experience in a receptive mind. The pure experience is illustrated as ‘innerlight’ or ‘light of self’. The Sanskrit word svaprakāśatva denotes a kind of self-revealing or self-luminous knowing. The analogy of light is commonly used to exemplify the essential character of reflexive awareness so that one “knows that one knows”. It seems that the Buddhist concept of svasamvedana (self-consciousness) may be correlated with the svaprakāśatva (self-luminosity) expressed by the Upaniṣads.

According to the Upaniṣadic utterances, some meta-descriptions of experience are employed in describing the cognitive state, e.g. ‘knowledge of knowledge’, ‘consciousness of consciousness’, ‘awareness of awareness’, etc. Based on the interpretation of the Indian philosophers, such knowledge is not effected or produced at all since self-awareness is the very being of awareness. If knowledge is not self-revealing, nothing can manifest it. No organ can apprehend it and no act can effect its manifestation. As described in the Upaniṣads, ‘He is eternity among eternal’, ‘the principle of consciousness among conscious being’. These sentences affirm phenomenal knowledge and its validity derived from the spiritual reality of the Vedas.
(Brahman). Both the knower and the known in a knowledge relation are ascription of the same reality. As a principle of revelation, knowledge is self-effulgent (svaprapāśa) with its identity with the Brahman. The reality to be known and the knower coalesce into one, i.e., ātmān (the self) is Brahman.

The description of knowledge as ‘luminosity’ is a helpful metaphor for understanding the concept of self-cognition. A possible explanation of how ‘knowledge’ comes to be conceived as ‘light’ in ancient Indian philosophy is that knowledge illuminates objects as light illuminates things. As said by Dr. Chaturvedi, “The analogy of light thus illustrates the essentially revelatory character of experience. It is visualized as the basal effulgence, illuminating the objects as well as its own identity as the illuminator.”

The basic and irreducible postulation of realistic epistemology, i.e. the knower, the means of knowledge, and the object known, are assimilated to concepts of subject and object. Our cognition of objects is expressed in terms of the ‘principle of revelation’ and the ‘phenomenon revealed’. It is obvious that self-luminosity (svaprapāśatva) is the unique distinction of the principle of revelation. The self and the objects are recognized as two necessary referents of the principle of revelation. On the ground that cognition is effulgent, its luminous character obliging the object would never fail to reveal because no other thing can mediate between the principle of revelation and its revelation. For example, a lamp does not require the aid of another lamp for illuminating things in the dark. Likewise, knowledge does not need any further cognitive act for self-revelation. The self-revealing knowledge described in the Upaniṣads is fundamental to the Indian philosophy about ‘one knows that one knows’.

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3 Dr. Girdhari Lal Chaturvedi, *The Concept of Self-Luminosity of Knowledge in Advaita Vedānta,*
2.1.2 Rival Systems about Knowledge of Knowledge

The epistemological thinkers in India formulated different theories of cognition. Among the six so-called orthodox schools of Indian philosophy advocating the Brahmanical tradition, these are Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Mīmāṃsā, Vedānta, Śaṅkhya and Yoga school. Since the Buddhist philosophers encounter persisting confrontation from the Nyāya and Vedānta, I will present the rival theories proposed by these two schools.

Vedānta is probably the most popular philosophical system of Indian thought. The popularity of Śaṅkarā in the seventeenth century owes much to his systematization of the advaita (non-dual) theory of knowledge expounded in the Upaniṣads. The Vedāntins focus on inquiring the cognitive means for apprehension of the reality. To their understanding, it is a direct non-dual experience of self-luminous reality. In the words of the Vedāntins, the goal of liberation is described as ‘the knower of (ultimate) reality becomes ultimate reality’ or ‘knowledge is the realization of identity.’ It is clear that the soteriology of the Vedānta comprises both epistemic and ontological components.

From the advaita point of view, the Brahman (the spiritual reality) or ātman (the individual self) is the same as cognition. Thus cognition means pure consciousness which is timeless and changeless. From the transcendental perspective, cognition is not only non-dual but also eternal. The self is known to be self-revealing (svapprakāśa), that is, the self need not depending on other means to reveal itself. The Vedāntins ascertain that the self as pure consciousness is self-revealing. Such thinking is in close proximity to an excerpt quoted from

**Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad:** “This person (puṇḍra) is self-luminous (svayam jyotiḥ).”

Cognition in the secondary sense of modification of reflectivity exists from the empirical perspective. When something are perceived, the inner organ executes through an external sense organ assuming the form (ākāra) of the perceived objects. That is why on the mundane level, sentient beings remain ignorance about the true nature of the self. Only when ignorance is dispelled, the true nature of reality could be known because the mode of reflectivity is vanished.

Among the Indian philosophical school, the Nyāya is famous in the spheres of logic and epistemology. Traditionally, the Nyāya scholars are called the Logicians. The *Nyāya-Sūtra* written by Gautama (ca. 100-200 A.D.) is one of the earliest philosophical treatises which investigates the sources of valid knowledge as its prime concern. To a large extent, this treatise provides the terminology and theoretical framework for subsequent Indian epistemology and logic. It discusses the possibility of acquiring correct knowledge, its verifiability and its practical use.

The Naiyāyikas hold that true knowledge necessarily originates from a source, which can be nothing else, but the means of valid cognition (*pramāṇa*). This is because true knowledge of a thing is acquired through the means of valid cognition. The Sanskrit word ‘pramāṇa’ possesses the meaning of ‘measure’, ‘standard’ and ‘criterion’, etc. The meaning of pramāṇa is translated as ‘true cognition’ or ‘means of valid cognition’. It is an important terminology of the Indian epistemology concerning with source of knowledge as well as apprehension of the truth. That is why some modern scholars named the Indian epistemology as pramāṇa theory. *The Commentary of the Nyāya Sūtra* by Pakṣilasvāmin (about 4th Century) quotes the following statements:

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* See Kisor Kumar Chakrabarti, *Classical Indian Philosophy of Mind, The Nyāya Dualist Tradition,*
A means of valid cognition possesses the object, because of the appropriateness of [human] activity [with regard to the object] when the object is cognized through a means of valid cognition. The correct knowledge brought forth by a means of valid cognition enables the cognizer to act with regard to objects, and enables him (or her) to make the appropriate choices concerning these objects. The veracity of the cognition is gauged precisely from this ability to make the right choices; practical utility is thus the measuring-rod of truth.  

The implicit meaning of appropriate act with regard to objects refers to the striving of the cognizer being desirous of obtaining or avoiding an object which give rise to the happiness or letting go the suffering respectively. With true knowledge, it can help us to make the proper choices of action in our daily life. The utility of correct knowledge is established in this regard.

The term ‘pramāṇa’ is frequently used to mean ‘various instrumental causes leading to true cognition’. The Naiyāyikas attempt to unite the pramāṇa theory with another theory called prakāśa (the apprehension of cognition itself). The main subject of the prakāśa theory is the question “How do I know that I know?”

Dr. Matilal gives a detailed account of the Nyāya’s view on the knowledge of knowledge as follows:

We perceive a cognitive event by an inner perception, technically called anuvyavasāya, which arises in the wake of the first cognition. In other words, if K₁ is a cognitive state which apprehends an object a and K₂ is another cognitive state which apprehends K₁, then K₁≠K₂. It is, however, conceded that K₂ may not happen at all after K₁ in some cases if any counteracting situation (pratibandhaka) develops. This theory is called paratahprakāśa, which means that cognition is not self-revelatory.  

The old Naiyāyikas hold that cognition is usually followed by another cognition which is an inward perceptual recognition of the first cognition. The second cognitive state or an inward perception is called anuvyavasāya. We may

8 Bimal Krishna Matilal, Logic. Language and Reality, (Delhi: Motila Banarsi dass Publisher 1990), p. 207.
distinguish the differences of these two cognitive episodes with the following expression. The verbal expression of a perceptual cognition takes the form ‘This is a pot’, but the verbal report of an anuvyasāya takes the form, ‘I see the pot’ or ‘I am aware that this is a pot’. These two awareness events, i.e. ‘I am aware’ and ‘this is a pot’, are different since a separate perceptual awareness is needed to apprehend the immediate preceding awareness.

Jayanta Bhāṭṭa (one of the leading commentator on the Nyāya-Sūtra in the tenth century), puts forward the theory of anuvyasāya. When an external sense-organ comes into contact with an object, there arises a cognition apprehending the object (jñātatā as an ‘apprehended-ness’ that ‘tinged with awareness’). This apprehension is unconscious of itself. The awareness of this apprehension is produced as the ‘subsequent apprehension’ (anuvyasāya) through the medium of an internal sense-organ or the mind (manas) that takes the first apprehension as its object. Since these two awarenesses are not arisen simultaneously, one needs an inference to be aware of one’s awareness. Thus, according to the Naiyāyikas, a cognition cognized by another cognition is in this way posited not perceptual.9

To the Naiyāyikas, the analogy of a light for cognition is inappropriately used by the Vedāntins to explain the cognitive activity. It is no doubt that a lamp does not need another lamp to reveal itself. However, in a cognitive state, will it be revealed by another cognitive state? The Naiyāyikas argue that a lamp serves as an aid to the eyes as light reveals things; therefore, another lamp is not needed. For them, cognition (pramāpa) is characterized, as intentionally conscious of an external object but is unconscious of itself. It is only by another subsequent cognition that the preceding cognition can be apprehended.

9 See Bimal Krishna Matilal, Perception, (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1986), p. 143-144, 156 and
However, if cognition is not self-revealing and is to be revealed by another cognition, a fault of infinite regress would be inevitable. That is to say, we need a second cognition to reveal the first cognition, a third cognition to reveal the second cognition and so on to infinity. This is the general criticism to the Nyāya’s view on the knowledge of knowledge.

The difference between Vedānta and Nyāya on the issue of knowledge of knowledge is that the Vedāntins emphasize the self-luminosity of pure experience in a transcendental state whilst the Nyāya’s cognition of cognition is established by an inference of the empirical experience.\(^{10}\) It is worth the effort in distinguishing different perspectives of conceptual models under different cultural frameworks for an appreciation of the philosophical concerns, notably the Vedānta and the Nyāya. Likewise, similar inquiry and constitution of the self-awareness consciousness are widely discussed by the Buddhist scholars.

2.2 The Origin of the Buddhist Concept of Svasamvedana

To trace the origin of the Buddhist concept of \textit{svasamvedana} (self-consciousness), we have to refer to the Buddhist scriptures. There are relevant texts discussing the self-conscious experience in the early Buddhism. As said by the Buddha, the human beings compose of five aggregates (\textit{pañca-skandha}) including the physical and mental aspects. The mental aspect includes feeling (\textit{vedanā}), conceptualization (\textit{saññā}), disposition (\textit{saṅskāra}) and cognition (\textit{vijñāna}) that are interacted in the cognitive process. In the \textit{Āgama Sūtra}, Buddha once mentioned a state of self-consciousness of feeling, perception and reflection during the cognitive

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\(^{10}\) The Mīmāṃsā school of Brahmanical philosophy also developed a distinctive theory of the
process.

Monks, herein to Nanda recognized feelings rise, recognized they endure, recognized they set; recognized perceptions rise, recognized they endure, recognized they set; recognized reflections rise, recognized they endure, recognized they set. Monks, this is the way for Nanda to mindfulness and self-possession.\textsuperscript{12}

During the practice of mindfulness, the subjective mental faculties like feeling, perception, reflection, etc., are objects to be recognized. It can be treated as a kind of mind training to inspire our innate endowments.

A detailed exemplar of the contemplation of feeling can be found in the "Discourses on feeling" of the Āgama Sūtra:

And how, bhikkhus [monks], is a bhikkhu mindful? Here, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu dwells contemplating the body in the body, ardent, clearly comprehending, mindful, having put away covetousness and displeasure in regard to the world. He dwells contemplating feelings in feelings ... mind in mind ... phenomena in phenomena, ardent, clearly comprehending, mindful, having put away covetousness and displeasure in regard to the world. It is in such a way that a bhikkhu is mindful.... there has arisen in him a pleasant feeling, he understands thus: ‘There has arisen in me a pleasant feeling’.....If he feels a pleasant feeling, he understands: ‘It is impermanent’; he understands: ‘It is not held to’; he understands: ‘It is not delighted in.'\textsuperscript{13}

This text describes an awareness of pleasant feeling experienced by the monks during the contemplation. The same practice of cultivating the awareness of one’s feeling is applied to a painful feeling and a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling as well. The revelation of ‘a feeling of a feeling’ highlights the essence of Buddhist meditation is to maintain an awareness of our mental states so as to remove our ignorance. Also in epistemological sense, this statement demonstrates how subjective emotion can be objectified to apprehending consciousness. The

\textsuperscript{11} svatathpramāṇa “self-establishedness” of all knowledge. However, it is not possible to treat this here.
\textsuperscript{12} The word ‘recognized’ in Pāli is Vidita which also means ‘known’ or ‘ascertained’.
meta-description of experience of this kind should be relevant to ‘a cognition of a
cognition’ and the like. These literatures indicate that one can cognize both feeling
of oneself and the object simultaneously. This can be regarded as the original
meaning of the concept of svāsātmāvedana (self-consciousness) though the exact
terminology is not found in ancient Buddhist scriptures. Nevertheless, the
application of this concept is largely at the realm of meditative practice and
soteriology in early Buddhism.

2.3 Proponents and Opponents on Svāsātmāvedana by
Influential Buddhist Schools

Since there is little evidence found from the early Buddhist canons about the
notion of self-cognition (svāsātmāvedana), the Buddhist philosophers take different
attitudes towards the theory of recognition. I will briefly discuss the different
viewpoints of four influential Buddhist schools with respect to the doctrine of
self-cognition. These schools include Vaibhāṣika, Sautrāntika, Mādhyamika and
Vijñānavāda. For the Indian Buddhism, two philosophical views known as realism
and idealism oppose each other in inquiring into the nature of reality. For the realists,
they hold that the external world is real and exists in the form as it is experienced.
On the contrary, the idealists assert that the so-called ‘external world’ does not exist
independently of our perceiving knowledge. The former two schools are realists and
representatives of the orthodox Hīnayāna (Small Vehicle) whilst the latter two
schools are idealists belonging to the Mahāyāna (Great Vehicle) tradition. Each
school formed a theory of knowledge on which its metaphysical structure is built.
Their belief in a particular theory is grounded in the fact that to philosophize is to
reflect on the nature of reality given in experience. Therefore, these Buddhist
thinkers attempt to provide a firm epistemological basis for their theory of reality.

2.3.1 The Vaibhāṣika School

To begin with, one sect of the Hīnayāna, the Vaibhāṣika is named as the ‘Great Exposition School’ for their contribution of compiling the Abhidharma Piṭaka (A Collection of Sophisticated Scriptural Texts). The Buddhist doctrines are systemized and elucidated from all perspectives in the Abhidharma. A distinct characteristic of the Abhidharma is that those Abhidharma scholars employ a variety of selective, precise and impersonal terminologies for the elaboration of the Buddhist texts. The main theme of the Vaibhāṣika philosophy is “the existence of the substance of everything remain unchanged during the three periods of time, i.e. past, present, and future”.¹⁴ This gives the Vaibhāṣika the name of Sarvāstivādins. All kinds of existences can be classified into five basic categories, i.e. the matter, mind, mental factors, compositional factors not associated (with either mental or physical factors), and finally the uncompounded phenomena. Each category composes of various substantial entities. Each entity possesses a specific function that is independent and can last permanently in the past, present and future. Since the phenomena are mainly analyzed into two distinct groups of reality as mind and matter by the Vaibhāṣikas, it is generally agreed that their philosophy is one of the realistic dualism in the Buddhist school of tenet.

With respect to the realistic dualism maintained by the Vaibhāṣika, there is an important point that should not be lost sight of, i.e. dependent origination or causality (pratītya śamutpāda), the central doctrine of Buddhism. The essence of pratītya śamutpāda is that things arise depending on causes and conditions which

indicate the interrelationship of all things in the universe. The substantial mental and physical entities asserted by the Vaibhāṣika are unique and discrete. Dependent on other conditions, these units of existence account for the casual efficiency (arthā kriya karitva) that constitutes a particular phenomenon.

The principal Buddhist thoughts are the ideas of impermanence (anitva) and nonsubstantiality (anāman). To the Vaibhāṣika, the reality that is generally understood in terms of physical and mental phenomenon is a series of changing moments (ksaṇa) as existence is a flux. The discrete momentary existence explains the reality of incessant change in terms of dependent origination. The real is always changing, but the change is not accidental since it is causally regulated. Permanence of a thing is an illusion. In this sense, the Vaibhāṣika’s substantial existent is an approach for interpretation of the dependent arising doctrine. The doctrine of impermanence, which was subsequently formulated as the doctrine of momentariness (ksanikavada) of all existence, is then linked up with the doctrine of dependent origination constituting the essence of the Vaibhāṣika’s ontology.

With regard to the definition of an ultimate truth (pāramārthika sat), the Vaibhāṣika holds that substantial existence means that the irreducible material substance cannot be broken by force or mental state divided into a point instant is considered as mental substance. The idea of ‘substance’ (svabhāva) is itself not derived or is irreducible. In contrast with the ultimate truth, the conventional truth can be understood in this way, either a physical object being destroyed or a mental state being separated into individual parts, the awareness of that phenomenon is subsided. A clay pot is a good example to illustrate the conventional truth (satīnārta sat) because, if a clay pot is broken by a hammer, the consciousness apprehending
that object as a clay pot is perished.\textsuperscript{15}

The Vaibhāṣika school upholds a realist view on a dualism of mental and physical elements. Based on their ontological ground, the scholars of Vaibhāṣika assert that knowledge of various sorts must be assigned with some sorts of existence. In light of consciousness and object in physical world are in separate category, they maintain that an object may exist independently of the cognizing consciousness. Likewise, a cognizing consciousness may also exist independently of the object. One point to be noted is that the mind directly cognizes the form of the object as it is. The native realism held by the Vaibhāṣika assumes that the experiential content in perception is identical with the external object.

According to the \textit{Abhidharmadīpa}, this demonstrates a theory of direct perception as well as the real existence of the object upheld by the Vaibhāṣika:

The substance called eye is of the nature of that which sees [a “seer”]. In it is produced an action of seeing, when its power is awakened on account of the emergence of the totality of its causes and conditions. The eye does not apprehend independently of consciousness (\textit{vijñāna}), nor does the eye-consciousness know the object unsupported by the active eye. The eye as well as eye-consciousness, with the help of such accessories as light, cooperate simultaneously toward bringing the perception of a given object. The object, the eye, the eye-consciousness, and the light, all manifest their power, i.e., become active and flash forth simultaneously. The object appears, the eye sees, and the eye-consciousness knows it. This is called the direct knowledge of an object.\textsuperscript{16}

The Vaibhāṣika asserts external objects as being truly established but does not accept self-cognizing consciousness, i.e. an awareness of mind itself simultaneously with its awareness of an object.\textsuperscript{17} From the Vaibhāṣika’s point of view, since the


mind is defined as a mental activity that can intentionally perceive an object, it is self-evidently absurd that the perceiving consciousness can be self-witness inwardly. Otherwise, the claim that each entity possesses a particular and definite feature would be violated. They deny the conception of *svasamvedana* by saying that a finger cannot point at itself. The underlying principle in this context is that the mind cannot see the mind. Thus the Vaibhasika refutes the view that the mind can take a cognitive object in a subject-object relationship.

It seems to me that the Vaibhāṣika holds a similar theory of cognition with that of the Nyāya’s. The similarity of their thinking is that the cognition does not possess a character of reflexive awareness and therefore they both reject the notion of self-cognition. The difference between these two schools is that the Vaibhāṣika asserts that awareness of an object is known at the very instant and thus denies ‘cognition of cognition’. But for the Naiyāyikas, they do have a theory of ‘cognition of cognition’ although the cognition is obtained from a reflective awareness in a succeeding moment.

2.3.2 The Sautrāntika School

Another sect of Hinayana Buddhism known as Sautrāntika School is also designated as realism. Like the Vaibhāṣika, the Sautrāntika also creates a dichotomy between elements of matter and mind. In this regard, the Sautrāntika also shares the realistic dualism with the Vaibhāṣika school. But the theory of Sautrāntika school is a form of realism standing midway between realism and idealism as they adapt the representative theory of perception. According to Sautrāntika thinkers, an external object exists irrespective of its being apprehended by the mind. The external objects are the cause of reflection in the form of image to the consciousness through
sensory organs. In other word, the perceptual consciousness only apprehends the appearance of the external object through sensory organs. What is directly cognized is the representation of the object and not the transcendental object itself. The Sautrāntika maintain the representative theory of perception, or the theory of the inferability of the external object. The agnostic tradition of Sautrāntika offers an analogy with the representation theory advocated by Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). Kant asserts that ‘things-in-themselves’ or ‘objects in themselves’ are unknowable. What we call outer objects is nothing but mere representation of our sensibility. The existence of external objects is presupposed as a cause for the appearances as a result of mental representation.\(^{18}\)

As said by Dr. Masaaki Hattori, the theory of *svasaṁvitti* or *svasaṁvedana* is maintained by the Sautrāntika and the Yogācāra (i.e. Vijñānavāda). The word “svasaṁvedana” (self-cognition) is expressive of the thought that cognition is cognized by itself and does not need another cognition to cognize itself. When a man has the cognition of something blue, he has at the same time the awareness of the cognition of something blue. This awareness is caused by nothing other than the cognition itself. Thus, the definition of self-consciousness is that cognition cognizes itself while cognizing an object, just as a lamp illuminates itself while illuminating an object. \(^{19}\)

I would infer that Sautrantikas’ *svasaṁvedana* is derived from the early Buddhism with regard to the feeling aggregates. Feeling is a typical example to exemplify the self-cognitive state. This is because feeling is a subjective mental state and is also a primary object for introspection. The mental functions can be

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objectified particularly in the feelings of happiness and unhappiness. When we perceive a patch of blue and at the same time experience a feeling of pleasure, we are conscious of something other than the mental object. This feeling accompanying a visual sensation is a mental state that is self-conscious. The situation of every consciousness is the same. The mental state in a cognitive event apprehends an object and the cognition altogether. This should be the idea of self-cognition (svasaññvedana) asserted by Sautrāntika.

2.3.3 The Mādhyamika School

With the rise of Mahāyāna, the Prajñāparamitā Sūtra\(^2\) defines prajñā (perfect wisdom) as a non-dual knowledge free from discrimination for realizing that everything is non-substantial or emptiness in essence (śūnyatā). Perfect wisdom (prajñā) is a state of consciousness directed to all dharmas (either mental or physical existents). This consciousness realizes those dharmas not possessing any intrinsic essence in them. Attachment or false discrimination of separate entities of object and subject are removed as a result. Such nonduality of knowing is similar to that of the Upaniṣads and Advaita Vedānta’s svaprapakṣa (self-luminosity). The difference between svaprapakṣa and prajñā is that the former is realized through the self-identification with the universal substance whereas the latter is an intuition devoid of any inherent substantiality of existence.

The Mādhyamika is the most influential philosophy among the Buddhist schools. Nāgārjuna (2\(^{nd}\) Century) is said to be the founder of this school. This school is known as Mādhyamika because of its emphasis on madhyama pratipada, which is a practical middle path avoiding all extremes. Nāgārjuna advocates śūnyatā

\(^2\) The term Prajñāparamitā means ‘perfection of wisdom’ and the literature is devoted to an elucidation of the path towards the attainment of the supreme wisdom of the Buddha.
(emptiness) of all the existences on account of its dependent arising character. In Nāgārjuna’s Mūla-madhymaka-kārikā (The Philosophy of the Middle Way), he has made an attempt to provide a philosophical analysis of the interrelationship of emptiness (śunyatā) and dependent origination (pratītya śamutpāda) for all kinds of beings (dharma) expounded in the scriptures of Prajñāparamitā.

For the Mādhyamika philosophers, they refute any assertions of ontological substance of any kind. Nāgārjuna is one of the opponents against the ‘knowledge of knowledge’. To Nāgārjuna, any assertions of ‘cognition of cognition’ may inevitably lead to a false conception of self-existent from an ultimate analysis. That is why Nāgārjuna, in his various writings refutes the self-cognition theory either in the form of Nyāya’s anuvyavasāya or Vedānta’s svaprapāśa. Candrakīrti, an important follower of Nāgārjuna in the seventh century, is considered to be the founder of Prāsaṅgika school, a division of the Mādhyamika school. He advocates the same line of argument against self-cognition by adopting a reductio ad absurdum method of reasoning in his Path to the Middle. This is also the focal point of controversy between realism and idealism in later Tibetan Buddhism. In this research study, I have to confine the discussion to Nāgārjuna’s criticism of self-cognition theory.

The refutation of self-consciousness usually employed by the Mādhyamika (so as the Vaibhāṣika) can be traced back to the early Mahāyāna sūtra, Ratnacūḍaparipṛcchāsūtra (Questions of Ratnacūḍa Sūtra):

If just that which is observed is the mind, how could the mind see the mind? For, for example, a sword-edge is unable to cut just that sword-edge, and a fingertip is unable to touch just that fingertip.\(^{21}\)

In this text, the ‘mind’ is a valid means of knowledge, i.e. pramāṇa. ‘The mind

\(^{21}\) This text is quoted by Daniel Cozort in his Unique Tenets of the Middle Way Consequence School, (New York: Snow Lion Publications 1998), p. 158-159.
sees the mind’ is an expression of ‘cognition of cognition’ to illustrate that a mind is being observed by another mind. The proposition ‘the mind sees the mind’ can be equated with the Naiyāyikas’s concept of anuvyavasāya, i.e. one knows that one know. As I have mentioned earlier, the anuvyavasāya is a subsequent cognition of the immediate preceding cognition. According to Nāgārjuna, “The pramāṇas cannot be established by other pramāṇas because the logical defect of a regressus ad infinitum would be produced.” 22 Fernando Tola comments Nāgārjuna’s argumentation as follows: “The pramāṇa cannot attest the existence of the prameya (i.e. object), because its own existence or validity must be proved by another pramāṇa, and this other pramāṇa at its own turn needs another pramāṇa in order to be proved, and so on. In this way the logical defect of a regressus ad infinitum would be produced.”23 A sword-edge is unable to cut just that sword-edge and a fingertip is unable to touch just that fingertip are vivid examples to demonstrate the impossibility of the reflectivity of a cognition, i.e. a pramāṇa becomes an object (prameya) of another pramāṇa. Thus, Nāgārjuna rejects the claim that ‘if one knows then necessarily one knows that one knows’.

Another argument found in Nāgārjuna’s Vigrahavyāvartani (The Dialectical Method of Nāgārjuna)24 is to refute the proposition that the pramāṇas can establish themselves without the other pramāṇas. The editors say that Nāgārjuna aims at rejecting Vātsyāyana’s interpretation of Nyāyasutra II that “the pramāṇas establish

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22 Ed. & Tr. by Fernando Tola & Carmen Dragonetti, Nāgārjuna’s Refutation of Logic (Nyāya), Vaidalyaprakaraṇa, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1995), p.59. The Vaidalyaprakaraṇa is an important treatise of the Mādhyamika conception of logic. This text demonstrates a polemical character of the Mādhyamika directed against the Naiyāyikas’s logic and epistemology. The original Sanskrit text has not been preserved and this treatise is an English translation from the Tibetan text.
23 Ibid. p.102.
24 Tr. by Kamaleswar Bhattacharya, ed. by Johnston E. H. and Arnold Kunst, The Dialectical Method of Nāgārjuna, Vigrahavyāvartani, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1990, third edition). The original Sankrit text was long lost in India but later discovered in a Tibetan monastery. This English translation is based on the Sanskrit text. This work of Nāgārjuna presents argumentation and criticism against the Nyāya theory of knowledge.
themselves as well as other things." It seems to me that this refutation may also be directed against Vedānta's theory of svaprakāśa (self-luminosity). This text takes fire (instead of lamp) as an analogy for illuminating itself as well as other things. Likewise, the pramāṇas establish themselves as well as other things. To Nāgārjuna, this is a defective proposition. Fire does not illuminate itself because it is not perceived in darkness. As in the case of a pot, without being illuminated by fire, it is not perceived in darkness. Whilst being illuminated by fire, it is perceived. In the same manner, the fire, not being lighted, first existed in darkness. When the fire was lighted, then it can be perceived. The statement that fire illuminates itself as it illuminates other things is not valid.

The Mādhyamika School belongs to the Indian philosophical tradition that does not admit the pramāṇas as valid means of cognition in absolute sense. The general principle applied by Nāgārjuna is to assert both the pramāṇa (means of cognition) and the prameya (object) coming into existence only through their mutual relation of dependence. Pramāṇa and prameya are relative terms; one exists only in relation to the other. Just like the father and the son, it indicates that the father exists only in relation to the son. This further supports the basic opinion of Nāgārjuna that 'all things are devoid of an intrinsic nature' or 'voidness' (śūnyatā) in a sense of 'dependently originated' (pratītya samutpāda). To Nāgārjuna, any assertion on the nature of cognition and the object in absolute sense is ultimately invalid. Nevertheless, he does not deny the conventional meaning of the parmaṇas and the prameyas on the ground of the doctrine of dependent origination (pratītya samutpāda). However, any form of self-recognition is definitely not acceptable to Nāgārjuna even on the conventional level of reality.

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25 Ibid, p. 116. The first available commentary on Nyāyasūtra is the Nyāya-bhāṣya of Vātsyāyana
2.3.4 The Vijñānavāda School

The Vijñānavāda is one of the two major schools of Mahāyāna Buddhism. It flourished in India from the 4th to 12th century CE. Asaṅga (c.310-390) is believed to be the founder of Vijñānavāda school. Vasubandhu (c. 320-400), the younger brother of Asaṅga, wrote most of the fundamental literatures of Vijñānavāda. He sets forth and expounds the Mind-only or viṣṇāna-mātra doctrines. The adherents of this school held that the world is nothing but mind or consciousness (viṣṇāna-mātra) and repudiate the object of cognition existing externally and independent of the cognizing consciousness. Since the Vijñānavāda advocates consciousness alone is real, it is regarded as a specifically Buddhist idealism.  

(2nd century BCE)

26 Ibid, p117.

27 Concerning the idealistic thinking of Vijñānavāda, there are some modern scholars, such as Alex Wayman, Lambert Schmithausen, Thomas Kochumuttom, etc., they suggest that although Asaṅga and Vasubandhu deny the theories of realists such as the Vaibhāṣikas, they do not actually deny the existence of external objects. They raise the possibility that Vasubandhu and other Vijñānavādins assert only that external objects cannot appear directly to the mind. The mind instead possesses mere representations of those phenomena, with those representations being the same entity as the mind. They believe the confusion may be a result of consistent misinterpretation of Vijñānavāda’s position by subsequent Buddhist thinkers. The detailed analysis can be found from Alex Wayman, “A defense of Yogācāra Buddhism”, published in Philosophy East & West, Vol. 46, No. 4, Oct. 1996, p. 447-476.

To understand the position of Vijñānavāda in this aspect, I would refer to Daniel Cozort who cites some fragments from Vijñānavāda texts in his The Unique Tenets of the Middle Way Consequence School (p. 89):

Through relying on mind-only

One does not conceive of external objects.
Abiding in correct observation
One passes beyond mind-only as well.
And:
[Objects] do not appear as external objects as perceived.
The mind appears as various [objects through the power of predispositions].
[Because the mind is generated] in the likeness of bodies [senses],
enjoyments [objects of senses],
and abodes [physical sense organs and environments],
I have explained [that all phenomena are] mind-only.

According to the Vijñānavāda, although minds and their objects seem to us to be unconnected entities, they are actually one inseparable entity. Objects are different from the perceiving consciousness, but they are not different entities because there are no external objects acting as conditions for consciousnesses. Minds and appearances of objects arise simultaneously from a single cause, the ripening of a predisposition (vāsanā) established by a previous action (karma). All appearances of objects are caused by these karmic predispositions that are contained within a continuously operating consciousness called store-consciousness or alayavijñāna. Since there are no external objects

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What is the mode of activity and objects of perception? The philosophical view of the Mind-only school is that the fundamental consciousness appears naturally and spontaneously in the form of a perceiving act and a perceived image. We can refer to the verses of Mahāyāna Sūrālāmīkāra (The Dignity of the Great Vehicle):

The mind is always luminous by nature; the external incidents make it impure. There is no appearance before the mind without its concentration on dharma. Without the other mind there is no luminosity by nature. ²⁸

These verses point out the significance of the mind through which all appearance is manifested and therefore the objects outside the mind are deceptive because they are mental image only. The implication of this verse is that only the mind alone is reality and should be known. Without the consciousness of the mind, we would not be aware of the dharma (existent). In fact, the external world is nothing but internal images perceived by consciousness and being grasped as a source of attachment by thought.

As the verse 25 and 26 state:

And again one sees in the mind all the artha as reflected image. Then one has abandoned the projection of the graspable.
And then one rests only in the projection of one who grasps (knower), from then on, one touches quickly the immediate order in the samādhi. ²⁹

independent of consciousness, on account of latencies for the perception of external objects having been infused and subsequently ripening in the alayavijñāna, there are phenomena that are perceived as external objects. Through the mechanism of store-consciousness, together with the operation of predispositions and karmic theory, external objects are not necessary to explain the knowledge of consciousness. The appearance of objects and the perceiving consciousness arising from predispositions that are in the store-consciousness is feasible. It can only be the fruition of one’s own karma and one’s reactions to those events that determine the chain of latency-generated appearances that is one’s stream of experience.

My opinion is that to avoid misunderstanding, it is necessary for those modern interpretators to clarify the sūtras that seem so clearly indicating a denial of external objects. Besides, they have to provide good reasons why not only the Buddhists in the subsequent Indian, Tibetan and Chinese traditions, but also the Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Vedānta, and other Indian schools understood the Vijñānavāda position to be a rejection of external objects. In fact, it is difficult for us to determine precisely the true textual meaning of Asanga and Vasubandhu’s works. The outcome of the modern investigation of Vijñānavāda’s ontological view is interesting but the evidences are not sound enough to repudiate the idealistic views of Vijñānavāda.

²⁹Ibid, p. 268.
The above text illustrates that one who realizes everything is mind only since he sees that all the artha (objects) is actually a reflected image appearing to him. By realizing the artha of anything other than the 'mind only', he rejects the projection of the graspable and remains a grasper only. He then quickly immerses into a calm and peaceful state of samādhi (meditation). After that, the verse follows by saying:

Because the projection of grasper is abandoned immediately afterwards, one develops understanding of the state of brilliance etc., in its order. One obtains a knowledge which is separate from the grasp of the two, supra-mundane, unsurpassable, without differentiation, without stains. 30

From the above extracts, it may be noted that the origin of Mind-only theory is derived from an experience of meditation that cultivates a spiritual state of mind. Such experience is in some ways very close to that of the pure experience expressed in the Upaniṣads. The only difference is that the Mind-only school does not identify this knowledge with the Brahman as an original and eternal principle. Initially, self-consciousness (svasaṃvedana) in the Vijñānavāda context is intimately involved with the nondual consciousness only. It is regarded as a substratum for the polarization that forms the illusion of duality. Free from any discrimination, the true nature of the mind is one of a luminous and non-dual awareness as expounded in the Prajñāparamitā Sūtra. That is why it is an understanding of 'the state of brilliance'. This puts forth the idea of svasaṃvedana a vision of ontology.

From the Vijñānavāda point of view, both subject and object aspects are evolved from the mind because the cognitive object is also the very same mind. This explains why Buddha has said in The Satipatthānā śūtra Mahāyāna śūtra that the image of an object is not different from the mind because the image is simply cognition-only (vijñāpti-mātra). The following text explains how the mind observing
the mind:

Maitreya, although no phenomenon apprehends any other phenomenon, nevertheless, the mind that is generated in that way appears in that way. Maitreya, for instance, based on form, form itself is seen in a perfectly clear round mirror, but one thinks, 'I see an image'. The form and the appearance of the image appear as different factualities. Likewise, the mind that is generated in that way and the focus of samādhi known as the 'image' also appear to be separate factualities...... However, because childish beings with distorted understanding do not recognize these images as cognition-only, just as they are in reality, they misconstrue them. 31

This text explains how the object contemplated by the mind in a meditative state is cognition-only. Its implicit meaning can be expressed as 'the mind to see the very same mind'. That is why it says that 'no phenomenon [of mind] apprehends any other [physical] phenomenon'. Just like the image on the mirror, they are inseparably as an entity but they appear as different factualities. Originally this explanation is ascribed to an experience in meditation, but later on, the Vijñānavādins try to generate this phenomenon to our ordinary experience.

The claim that ‘the mind cannot see the mind’ in Questions of Ratnacūḍa Sūtra and ‘the mind to see the mind’ in The Sarīrakākhyāna Mahāyāna Sūtra are contradictory propositions found from the Buddhist scriptures. The exegesis of the textual meaning by the Buddhist philosophers gives rise to adverse position of the Buddhist thoughts. Based on the implicit meanings of these texts, the Vijñānavādins gradually develop the doctrine of svasaṃvedana (the self-cognition).

From the above historical background, we have a glance on how the philosophical inquiry of self-cognition has gradually acquired a component of self-aware subjectivity which epistemically grounds every cognition, so that one

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31 Tr. by John Power, Wisdom of Buddha, The Sarīrakākhyāna Mahāyāna Sūtra, (USA: Dharma Publishing 1994), p.155. This English translation is based on Tibetan Tripiṭaka (Buddhist canon). The original Sanskrit text is not available. This sūtra is authoritative to the Vijñānavādins since it forms the fundamental doctrine of viṣṇu-pāramitā.
knows that one knows. Some of the conceptual models and analysis are profitably reviewed in the light of another in the Indian philosophical tradition. Historically we can trace the concept of self-luminosity of experience from the Upaniṣads. It is primarily due to the efforts of the scholars of the Vedāntins, the Naiyāyikas and the Buddhists, that we can have an apprehension of its earliest systematic expositions. However, it is mainly due to the effort of Dignāga who formulates the doctrine of svasaṃvedana of the Vijñānavāda school in epistemic perspective that I will explore in next chapter.
CHAPTER THREE

DIGNĀGA'S VIEW ON REFLEXIVE KNOWLEDGE

In previous chapter, we have already discussed how the notion of self-consciousness (svasaṃvedana) is developed in the Indian philosophy. Its attributes and characteristics gradually come forth with a clearer meaning from different philosophical schools. The evolution of the concept also brings up rival theories and challenges from other Indian schools. Regarding the theory about knowledge of knowledge, we have Nyāya’s anuvyavasāya (cognition of cognition) and Vedānta’s svaprakāśatva (self-revelation theory of awareness) of the Bramanical tradition on the one hand, and four influential Buddhist schools on the other hand. The Vaibhāṣika-Mādhyamika refute but the Sautrāntika-Vijñānavāda advocate the svasaṃvedana (self-cognition). In postulating the doctrine of svasaṃvedana, Dignāga has undergone thorough consideration of proponents or opponents to the theory of knowledge of knowledge. This chapter attempts to expound Dignāga’s proposition on reflexive knowledge and how his theory has advanced the vijñāpti-mūtra doctrines and resisted the challenge from rival schools.

3.1 Vijñānavāda Cognitive Theory Prior to Dignāga

In the Buddhist camp, it was Sautrāntika who first proposed the notion of svasaṃvedana (self-consciousness), then followed by the Vijñānavāda to constitute
a refined system. Referring to Asaṅga’s works cited in last chapter, he speaks of a special state of mind with clear light and nondual attributes to be realized through the process of spiritual transcendence. The significance of this mental state is notably the formation of a primordial substratum that is beyond all conceptuality. When consciousness does not perceive an object, it stands in consciousness-only (vijñāpti-mātra). In such circumstance, the consciousness is not grasped as a subject since there is no object. This nonperception, which has no subject-object relation, is an extraordinary insight. Hence, this primordial substratum is spoken as ‘the very nature of mind’. Such mental state is an ‘awareness of the mind itself’ or ‘reflexive awareness’ that can be treated as a kind of self-consciousness (svasaṃvedana). This reflexivity of the primordial substratum is one of its most important characteristics. It is usually indicated in the metaphors as ‘luminosity’ or ‘lamplight’. It advocates the significance of mind cultivation that is crucial for the liberation of sentient beings. Owing to this soteriological concern, the Vijñānavāda emphasizes the practice of contemplating the minds in various stages. In this respect, this school is given the name of the Yogācāra.¹

The fundamental concept of the consciousness-only (vijñāpti-mātra) was originated from Asaṅga and systematized by Vasubandhu. Being the younger brother

¹ The meaning of “Yogācāra” is “practice of yoga”. The Vijñānavāda school is also named as Yogācāra for their emphasis on the yogic practice of the mind-only (vijñāpti-mātra) doctrine.
and disciple of Asaṅga, Vasubandhu succeeded the philosophy of his elder brother to a large extent. Nevertheless, he intends to provide a footing for the Buddhist epistemology. Various argumentations in his work undergone with ontological and epistemological considerations generate new insight and systematize the doctrines of mind-only (vijñāpti-mātra).

According to Asaṅga’s Mahāyānasamgraha (Compendium of the Great Vehicle)\(^2\), in every process of knowledge, the same consciousness consists of two elements: “an apprehended form (nimittavijñāpti)” and “an apprehending act (darsanavijñāpti)”. This is the basic structure of every consciousness. To explain the constituents of mind proposed by Asaṅga, Vasubandhu says that these two parts are produced in the process of knowing through mind transformation (vijñāna-parināma):

The various consciousness manifest themselves in what seem to be two divisions:
Perception (Darsanabhaga) and the object of perception (nimittabhaga). Because of this, Atman and dharmas do not exist. For this reason, all is mere consciousness.\(^3\)

The transformed consciousness is dualistic in a sense that it comprises the subjective aspect (perception) and the objective aspect (object of perception). The perceiving

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\(^2\) Asaṅga’s Mahāyānasamgraha is an important source for identification of the Vijñānavāda’s position. The original Sanskrit text was not available but the whole treatise was translated into Chinese by Hsüan-tsaṅ, Taishō 31, p. 132-152. Part of this treatise was translated into Tibetan and English.

\(^3\) Translated by Wei Tat, Ch’eng Wei-Shih Lun, The Doctrine of Mere-Consciousness, (The Ch’eng Wei-Shih Lun Publication Committee, Hong Kong, 1973), p. 503.
act (darśanabhāga) is an activity of [looking or discrimination] whilst the objective aspect (nimittabhāga) has the characteristic of the [objective] look.⁴ In other words, the consciousness possesses a capability of making an object to appear within the mind. The image that is the objective aspect of consciousness looks as if it were an external object.⁵ To Vasubandhu, that is how false conception of soul-substance (ātman as perceiving self) and external world (dharma as existent objects) is held by sentient beings. The doctrinal position of vijñānaparītāma (transformation of consciousness) by Vasubandhu is to deconstruct the ātman and dharma. It is this basis that Vasubandhu expounds a universal proposition that ‘Everything is nothing but representations of consciousness’. This statement is not just a claim to the nature of reality as dependent on mind from a metaphysical perspective, but it also concerns with the epistemic issue, the cognitive roots of knowledge.

Vasubandhu puts much effort on the elucidation of the doctrine of

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⁴ See Iso Kern, “The Structure of Consciousness According to Xuanzang”; (Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology, Vol. 19, No. 3, October 1988), p283. It should be noted that Iso Kern translates “Hsiian-tsang” as “Xuanzang”. The opinion of the writer presented in this article is based on Hsian-tsang’s translation of Dharmapāla’s interpretation.

⁵ The Mind-only school considers the so-called “external objects” as objective aspect transformed by the consciousness. It seems that the intentional characteristic of consciousness asserted in the vijnāpati-mātra theory is close to the intentionality of consciousness advocated by the phenomenologists. In fact, Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) thinks that the dichotomy of “internal” and “external” is not accurate in characterizing intentionality of consciousness. Since he rejects both naturalism and psychologism, he contends that “internal objects” are identical with “external objects”. There is no difference between internal and external for the intentional structure of consciousness. The intentional object is known only as something constituted by the intentional consciousness. Phenomenology thus becomes a study of the principles governing the intentional act by which an object is ‘constituted’ out of the hyletic data. Husserl’s view of consciousness meant a critical concern with epistemological issues, it is a recognition that knowledge comes through cognition. His thoughts are extensively appropriated by his successors, from Heidegger, Fink, Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, etc., and subsequently formed a philosophical school.
consciousness-only (vijñāpti-mātra) with emphasis on the fundamental structure of consciousness. Although there are not many words concerning the reflectivity of the consciousness in terms of self-cognition (svaśaṃvedana), the fundamental mind structure during evolution implies knowledge arisen from within. This is the realm that interests Dignāga to advance his teacher’s philosophy for developing a theory of ‘knowledge about knowledge’. It is Dignāga who adopts Sautrāntika’s thought on cognition of cognition, Asaṅga’s idea of self-luminosity in meditative state and Vasubandhu’s views of mind transformation to formulate the svasaṃvedana or self-cognition in epistemological sense. Through justifying svasaṃvedana as an addition to the mind structure, Dignāga’s doctrine of svasaṃvedana is influential and becomes the central theme of Buddhist epistemology.

3.2 The Principal Characteristics of Svasaṃvedana Expounded by Dignāga

Dignāga or sometimes named as Dinnāga (approximately A.D. 480-580) is a famous intellectual for setting a solid foundation to the Buddhist theory of knowledge and logic. His philosophy is well known for a distinctive, concise and systematic exposition of his original thought on logic and epistemology. Besides, he was a powerful and skillful debater at his time. It is Dignāga who has integrated the self-cognition (svasaṃvedana) theory of Sautrāntika into the vijñāpti-mātra doctrine. The Sautrāntika Buddhists believe the external world to be real; they also
assert that any knowledge of any object is at the same time self-conscious or self-effulgent. Dignāga follows Sautrāntika’s claim that the experience of the objective aspect by the subjective aspect is a kind of ‘self-awareness’ activity. He repudiates that the external world could exist independently of the consciousness. It should be noted that the theoretical basis of Dignāga’s self-awareness is the mind-only (vijñāpti-mātra) doctrine, referring to the interpretation of “the mind to see the very same mind” in The Saṁdhinirmocana Mahāyāna Sūtra and vijñānaparipāramāṇa (transformation of consciousness) mentioned earlier. The notion of ‘svasaṣṭvedana’ (so as svasaṣṭvittī or svasaṣṭvittibhāga in Sanskrit) stands for ‘self-consciousness’, ‘self-awareness’ or ‘self-cognition’ in English. It is a technical term to illustrate ‘reflexive awareness’ or ‘awareness of itself’, i.e. the self-luminous character of all mental events. The principal characteristics of the word ‘svasaṣṭvedana’ by Dignāga, is expressive of the thought that a cognition is cognized by itself and does not need another cognition to cognize itself.

The conceptual framework of self-cognition (svasaṣṭvedana) was set up in Dignāga’s Pramāṇasamuccaya. The title of this work means “a collection on the means of cognition”. It deals with the major issues of logic and epistemology. Due to its significance, the Tibetan Buddhist scholars respect Pramāṇasamuccaya as

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scripture (sūtra). In chapter one of this treatise, Dignāga has examined the nature of perception, its varieties, and the relation between the means and results of cognition thoroughly.

Dignāga's definition of reflexive awareness of a cognition is expounded in Pramāṇasamuccaya as follows:

Every cognition is produced with a twofold appearance, namely, that of itself [as subject] (svābhāsa) and that of the object (viśayābhasa). The cognizing of itself as [possessing] these two appearances or the self-cognition (svasatīviti) is the result [of the cognitive act]. Why?

k.9b. because the determination of the object (artha-nīscaya) conforms with it [viz., with the self-cognition].

This text explicitly states that each cognitive event gives rise to two aspects of appearances: i.e. 'the cognizing aspect itself' (svābhāsa) and 'the object appearance' (viśayābhasa). The object appearance (viśayābhasa) refers to the aspect of a mental occurrence which makes an intentional reference. For instance, when a man has the cognition of something blue, his eye-consciousness apprehends the form of blue. The self-cognizing appearance (svābhāsa) is an immediate awareness that accompanies and experiences 'the eye-consciousness with the aspect of blue'. The cognizing of itself as possessing these two appearances gives rise to a cognitive knowledge, i.e. one knows what one knows. That is why Dignāga treats the second awareness as a

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result of a cognitive act. Since this awareness is caused by nothing other than the
cognition itself, therefore the cognition, while cognizing an object, cognizes itself at
the same time.

The underlying principle of Dignāga’s doctrine of svasaṃvedana is an
awareness that is reflexively aware of itself:

...reflexivity is the very characteristic of all mind, it is what is — mind,
consciousness makes itself known in the very act of knowing things which are
other than it. Indeed the very presence of reflexivity in all consciousness is
closely integrated with the realization of the presence of mind-as-such in all
consciousness. 8

Paul Williams argues on behalf of Dignāga, “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.” 9

The above is a general description of Dignāga’s view of svasaṃvedana
(self-consciousness). In face of the refusal of cognition of cognition, especially from
Vaibhāṣika and Mādhyamika, Dignāga has provided some arguments to prove that a
cognition always has twofold appearances and it is necessary to establish
self-cognition for knowledge validation.

3.3 Self-consciousness as a Resulting Cognition for Validation of Knowledge

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Following the tradition of Indian epistemology, Dignāga regards the self-cognizing aspect of cognitive event as pramāṇa (a means of cognition or valid cognition). The implicit meaning of these two appearances of a cognition suggested by Dignāga is indeed two kinds of awareness or pramāṇa exercised in the same consciousness. Since the function of these pramāṇas appears differently, the second awareness being a means of cognition (pramāṇa) is also regarded as a resulting cognition (pramāṇaphala).

Dignāga then suggests the constituents of a mind should possess triple divisions. They are ‘prameya’ (the objective aspect being cognized), ‘pramāṇa’ (the perceiving act or the means of cognition) and ‘pramāṇaphala’ (the self-consciousness or svasaṃvedana being a result of knowledge) 10. All of these parts are indivisible but with different faculties of function in the cognitive process.

This idea is stated in the following verse in Pramāṇasamuccaya:

k.10. whatever the form in which it [viz., a cognition] appears, that [form] is [recognized as] the object of cognition (prameya). The means of cognition (pramāṇa) and [(the cognition which is) its result (phala) are respectively the form of subject [in the cognition] and the cognition cognizing itself. Therefore, these three [factors of cognition] are not separate from one another. 11

Dignāga clearly formulates that every cognition comprehends itself. It is not different cognition but as a constituent of the same consciousness — a perceiving

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act and an objective aspect. This embarks a landmark for the Buddhist epistemology as the evolution of a consciousness changing from two-fold divisions to a three-fold model for which the idea of reflexive knowledge (knowledge about knowledge) is integrated in the Mind-only theory.

Dignāga views the self-attesting consciousness (*svaśamvedana*) as the result of the measurement. When the perceiving act grasps the objective aspect, it is a means of measuring activity. The act of “measuring” stands for “cognizing”. There follows the result of measurement (*pramāṇaphala*) which is a pragmatic use of the self-consciousness. Below is Kuiji’s\(^\text{12}\) elaboration that may help to understand Dignāga’s viewpoint:

The objective aspect is merely what is measure, the perceiving act is what measures, and self-consciousness is the result of measurement... Now, these three kinds are substantially one consciousness. Since [the objective aspect] is not separate from consciousness, one speaks of ‘merely’ ([vijñāpti] mātra). The faculties are different, therefore one speaks of ‘three [parts]’.\(^\text{13}\)

On the basis of the *vijñānapariṇāma* (transformation of consciousness) doctrine, Dignāga advanced the twofold mind structure to a threefold one whereas the latter produces two aspects of appearances. It should be noted that the ‘twofold

\(^{11}\) Ibid. p. 29.

\(^{12}\) Iso Kern translated “K’uei Chi” as “Kuiji”. As I have introduced K’uei Chi in the previous chapter, he is the most important pupil of Hsüan-tsang (or named as “Xuanzang” by Kern). He recorded down the verbal commentary of Cheng Wei-Shi Lun of Hsüan-tsang. Hence, the extract from *The Commentary of Cheng Wei-Shi Lun* here is the elaboration of Hsüan-tsang’s understanding of Dignāga’s words.

\(^{13}\) Iso Kern, “The Structure of Consciousness According to Xuanzang”, *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, Vol. 19, No. 3, October 1988, he refers to Kuiji’s *Commentary, Taishō*
structure' could not be equated with 'twofold appearances' of cognition. The
readers are reminded that the twofold structure advocated by pre-Dignāga
Vijñānavādins is a consciousness evolving itself into *darśanabhāga* (perceiving act)
and *nimittabhāga* (object of perception) in a cognitive event. The Indian tradition
regards the former part as *pramāṇa* and the latter part as *prameya*. This is the basis
from which Dignāga's threefold consciousness theory is derived. By adding
self-awareness as a result of the perceiving knowledge (*pramāṇapahala*), Dignāga
asserts that *prameya, pramāṇa* and *pramāṇapahala* are factors immanent in
knowledge itself.

As I have already explained in last chapter, Nāgārjuna has denied the
possibility of apprehending *prameya* (object of cognition) by means of *pramāṇa*
(means of cognition) on the ground that both of them, being mutually conditioned,
lack independent substantiality. For the sake of establishing the empirical
knowledge so as to have a proper apprehension of the worldly phenomena, Dignāga
declares that *pramāṇa* and *prameya* must be postulated. Moreover, to rationalize the
existence of self-witness function within the mind, Dignāga further asserts that
*svasaṃvedana* is an ability of validating our perceptual experience.

How is it that a cognition cognizes itself and thus establishes itself as true? The

43, p. 319 a3-6.
answer given by Dignāga is:

k.8 cd. [we call the cognition itself] "pramāṇa" [literally, a means of cognizing], because it is [usually] conceived to include the act [of cognizing], although primarily it is a result.

Here we do not admit, as the realists do, that the resulting cognition (pramāṇa-phala) differs from the means of cognition (pramāṇa). The resulting cognition arises bearing in itself the form of the cognized object and [thus] is understood to include the act [of cognizing] (savyāpāra)……

k. 9a. or [it can be maintained that ] the self-cognition or the cognition cognizing itself (svasatīvitti) is here the result [of the act of cognizing]. 14

To Dignāga, the act of cognizing is an instrumental cause and is generally named as ‘a means of cognition’ (pramāṇa). Nevertheless, the cognition of the object, as an effect of that means of cognition, is conceived as ‘knowledge’ or ‘result of knowledge’ (pramāṇaphala). Since cognition includes awareness of two aspects: i.e. ‘the awareness of an object’ and ‘awareness of a cognizing act’, these two elements are irreducible to each other in the perceiving experience. Therefore, when a consciousness possesses the form of an object, it is a sufficient condition for its being true. By proving that pramāṇaphala does not differ from pramāṇa, Dignāga criticizes the view that recognizing pramāṇa is separated from pramāṇaphala as held by the realists, such as the Naiyāyikas. 15 The reasons from Dignāga do support his thought that svasaṃvedana (self-awareness) is a cognizing act established on

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15 Ibid, p. 99, footnote 1.56. According to Dr. Hattori’s commentary, the realist that Dignāga criticized is the view from Vātsyāyana of Nyāya school.
evidencing of knowledge.

3.4 Sentiments to be Nature of Percept and Self-awareness

With respect to our experience of inward feeling or reflexive consciousness, we may need to identify the characteristics of perception and the classification of cognitions. Dignāga’s theory is unique in his suggestion that perception (*pratyakṣa*) and inference (*anumāna*) are the only two means of cognition (*pramāṇa*). The terms *pratyakṣa* (perception) and *anumāna* (inference) are to be understood as standing respectively for direct, unmediated cognition and indirect, mediated cognition.\(^{16}\) He sharply distinguishes the particular (*svalakṣaṇa*) and the universal (*sāmānyalakṣaṇa*), which are respectively the objects of perception and inference. The characteristic of object of perception is unique or particular (*svalakṣaṇa*) and it can never be generalized or conceptualized. In contrast, the characteristic of object of inference is universal (*sāmānyalakṣaṇa*) and it is conceptually constructed through generalizing from many individuals regardless of their particularity. Apart from the particular (*svalakṣaṇa*) and the universal (*sāmānyalakṣaṇa*), there is no other type of object to be cognized. Dignāga characterizes perception as “being free from conceptual construction” (*kalpanāpāda*) and does not recognize ‘determinate perception’ (*savikalpaka-pratyakṣa*) as a kind of perception. This is because

\(^{16}\) Ibid, p. 24.
Dignāga views determinate perception as a kind of conceptual judgement when
cognizing a thing associated with conceptuality. Since particular and universal are
two terms incompatible with each other, there cannot be anything which possesses
both svalakṣaṇa and sāmānya-lakṣaṇa at the same time. ¹⁷

Dignāga, in his Pramāṇasamuccaya, introduces four kinds of perception viz. (i)
sense perception (indriya pratyakṣa), (ii) mental perception (mānasa pratyakṣa), (iii)
self-cognition (svasaṃvedana pratyakṣa) and (iv) yogic perception (yogi pratyakṣa).

It is clear that perception caused by sense organs is devoid of conceptuality. Apart
from sense perception with which we are familiar and the yogic perception which is
intelligible intuition of the saints, Dignāga describes mental perception and

self-awareness as follows:

k. 6ab. there is also mental [perception, which is of two kinds:] awareness of an
[external] object and self-awareness of [such subordinate mental activities as]
desire and the like, [both of which are] free from conceptual construction. ¹⁸

With respect to Dignāga's definition of svasaṃvedana, this kind of cognizing
act not only relates with every consciousness (citta) but also some other mental
states (cāitta), such as pleasure, pain and so on. They are of nature of conscious and
self-cognized. For instance, when a patch of color is apprehended, we at the same
time have some emotional feelings. It is inappropriate to maintain that a patch of
color is felt as being itself the pleasure it affords us. This is because we do not say,
"This patch of blue color has itself the form of pleasure." We do not regard the object blue and the pleasure impression as identical. In fact, we really are experiencing pleasure as something quite different from the object blue, and this knowing is not dubious since we do experience our own sentiments. Feeling, emotion or desire itself is a percept since it is a mental event and as such it is directly cognizable.

According to Dignāga, mental perception (mānasa pratyakṣa) is an intelligible sensation immediately following sense perception with an image such as a color of blue. This mental sensation is an intermediate step between pure sensation and understanding. Since this cognition operates in the form of immediate experience and is free from conceptual construction, it is regarded as perception. Furthermore, in the first moment of our perceptual process, subtle reflexive action occurs. It is an indefinite reflex emanating from a unique particular (svalakṣaṇa), followed by a mental feeling which is evoked by the reflex. Dignāga claims that a perceiver is aware of his own mental states such as pleasure, pains etc. It is in the very act of knowing that we are aware of our knowing. Since every knowledge is self-conscious, Dignāga considers 'svasaṇṇvedana' or self-consciousness to be a type of direct perception. Svasaṇṇvedana (self-awareness) is a sort of mental perception because it

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18 Ibid, p. 27.
does not depend on any sense organs and is entirely free from conceptual
construction. Besides, whether it is perception (pratyakṣa), inference (anumāna)
or conceptual judgment (savikalpaka-pratyakṣa), etc., the essential nature of the
cognition is the same, i.e., it is self-cognized. This is what Dignāga meant that each
mental event has a perceptual character. This is because there happens the
self-awareness of such event.

With respect to Dignāga’s views on mental states like our sentiments towards
an object, we may find that there is consistency with his theory of svasaṃvedana,
viz. the reflexive awareness of a mental perception.

3.5 The Proof of the Existence of Svasaṃvedana

One may ask what is the reasoning for Dignāga to establish the doctrine of
svasaṃvedana? The assumption of the self-consciousness (svasaṃvedana) is based
on the two-form appearances of cognition. Therefore, it is important for Dignāga to
demonstrate the necessity of the dual aspects of a cognitive event so as to support his

161-162.
20 M. Nagatomi, a modern scholar, has argued that Dignāga did not talk about two types of mental
perception but only about one type with a twofold aspect. Dr. Matilal would readily accept the
interpretation of Nagatomi if he means that the event called mental perception is identical with the
self-awareness part of each mental event. (see Perception, p. 150) I agree with the point that
self-awareness is a mental perception with regard to the two-fold aspect in a cognitive event. However,
it is hard for me to accept that the term mental perception (mānasa pratyakṣa) is identical with the
self-awareness (svasaṃvedana pratyakṣa) because the style of Dignāga’s philosophy is unique and
distinct. For the classification of perception, Dignāga mentioned four types, i.e. sense perception,
mental perception, self-cognition and yogic perception. If the mental perception is the same as the
self-awareness, Dignāga couldn’t make justification of his classification. Just like his distinction
between two means of cognition and two types of object, they are incompatible and mutually
exclusive in different categories.
view of knowledge of knowledge.

How can consciousness possessing two forms be understood? Why is this necessary for a cognitive process? The first argument provided by Dignāga is cited as below:

k.11ab. that cognition has two forms is [known] from the difference between the cognition of the object and the cognition of that [cognition];

The cognition which cognizes the object, a thing of color, etc., has [a twofold appearance, namely,] the appearance of the object and the appearance of itself [as subject]. But the cognition which cognizes this cognition of the object has [on the one hand] the appearance of that cognition which is in conformity with the object and [on the other hand] the appearance of itself. Otherwise, if the cognition of the object had only the form of the object, or if it had only the form of itself, then the cognition of cognition would be indistinguishable from the cognition of the object. 21

I would like to use Dr. Matilal’s example, an ‘awareness of blue’, for analysis of Dignāga’s argument. We can distinguish two aspects in a cognitive event, the blue-aspect and the cognition-aspect. The latter intentionally grasps the former. If the same event also has self-awareness, then this self-awareness aspect is to be distinguished from the cognition-aspect in that the ‘self-awareness aspect’ picks out the ‘cognition-aspect as marked by the blue-aspect’ while the ‘cognition-aspect’ picks out the ‘blue-aspect’ only. These two aspects of cognition are clearly distinguished by their different function in the cognitive event. However, if our

awareness had only the blue-aspect for its object and another cognition is holding the blue-aspect for its object, this will collapse the distinction between the cognition-aspect and self-awareness aspect. If the cognition has only the cognizing aspect without the object-aspect, the distinction between cognition and self-awareness will collapse. It is because both of them will be marked by the same cognizing aspect.\textsuperscript{22}

Furthermore, Dignāga argues that there is another fact that can be explained under the assumption of the dual aspects of a cognitive event:

Further, [if the cognition had only one form, either that of the object or of itself,] then the object which was cognized by a preceding cognition could not appear in a succeeding cognition. Why? Because that [object of the preceding cognition does not exist when the succeeding cognition arises and] could not be the object of the latter. Hence it is proved that cognition has two forms.\textsuperscript{23}

It is probable that this second argument is directed against the Sautrāntika’s theory of knowledge. Based on the Sautrāntika’s assumption, an external object is represented in the cognition in the subsequent moment. Likewise, the Naiyāyikas maintain that the cognizing self is unconscious of itself in apprehension of an object. The awareness of this apprehension is produced by the subsequent apprehension, i.e. \textit{anuvyavasāya} (cognition of cognition). To Dignāga, this is impossible because in the perpetual flux of phenomenon, the form of an object in the preceding cognition

ceases to exist before the succeeding cognition arises. By accepting the dual aspects
theory the situation can be explainable. On the basis of Dr. Hattori's elaboration, Dr.
Matilal simplifies the argumentation of Dignāga as follows:

For we can say that at moment \( t_1 \) there arises a cognitive event, \( c_1 \), which
grasps the blue, \( b_1 \), as its object (presumably \( b_1 \) being there at \( t_0 \)); and at \( t_2 \), \( c_2 \)
arises and grasps not \( b_1 \) but \( c_1 \) as an event which has the dual appearance. This
will show that \( c_1 \) grasps 'the \( b_1 \)-appearance' of \( c_1 \), which is part of its dual
appearance (it does not grasp \( b_1 \) directly). For \( b_1 \) being in a state of flux cannot
be present at \( t_1 \). This argument provides an explanation of the common-sense
belief that an object grasped in a cognition can be grasped by several
succeeding cognitive events, but it is not clear whether it accomplishes
anything else.\(^{24}\)

According to the comment of Dr. Hattori, this argument was primarily intended
to prove that the cognition has \textit{arthākāra} (object-form) within itself. Then, by the
fact of recollection of a past cognition, Dignāga proves that the cognition has
\textit{svākāra} (own-form) along with \textit{arthākāra}.\(^{25}\) The recollection is caused by the
impression (\textit{saṁskāra}) of previous experience. The term '\textit{smṛti}' (recollection) refers
to the memory of whatsoever has been experienced before. As Dignāga puts it:

Some time after [we have perceived a certain object], there occurs [to our mind]
the recollection of our cognition as well as the recollection of the object. So it
stands that cognition is of two forms. Self-cognition is also [thus established].
Why?

k.11d. because it [viz., recollection] is never of that which has not been

footnote 1.73.
previously experienced. 26

A memory is an effect of the past experience leaving an impression for future recollection. When we remember, the memory image is seen to be composed of ‘formerly this was seen’ and ‘it was seen by me’. When we remember that we truly saw blue, there is ‘a memory of blue’ and ‘a memory of seeing blue’. It is justified for us to believe the fact that in the original act of perception, there must have been the ‘sensation of blue’ and also the ‘sensation of seeing blue’. 27 Dignāga meant to say that our recollection is not only of the object previously cognized but also of the previous cognition itself. Thus, the recollection of a past cognition is explainable only by admitting that cognition is cognized by itself.

The above three arguments from Dignāga are critical to support the claim that an awareness always has two-form appearances, therefore self-cognition (svasamvedana) theory is proved thereby.

3.6 Avoidance of Self-Refuting Nature of Self-consciousness

Lots of arguments and debates about the theory of self-cognition were prevailing among the Buddhist scholars. Both Vaibhāṣika and Mādhyamika School refute the idea of self-cognition (svasamvedana) by employing the examples quoted by Ratnacūḍaparipṛcchasūtra (Questions of Ratnacūḍa Sūtra) that I have introduced

in last chapter. They point out "a finger cannot point at itself. Similarly, a knife is unable to cut itself." It is highly probable that these Buddhist schools criticize the Nyāya concept of cognition of cognition, i.e. *anuvyavasāya*. Dignāga also takes the same views as the other Buddhist schools to reject the Naiyāyikas' idea of *anuvyavasāya*. This is because the subsequent cognitive act directing to the first cognition would lead to infinite regress. Then there would be no movement of cognition from one object to another.

To avoid the problem encountered by the Naiyāyikas, Dignāga stresses that self-consciousness is not a second cognitive act perceiving the first and that correspondingly what is ‘intentionally held’ in self-consciousness as such is not a second objective aspect. It is in the same perceiving act that we are immediately conscious that act (*pratyakṣa*). The problem of infinite regress arises from the general thinking that for a consciousness with reflexive activity, it would be a specific second act necessarily directed to the first one. ²⁸

The idea of two subjective awarenesses (as we can put it: “one knows that one knows”) could easily fall into the trap of infinite regress. Unlike the phenomenologists, the Vijnānavādin scholars do not put these acts in consequential process. Since the definition of self-awareness is “to aware the others and to aware

²⁸ Iso Kern, “The Structure of Consciousness According to Xuanzang”, *Journal of the British
itself”, both awareness and reflection can happen simultaneously. To avoid the
infinite regress, Dignāga suggests it is preferably to say that the cognition of object
and awareness of that cognition is actually a single act. It is unnecessary to require
another cognition to know the cognition of the object. Thus, he maintains
simultaneity of cognitive activities on the ground of momentariness theory.

The general position of the Buddhists can be understood through the theory of
momentariness (ksanikavada). This theory is based on the Buddhist proposition
that “everything is impermanent”. All phenomena is changing in every moment and
thus their true existence is said to be a single point-instant of reality only. In such a
position, cognition is just momentary state of existence. It cannot last until the next
moment. Then there comes a query that either cognition of that cognition (i.e.
self-consciousness) occurs in the very moment, or the possibility of the cognition of
that cognition is denied because in the next moment that cognition will no longer
there to be cognized by the subsequent cognition.

To be consistent with the theory of momentariness, some Buddhist
philosophers put forth the cognition of the cognition only within the framework of
simultaneity but not that of succession. During the perceptual process, the object, the
cognitive sense, and the cognizing consciousness are all simultaneous and

momentary as claimed by the Vaibhāṣika. This basic idea was followed by Dignāga but expressed in different way. Since object is not independent of consciousness, the only position available to the Dignāga would be to advocate the theory of svasaṃvedana (self-cognition). This would mean that at the very moment of a cognition cognizing an object, it also cognizes itself. This is because the cognized object, the act of cognition and the self-cognition are integrated into a single consciousness and function simultaneously. In the very act of knowing an object, there is an awareness of the knowing. Dignāga is quite explicit in advocating the “simultaneity model” which would preclude any ad infinitum.29

On the other hand, under the theory of dual aspects asserted by Dignāga, the phenomenon of an object appearing in a succeeding cognition after the same has once been cognized by a preceding cognition can be explained even in the face of the Buddhist momentariness theory. Without the self-cognizing theory, the phenomenon of recollection cannot be explained. This is because the object ceases to exist before the succeeding cognition arises. We can then say that the succeeding cognition is no longer required to grasp the same object, but the cognition of the object of the preceding moment. Dignāga’s momentariness theory may help to have a proper appropriation of his arguments for svasaṃvedana (awareness of awareness).

3.7 The Summary

The Vijñānavādins uphold that every consciousness manifests a certain object.

The object being cognized is interpreted as an appearance within consciousness.

Dignāga maintains that there should be two forms of cognition for every
consciousness, i.e., the appearance of object and itself. This accounts for the
establishment of the third part of a consciousness, i.e. the self-cognition
(svasāṣṭṭvedana). The cognizing of the cognition itself as possessing two appearances
implies that self-cognition is a result of the cognizing act. Since cognition takes the
form of that cognizable object, it measures and determines the result of knowledge.

It is inferred that knowledge is self-evidencing. The self-cognition (svasāṣṭṭvedana)
asserts the validity of knowledge. The cognized object and the self-cognition
(svasāṣṭṭvedana) are not two different phenomena but they are two facets of the same
knowledge. Since cognition is not cognized by a separate cognition and the
reflexivity of cognition is an instant knowledge, it should not be considered as
separate means of cognition. In this regard, an infinite regress would not be resulted.

This applies even to mental faculties such as recollection, emotion, etc. for which
they operate on objects once cognized. Considering the scope of his epistemological
claims, the framework of Dignāga’s reflexive knowledge with respect to the
self-cognition (svasāṣṭṭvedana) theory is fully consistent with the idealistic position
of the Vijñānavāda school.
CHAPTER FOUR

THEORY OF SELF-COGNIZING COGNITION

EXPOUNDED BY DHARMAKĪRTI

Dignāga's major contribution was his effort in formulating a complete
Buddhist logico-epistemological system. Since this system is important in India,
there are continuous references by later Buddhist thinkers. There are also criticisms
from other philosophical schools. Defending of Dignāga's theory was left to
Dharmakīrti. His elaboration of Dignāga's system becomes the frame of reference
for Buddhist epistemology. Dharmakīrti was the most famous Buddhist logician after
Dignāga. Let us first introduce the following lineage: Vasubandhu – Dignāga –
Īśvarasena – Dharmakīrti. Dharmakīrti (c. 750 A.D.), who is the pupil of
Īśvarasena, worked out a commentary on Pramāṇasamuccaya for interpretation of
Dignāga's thought. His work is titled as Pramāṇavārttika (abbr. PV). The word
"vārttika" means commentary. Its purpose is to inquire into what has been said and
what has not been said clearly. In this regard, this treatise is not merely a
commentary but rather putting forth the topics dealt with by Dignāga in full details.

Thus, Dharmakīrti demonstrates his unique thinking and analyses the Buddhist
epistemology and logic subjects more penetratively in the Pramāṇavārttika. In
particular, the second chapter of Dharmakīrti's Pramāṇavārttika (abbr. PVII)
discusses the issue of perception. Besides, the most popular works of Dharmakīrti is Nyāyabindu and this treatise is an abridgment of PV. The principal lines of thinking of Dharmakīrti are preserved in these texts.

Dignāga has provided the definition and framework of svasaṃvedana (self-consciousness) with the proof of recollection, ‘resulting cognition’ for evidencing knowledge and reflexive awareness without regression. The doctrine of svasaṃvedana is made possible under Dignāga’s theory of double aspects of cognition. Similarly, Dharmakīrti is also interested in inquiring the relevant issues in depth. It is generally agreed that Dharmakīrti holds a similar view with that of Dignāga. Strictly speaking, Dharmakīrti succeeded in giving a clear analytical exploration of what svasaṃvedana should be in various perspectives. These will be examined in this section. My exposition of Dharmakīrti on svasaṃvedana attempts to distinguish the similarity and difference of Dignāga’s and Dharmakīrti’s thoughts. Through Dharmakīrti’s thorough analysis and some of his unique thinking, a pragmatic and an intentional sense of this term are highlighted. These are grounded with certain criteria of knowledge validation.

4.1 Momentariness Theory in favor of Self-consciousness

Like Dignāga, Dharmakīrti also maintains that everything in the phenomenal

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1 Vyas C. S. has translated this chapter in the appendix B of his Buddhist Theory of Perception, (New
world is a flux in a sense that it comes into existence at one moment and goes out of existence at the next. However, Dharmakīrti advances the doctrine of momentariness by saying that a really existent thing (as opposed to an unreal thing) must have some causal efficacy. As Dharmakīrti's Nyāyabindu reads: “The characteristic mark of a real thing (vastu) is its capacity for arthakriyā (causal efficiency).”¹ In other words, ‘to exist’ means ‘to do something’ or ‘to have performance’. As indicated in Dharmakīrti’s Hetubindu, in order to acquire instant causal efficacy, a thing must be momentary. For instance, a seed gradually produces its effect, i.e. the sprout, together with some other causal factors such as soil, water, etc. These efficient causes initiate some changes in every moment and are really a convergence of the streams of seed-moments, soil-moments, water-moments and so forth. Such confluence in its turn brings about the effect, i.e. sprout.²

The premise of Dharmakīrti’s momentariness theory is that whatever exists and thereby possessing some causal efficacy, must also be momentary. To uphold the theory of momentariness with respect to the idea of svāsaṃvedana (self-consciousness), Dharmakīrti stresses the importance of momentary causal efficacy. In the perceiving process, when sense perception has cognized something

blue, this knowledge of blue is not to be evidenced by another knowledge since
every knowledge stand self-revealed. If this were not so, it would be reduced to the
position in terms of which one moment of consciousness is to be cognized by
another consciousness. The former can no longer be said to be consciousness
because it becomes an object. Dharmakīrti contends that the subsequent moment
cannot know the previous moment at all, since the latter is diminished by the time
the former arises. In this regard, Dharmakīrti agrees with Dignāga’s view that the
coexistence of prameya (object), pramāṇa (perceiving act) and pramāṇaphala
(self-cognition) operates simultaneously in the perceiving process. Dharmakīrti
clearly asserts that those three aspects are indeed signifying different causal efficacy
in each event of awareness. They are integral parts of one momentary state of
consciousness. The underlying principle held by Dharmakīrti is that reality is an
instantaneous being (ksanikavada). Cognitive process splitting in discrete moments
is indeed a momentary event exercising certain causal efficacy to give rise to
knowledge. The “simultaneity model” of the consciousness structure suggested by
Dignāga and Dharmakīrti is to avoid the problem of infinite regress and to establish
the evidentiality of knowledge.

4.2 Resulting Cognition as Self-evidentiality of Knowledge

In the case of cognitive activity, Dignāga says that the mental object (prameya),
the act of cognition (pramāṇa) and the awareness of that cognition (pramāṇaphala) are in fact a single entity of consciousness. To Dignāga, as knowledge is self-evidencing, there is no need to distinguish between the act of cognizing (pramāṇa) and its outcome (pramāṇaphala). They are integrated in the same awareness event. The distinction can be made from a functional point of view so as to identify different efficacy of each divisions. How can self-cognition (svasaṃvedana) registering difference between object-form (arthākāra) and cognition-form (svākāra), be proved to be the indifference of those two forms? The argument put forth by Dharmakīrti is based on an assumption of ‘togetherness’. The object-form and the cognition-form are indifference in a sense that they are apprehended altogether by the same apprehension. Since there is the invariable fact that the object-form is never apprehended without its cognition-form being apprehended, it is argued that one should not be distinguished from the other.

Dharmakīrti then comments, “We call the cognition itself [svasaṃvedana] pramāṇa because it is generally conceived to include the act of cognizing although primarily it is a result [pramāṇaphala].” ⁴ In this sense, pramāṇa and pramāṇaphala are identical as to the self-cognizant. Here, we notice two different views about the nature of svasaṃvedana in Dharmakīrti’s exploration. One of them is pramāṇa

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consisting in cognition of an object whilst the other is pramāṇaphala consisting in
cognizing itself (self-consciousness). Since cognition is aware both of its object
and of itself, this double cognition confirms an evidence of knowing certain things.
Each episode of awareness in the conscious series is therefore self-revealing and
self-evidentiality in character.

Dharmakīrti then argues that if consciousness were not self-revealed, it would
be on a par with the object. In PVII, asserts Dharmakīrti, “that which does not know
itself, cannot know anything else.”

5 Dharmakīrti holds that since consciousness is in
its very being as conscious or aware of something, it is luminous by nature, and this
luminosity by nature is what we mean by ‘self-awareness’. They do not require
anything else to render them knowable. They are accordingly self-aware, the
quality of independent of another possessed of illumination. In this regard the
illumination by consciousness is self-revealing. Self-revealing nature of
consciousness means that one cannot be in doubt whether one is experiencing at all,
and thus the very nature of experiences claim to be self-verification.

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In terms of the characteristics of svasaṇṇvedana (self-consciousness),
Dharmakīrti’s exposition is basically the same as that of Dignāga’s. Nevertheless,


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Dharmakīrti presents the reasoning why the pramāṇa and pramāṇaphala are not different entities of a cognitive event. This in turn asserts the essential specialty of svasaṃvedana (self-consciousness) and that is the self-evidentiality of every cognition.

4.3 Argumentation of Mental States to be Nature of Self-awareness

As specified in the last chapter, one of Dignāga’s main arguments to establish the reflexivity of consciousness concerns the nature of our sentiments. However, Dignāga does not go much detail to his reasoning. It is Dharmakīrti who presents some arguments revealing the deeper nature of mental states.

Dharmakīrti explicitly stated in the Nyāyabindu that all mental events are self-cognizant.\(^7\) Considering cognition has own-form (svākāra) along with object-form (arthākāra) as suggested by Dignāga, Dharmakīrti argues that the feeling of pleasure or pain is experienced through the same consciousness that apprehends the external objects. To take an example, in perceiving an external object, e.g. to taste the food, we immediately know how it feels when we taste it, either disgusting or favoring the taste of the food. Since both pleasure etc. and food etc. are cognized simultaneously, we do not grasp the image of food alone. In this regard, two aspects can be identified: the first is the appearance of the object itself whilst the

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second is the apprehension of this appearance along with a feeling for which Dharmakīrti describes as self-cognition. Thus, Dharmakīrti says:

Therefore, happiness, etc., is commonly understood as [an experience of objects] because it has the appearance of objects being transferred onto itself and is experienced. [Happiness] does not, however, directly cognize the external object [but] cognizes itself through being merely produced from an [external] object.

Since pleasure etc. and awareness of pleasure are originated from the same object, how, then can pleasure be different from awareness of pleasure? For Dharmakīrti, our feelings or emotions are not external to consciousness. They are integral to our awareness of external objects. Due to the dual aspects of cognition, these emotions are not experienced separately from the objects we perceived although they are different. Thus, the cognitive events, as well as emotions derived from the cognitive events (i.e. mental states or caitta) are self-cognized. This asserts the self-cognized nature of the mental states in terms of the feeling of pleasure, pain, anger etc. One point deserving our attention is that the mental states are deliberately classed apart from consciousness on the ground that feeling and the else do not contain the characteristic of “intentionality” insofar as they are purely inward in reference. Barring this difference, they are all conscious states. The cognizing character is common to consciousness and feeling alike.

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To emphasize the inward reflexive nature of mental states, Dharmakīrti then tries to prove that pleasure is not an object of perception. When sense perception grasps the object, which gives rise to its image in the cognition, as in the example of food, it simultaneously causes pleasure or pain to a perceiver. How can sense perception grasps pleasure etc. that are invariably generated simultaneously with this sense-experience? Dharmakīrti then rules out the possibility of sense perception of pleasure etc. What remains is mental perception. It is generally contended that at first an external object is cognized and then the contingent pleasure or pain is cognized by means of mental perception (mānasa pratyākṣa). Dharmakīrti rejects this contention by pointing out that such a view implies the absurdity that in human perception external object and pleasure etc. are successively and separately grasped. He maintains that an awareness of pleasure or pain is necessarily perceived as soon as it arises. From the standpoint of Dharmakīrti, pleasures etc. must be in the nature of cognition. His reasoning is that, since the awareness of pleasure is not distinguishable from pleasure itself, it becomes an integral part of the same awareness. Simultaneous awareness of pleasure during the perceiving experience for certain objects can be properly accounted for only when both are coterminous. For even a slight divergence from this condition by holding that pleasure etc. are felt by a

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distinct mental perception would imply that pleasure arises in the second moment after the moment of perceptual experience. Then it would not be coherent with the momentariness principle.\textsuperscript{10} Dharmakīrti draws a conclusion that since pleasure etc. is neither cognized by perception or by inference, they must be in that nature of cognition itself. The feeling of pleasure or pain, although apprehensible through consciousness, is not differentiable from it, just as the objects of consciousness.

Dharmakīrti's interpretation of mental states clarifies Dignāga's views that pleasure or passion, etc. are also cognitive in character, and by the same token self-cognizant. Both Dignāga and Dharmakīrti take self-apprehension of pleasure etc. as a kind of mental perception (mānasā pratyakṣa). It is unique (svalakṣaṇa) and free from conceptual construction (kalpanāpoḍha). The difference between them is that Dharmakīrti goes further to assert that pleasure itself is not perception. Just as the self-apprehension of conceptual construction is perception, conceptual construction itself is, obviously, not perception. As such, mental states must be in the nature of cognition itself.

\textbf{4.4 Validation of Perceptual Knowledge in terms of Clarity and Conformity}

The appealing debate in the epistemological issues of the Indians is basically a problem of evidencing the truth of cognition. To certify or falsify cognition is subject

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid, p. 112-113.
to a critical examination based on some sorts of criteria. The discussion of validity of knowledge arises from this background.

Having characterized perception (*pratyakṣa*) as free from conceptualization and in itself always reliable, Dignāga sees illusion as interpretative error not occurring on the level of *pratyakṣa* itself. This is because pure sensation does not contain any judgment, right or wrong and it is not constructive. A contrast with Dignāga is seen clearly in Dharmakīrti’s identification of causal factors determining some apparent sensation to be in fact illusory. As in the case of organic defect, a jaundiced person perceives things in yellow until the disease is cured. Therefore, illusion for Dharmakīrti can occur on the level of perception itself and is not simply a matter of interpretative error.

Dharmakīrti, who follows Dignāga, defines perception (*pratyakṣa*) as “non-conceptual” (*kalpanāpocḍha*) but adds another feature, “non-erroneous” (*abhrāntam*) to it. The primary function of *pratyakṣa* is in coordination with the form of object, according to Dharmakīrti. From the empirical point of view, the validity of a cognition depends on its conformity (*sārūpya*) with the object which is deprived of wrong cognition. But for Dignāga, this is not a point to be concerned with by the very definition of perception that is free of conceptuality.

Dharmakīrti holds “certainty” and “non-deceptiveness” in a sense of objective
conformity for a cognition to be two necessary conditions for justification of true knowledge. Somehow, it is close to the Western meaning of "knowledge as justified true belief" though there is deviance between these two. It is based on the intuition or understanding that some of our experience or belief are true.

Pramāṇa can be described as valid cognition for its identification of its objects with certainty. For instance, when I see a jar in front of me, my visual perception enables me to correctly identify the cognized object as a jar. The instance I know that the object is a jar indicating that I do not have any doubt with respect to this fact.

In addition to the feature of certainty in perception, Dharmakīrti characterizes valid cognition (pramāṇa) as a cognition that is non-deceptive. What Dharmakīrti meant of "non-deceptiveness" is an objective conformity for a cognitive knowledge. This is because knowledge stands for a faithful representation of the reality that has practical efficiency. In a sense, non-deceptiveness implies the appropriateness of apprehending the objects in accordance with its causal dispositions. For example, the apprehension of fire would practically correspond to the burning effect of a fire. According to Dharmakīrti, a valid cognition must be directed towards its objects and the truth of knowledge consists in its accordance with the nature of the object. A non-discordant cognition discerning the true nature of the objects asserts the true belief that is necessary to the validity of the cognition. Knowledge is a cause of
successful action in the sense that it results in attaining of the desirable objective and avoidance of the undesirable effect. Therefore, non-discordance is a necessary condition of a true cognition and it infers that certain function could be performed by object.\textsuperscript{11}

In support of his doctrine of self-cognition, Dharmakīrti maintains that knowledge is awareness of an object and thus possessing self-evidential character. Svasaṇṇvedana is not itself a wrong consciousness since it is merely the observer of the cognition. According to the commentary of Nyāyabindu by Dharmottara (c. 750 A.D.)\textsuperscript{12}, there is no mental phenomenon whatsoever which would be unconscious of its own existence. Further, he says that such self-awareness is neither a conceptual construction nor an illusive one, therefore self-cognition is a type of perception that is true and also indubitable.\textsuperscript{13}

To Dharmakīrti, the essential meaning of perception is far more than that of pramāṇa (means of valid cognition). Rather it has to clear away wrong cognition. Such as errors caused by color blindness, rapid motions, traveling in boat, mental sickness, and so on, sensual aberrations or abnormal circumstances that affect the cognitive senses cause the illusive sensations. As Dharmottara says, not including

\textsuperscript{12} Just like Dignāga who had no famous pupils, the real continuator of Dharmakīrti emerged a generation later, it is Dharmottara who wrote detailed commentary for Dharmakīrti's works, such as Pramāṇa-viniścaya and Nyāyabindu.
the requirement of "conformity" in perception, some people may maintain that those erroneous experiences are true knowledge. Inasmuch as to an assurance of a true cognition, Dharmottara points out that what constitutes validity of perception should include the factor of correspondence with reality so as to exclude those sensual aberrations or abnormal circumstances from the ken of perception. This marks a difference with Dignāga since Dharmakīrti applies the doctrine of conformity as a criterion for validation of knowledge. It is clear that Dharmakīrti tries to put forth a criterion of truth that is cogent and convincing.

4.5 Psychological Account of Svasaṃvedana under an Idealistic Perspective

Though his theory embraces a causal realism, Dharmakīrti attempts to uphold the Yogācāra idealism and this intention is made clear in the Pramāṇavārttika in the discussion of the four varieties of perception. He says that self-awareness is invariably a part of the mental phenomenon. There would be no awareness of objects that does not contain an element of self-awareness since no analysis of desired objects can do without the idea that they are real and even "external", as mentioned in PV II:

As something coming into being comes into being as desired while something else as not desired, so the [cognized] object has a cause in consciousness and this [desire-laden consciousness] affects the experience. There is cognition that has its content established with respect to the subjective portion; similarly that

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which is self-experience is determined with respect to the object [as desired]. If one experiences oneself as desirous or otherwise [i.e. as averse to whatever], then, [any] object is known as desired or undesired [only a Buddha does not experience in this way]. Although it is an external object that is being known, it is such that it accords with the nature of the [desire-infected] experience.\textsuperscript{14}

In this passage, Dharmakīrti holds that even in an externally-oriented state of awareness there is always self-consciousness. He demonstrates that there are three elements invariably present in a worldly-oriented cognition: self-awareness, awareness of an external object and desire. In this text he appears to believe that it is specifically the self-cognition imbued with desire that gives rise to conceptual construction and thought. Thus a psychological account can be reconstructed in this way. The external object causes a sensation in the correct causal circumstances, i.e. together with the light, the corporeal eye, and a state of attentiveness, etc. The resultant sensory cognition has two aspects, one objective and the other subjective. Intrinsic to the subjective aspect is self-cognition (svasaṃvedana). If in the self-awareness aspect of the sensory cognition there is also awareness of desire, then a verbalized cognition of the object would be provoked in accordance with one’s memory of previous enjoyments and sufferings and their causes. Then, the room for the idealism lies obviously in the condition that conceptualization is provoked, and action as well, through the self-cognition imbued with desire. The arguments of Dharmakīrti implicitly mean that all awareness involves an element of

\textsuperscript{14} See Stephen H. Phillips, “Dharmakīrti on sensation and causal efficiency”, \textit{Journal of Indian

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self-awareness. He applies the idealism to objects that are cognized by means
(pramāṇa) whose scope is pragmatism in essence.\textsuperscript{15}

Stephen H. Phillips rightly pointed out that Dharmakīrti’s metaphysical
reasoning supports the view that there are no external objects separated from
self-awareness. Moreover, his embrace of a causal realism carries this perspective
into the street in our pursuit of worldly goals.\textsuperscript{16}

4.6 The Summary

The discussion of self-consciousness is an important section of Dharmakīrti’s
epistemological system. Following the idea of Dignāga, the contribution of
Dharmakīrti is to provide a detailed exposition with sound logical grounding.
Several arguments are presented by Dharmakīrti to establish the reflexive nature of
the consciousness. With our particular interests on the doctrine of svasaṃvedana
(self-consciousness), Dharmakīrti contends with Dignāga’s ‘simultaneity model’ in
the cognitive activities that can be coincided with the theory of momentariness. But
Dharmakīrti stresses on the causal efficacy of every momentary existents. His
analysis turns out to be a support to self-cognizing consciousness for avoiding the
problem of infinite regress.

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid, p.244-245.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid, p.245.
With respect to the theory of *pramāṇa*, Dīnāga establishes the *pramāṇapahala* as the result of knowledge. Dharmakīrti points out that since the twofold appearances in terms of the outcome attained by the reflexive awareness is considered as an evidence of knowledge, the act of cognition intrinsically includes what is knowable. The self-evidentiality of cognition is both the measure and the measured. It is this sentient character that distinguishes consciousness from the insentient objects. Therefore, the basic idea on *svasaṃvedana* (self-consciousness) is the same for Dīnāga and Dharmakīrti but the latter is capable of providing the argument for the indifference between *pramāṇa* and *pramāṇapahala*.

Another forceful argumentation for sustaining the *svasaṃvedana* is Dharmakīrti’s investigation of mental states such as feeling and emotion etc. to be the nature of self-awareness. These mental activities are directly cognizable inwardly, and thus they are different from the object of cognition. Although they are different, a sense of feeling initiated by an object and an awareness of that feeling are integral part of the same cognition. It is Dharmakīrti who reveals the deeper nature of mental states whereas these are not external to consciousness but integral to our awareness of external objects. This is a unique thinking by Dharmakīrti in his proposition that sentiment itself is not an object of perception but is in the nature of self-awareness.

On the issue of illusion and the characteristics of *pratyakṣa*, Dharmakīrti
departs radically from Dignāga's position. And this deviation signals a major
development and defense of Dignāga's epistemological theory. Dharmakīrti's theory
of knowledge emphasizes "pragmatic" and in that notion, things have causal
efficiency (arthakriyā). There can be no successful human action with regard to that
which is unreal. Thus the reality apprehended by sensation is in connection with the
idea of successful human action. This is because the real will in turn possesses a
force of causal efficiency.

Dharmakīrti also understands clarity as being the ability of cognition to free
itself from distortion in its apprehension of its object. For Dharmakīrti, there is a
kind of natural fit between awareness and reality. This fit is less actual than potential.
To actualize it we need to free ourselves from obstructions. The minds of all beings
have the potential for reaching an unimpeded attunement to reality. He alters the set
of background assumptions for the epistemology of everyday cognition to include a
theory of praxis and of causal relation. The reality with which Dharmakīrti is
concerned in discussing valid cognition is that the reality bounds up with the
anthropology of human beings as beings of desire, undertaking actions to satisfy
desire or to avoid objects of aversion.¹⁷

As it is correctly pointed out by C.S. Vyas,¹⁸ the principal thinking of Dignāga

¹⁷ Ibid, p.239-240.
and Dharmakīrti indicates a turning point for the Buddhist philosophy. It is common for the idealist schools of Indian philosophers that they incline to explain the phenomenon of illusion and extend to make a universal proposition that the world of experience is essentially illusory. Especially for the forerunner of Vijñānavāda school, such as Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, who incline to repudiate the external world as illusory and all knowledge as knowledge of the unreal. Nevertheless, the Dignāga-Dharmakīrti tradition of philosophy holds that the real is knowable, perceivable and through which the knowledge is devoid of deception. It cannot be conclusively held that it is invariably invalid. Surely there is occasionally invalid knowledge on account of being illusory, but this can be precluded by de-recognizing illusion as true perception. We can find a reverse trend of de-illusionism reflected in the theory of pramāṇa advocated by Dignāga and Dharmakīrti. This position is then followed and advocated by the Sakara-vijñānavādins and we will go into details in the next chapter.
CHAPTER FIVE

EXPLANATION OF SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS BY SĀKĀRA-VIJÑĀNAVĀDA AND NIRĀKĀRA-VIJÑĀNAVĀDA

According to the Vijñānavāda Mind-Only doctrine, the mind itself transforms into the perceived mental object and the perceiving act during the cognizing activities. Objects and subjects are different but they are not different entities. The object we perceived is just consciousness only. This characteristic of mind induced Dignāga to inquire into the mind structure in an innovative way that there should be two appearances to the mind itself, i.e. the object and the self-cognizing aspects. To better illustrate the different faculty of mind, he further develops a theory of threefold divisions of mind; this includes the cognized object (prameya), the cognizing act (pramāṇa) and the cognition of cognition (svasaṃvedana or pramāṇaphala).

Dignāga has skillfully integrated the two-fold division of consciousness with dual aspects of cognition and inferred the triple structure of mind. Since self-cognition is a valid cognition in cognizing itself while being aware of an object, the reflexive aspect of a consciousness assures the fact that it does not have an object distinct from itself. This accords with a line of Buddhist philosophical thinking known as Sākāra-vijñānavāda whose meaning is “consciousness with forms”. However, there are opposite views held by some Buddhists named the Nirākāra-vijñānavāda who suggests “consciousness is without form”.

The nature of objects of cognition and the way in perceiving these objects are the central issues of the Vijñānavāda School. The discussions of sākāra-vijñānavāda or nirākāra-vijñānavāda are concerned with the relationship between cognition and the external object. The views of the Sākāra-vijñānavādin and Nirākāra-vijñānavādin are preserved mainly in Hsüan-tsang’s Cheng Wei-Shih Lun.
In this chapter, I will focus on comparing the philosophical inquires and arguments of Sākāra-vijñānavādin and Nirākāra-vijñānavādin, with special emphasis on mind structure, validation of cognition and justification of their doctrines. Through analyzing and contrasting similar and different viewpoints of these philosophers, it is hoped to present their standpoints with respect to the theory of self-cognition in the Mind-only system, and also their implications from the perspectives of epistemology, ontology and soteriology.

5.1 Definition of Sākāra and Nirākāra

Before we deal with various argumentations of the Vijñānavādins, we need to clarify the meaning of ‘sākāra’ and ‘nirākāra’ in the first place. As I have mentioned earlier in the Abhidharma tradition of the Vaibhāṣika and the Sautrāntika schools, they took different ontological positions that affect their epistemological views to a large extent. With reference to chapter two, the realist school of Vaibhāṣika asserts that cognition is a result of concerted efforts of sensory organs and objects, etc. The consciousness is held to be a direct apprehension of physical objects through the sensory organs. This requires no form as media for cognition. In this regard, the Vaibhāṣika is advocate of nirākāra because the definition of this term is ‘without form’. Unlike the Sautrāntika, Vaibhāṣika rejects the idea that the cognized object is a representation of external thing. Since representation is a reflection of external objects, the Vaibhāṣika do not treat it as a true knowledge. Only a bare presentation of a physical object as such can be said to be a right knowledge.

The position of the Sautrāntika is somewhat different, as explained before, the cognition is made possible by virtue of the external object leaving an impression
of its likeness on the consciousness and this is known as ‘sākāra’. The literal meaning of ‘sākāra’ is that consciousness possesses the form of the object. The Sautrāntika concludes that the cognizing consciousness apprehends only this impression and through which it infers the existence of an external object. In this regard, the theory of sākāra asserts that as a physical object has a recognizable form through which it can be identified. Each consciousness too has a form (ākāra) through which it is identifiable. To the Sautrāntika, the basis of sākāra is that the physical objects are not directly perceived. It is through the media of object impression resembling the external object that the Sautrāntika speaks in favor of a representative theory of perception.

Furthermore, the Sautrāntika also suggests the theory of svasaṇṇedana (self-consciousness). The Sautrāntika Buddhists argue that the cognition and its cognized content are inseparable whole and are cognized altogether. Consciousness or awareness, therefore, has to assume the form of the object to attain the result of cognition. They criticize Vaibhāṣika’s formless cognition by saying that if the consciousness were construed as formless (nirākāra) while the object had a form (ākāra), in the face of the vast differences amidst the objects, the consciousness would remain the same bare experience whether it cognizes something blue or something red or anything else. To obviate this difficulty the cognition as the apprehension of the object must be admitted to be sākāra.¹ The reason for the Sautrāntika Buddhists to advocate the theory of sākāra is to assure the determination of the cognition by its respective object. Since cognitions rise up bearing the appearance of objects, they repudiate the view of formless cognition. The

Vijñānavāda School succeeds this ground of reasoning and hence is called
'sākāra-vijñānavāda'. We are reminded that the Vijñānavāda differs from the
Sautrāntika in their denial of any independent objects from the consciousness. Since
vijñāpti-māra (Mind-only) suggests every consciousness definitely holds a
manifested form in the perceiving process, therefore, the Vijñānavādins are also
advocators of 'sākāra-vijñānavāda'.

Nevertheless, there are situations that the cognition would have a form but not
in accordance with the given object. Among the Vijñānavādins, some philosophers
maintain that the perceived forms (prameya) are intrinsically illusive because of our
ignorance. That is why we discriminate subjective and objective aspects as true
existents. Since the form or image within our consciousness is not true from the
ultimate view, the form perceived by the cognition is said to be false and in this
sense it is regarded as formless (nirākāra). In this respect, the meaning of 'nirākāra'
is somewhat different for the Vijñānavāda. We should distinguish that the
Vaibhāṣika is the 'nirākāra' in its original meaning of 'consciousness without form'.
But for one stream of Vijñānavāda, though it is named as 'Nirākāra-vijñānavāda',
the meaning is deviated from the original meaning and understood, as 'the
consciousness does possess the object form but that form is unreal'. In contrast
with this specific meaning, the 'sakāra-vijñānavāda' is not simply meant
'consciousness with form' but is 'consciousness with form whereas that form is real'.
In short, both streams of Vijñānavāda maintain that every mental phenomenon is
associated with projected forms. Nevertheless, each camps carries different weight
on the form of object. I will go into details of these meaning in the following
context.
5.2 Different Mind Structure Theory of the Vijñānavādins

To explore the faculties of mind from various standpoints, one of the important subjects for the Vijñānavāda (Mind-only) School is the aspect of the cognitive structure. Asaṅga’s idea of pure consciousness invoked Dignāga to stipulate the theory of svasamvedana (self-consciousness) for validation of knowledge. Besides Dharmakīrti who belongs to the sect of Buddhist Logician, two main streams of the intellectuals of Vijñānavāda also follow Dignaga’s thought on self-cognition. They are the Sākāra-vijñānavādin and Nirākāra-vijñānavādin. These Buddhist philosophers have put great effort in postulating, redefining and setting up the foundation of self-cognition doctrine. Based on Hsüan-tsang’s information, representatives of Sākāra-vijñānavādin are Dignāga and Dharmapāla (A.D. 530-561) whereas representatives of Nirākāra-vijñānavādin are Sthiramati (A.D. 510-570) and Nanda (6th century). Dharmapāla is an outstanding pupil of Dignāga whereas Sthiramati is a prominent student of Vasubandhu. As for Nanda, he is famous as being one of the ten great commentators of Vasubandhu’s Trīṃśikā, so as Dharmapāla and Sthiramati.

Since the theory of ‘sākāra’ (consciousness with form) is related with the structure of mind or the mode of cognition, we need to understand the analysis undergone by the Vijñānavādins. Although these philosophers belong to the same idealistic school, they take different attitudes towards the conventional knowledge. Dignāga’s engagement in pursuit of true knowledge has great influence on

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2 With reference to Chi’eng Wei-Shi Lun (The Treatise of the Doctrine of Mere-consciousness), Hsüan-tsang has not mentioned the name of Dharmakīrti. That is why the representative of Sākāra-vijñānavāda has not included Dharmakīrti. Nevertheless, Dharmakīrti’s view should be ascribed to the camp of Sākāra-vijñānavāda.

3 Hsüan-tsang mentioned Nanda as one of the representative of Nirākāra-vijñānavāda. It should be noted that Nanda does not have any assertions on self-cognition.
Dharmapāla. Following the standing of his teacher, Dharmapāla attempts to establish
the validity of knowledge that could bring about certain pragmatic effects. Unlike the
Śākara-vijñānavāda, Sthiramati and Nanda hold that the worldly knowledge is
deceptive by nature and that is why they belong to the camp of
‘Nirākāra-vijñānavāda’.

Referring to Dignāga’s views, ‘the knowledge of knowledge’ is an integral
awareness of the dual aspects of object-form and the self-cognizant. Hence, the
doctrine of self-cognition closely relates with the issues of ‘awareness with form’
and the ‘structure of mind’. Discourses about the mind structure among the
Vijñānavādins are divided into four propositions: Sthiramati for onefold, Nanda
for twofold divisions, Dignāga for threefold divisions and Dharmapāla for fourfold
divisions of consciousness. Their standpoints of these theories would be examined in
sequence.

5.2.1 Onefold Theory of Consciousness Advocated by Sthiramati

The meaning of “onefold” is obscure because for any partition of an entity,
there should comprise more than one part at the least. How can a consciousness be
divided into one part only? In fact, Sthiramati’s thought on mind structure is same as
Dignāga because the constituents of an evolving consciousness comprise three
aspects, i.e. perceived object (prameya), perceiving act (pramāṇa) and
self-consciousness (sva-saṃvedana). These are components of a consciousness
designating different faculties. But Sthiramati differs with Dignāga on the point that
only that self-consciousness (sva-saṃvedana) is a true element among the three. Due
to the fact that self-consciousness differentiates itself into object of cognition and
perceiving act, it is the real entity acting as a unifying base or substance for the manifestation of the other two parts. This is the reason why Sthiramati is regarded as the initiator of “onefold” theory instead of “threelfold divisions”. Indeed, it is more appropriate to say Sthiramati’s theory is onefold in essence with a threelfold in formal construction. As the object aspect is not a real part of the consciousness according to Sthiramati’s assumption, he is thus ascribed to the camp of ‘Nirākāra-vijñānavāda’.

It seems to me that the onefold division theory of Sthiramati develops the thinking of Asaṅga with reference to svasaṃvedana (self-consciousness). We may need to refer back to Asaṅga’s concept of pure consciousness. In chapter three, we have mentioned that Asaṅga regards the self-consciousness (svasaṃvedana) as a special state of mind with luminous and nondual attributes to be realized through the process of spiritual transcendence. This mental state forms a primordial substratum that is beyond all conceptuality. When consciousness does not grasp an object, it is in this state that the mind remains in the very nature of mind and thus called consciousness-only (vijñāpti-mātra). To Sthiramati, the criterion of perceptibility is pure consciousness. What makes it possible for consciousness to be perceptual is that in the knowing process object presented to consciousness that apprehends it. The two poles of knowing – the subject at one end and the object known at the other, both are met on the common platform of consciousness. The philosophy of Sthiramati strongly proves that the object does not exist independently of the pure consciousness simply because svasaṃvedana is the substance of the transforming consciousness. Though the consciousness is a substance in this view, it is also an attribute in another view for the self-evidentiality. There need be no fear of

4 I cannot find the corresponding Sanskrit for the word “onefold”. As Ch’eng Wei-Shi Lun was
contradiction in the same entity being a substance and an attribute in nature as this is the case of an object like a lamp which is both light as well as the luminous object. Here, the interpretation of Sthiramati gives a new stand to svasānvedana (self-consciousness), i.e. the fundamental cause of mind transformation integrating the known and the knowing.

5.2.2 Twofold Divisions Theory of Consciousness Suggested by Nanda

Nanda, who belongs to the Nirākāra-vijñānavāda, advocates the twofold divisions theory to depict the vijñāpti-mātra theory originated from Asaṅga and Vasubandhu. Vijnāpti-mātra means everything is nothing but transformation (parināma) of consciousness (vijñānas). According to Nanda, the part of consciousness that performs an activity of looking or discrimination is the perceiving act (darsanabhāga). The perceived object (nimittabhāga), as a “part” of consciousness, looks as if it were an external object. The mind itself is in dualistic mode because the perceived object looks as though it is an external object and the perceiving act looks as though it is grasping an external object. That is why Nanda conceives every consciousness be necessarily constituted by these two “parts”. It should be noted that Nanda says that the essential nature of consciousness is discrimination (vikalpa). The internal consciousnesses manifests what seem to be ātman (subjective self) and dharmas (objective existents) of the external world. The objects being discriminated are falsely regarded as real substances by the sentient beings. In this regard, Nanda is said to be a ‘Nirākāra-vijñānavādin’. But to Nanda, the discriminating ability of the mind itself is a real capacity whereas the object is not.

written in Chinese, the English translation uses “onefold” to mean “one part” in Chinese words.
It should be noted that the twofold theory does not include the part of self-consciousness (svaṣaṇṭvedana).

Although the thoughts of Sthiramati and Nanda on the mind structure issue are quite different, one establishes svaṣaṇṭvedana whilst the other does not. However, they have agreements on the perceived object (prameya) as something ‘delusive’ or ‘unreal’ in nature. Only the mind either in the form of perceiving act (darśanabhāga) or self-consciousness (svaṣaṇṭvedana) is true in essence. Therefore, this sect is named as ‘Nirākāra-vijñānavādin’. We are reminded that the term ‘nirākāra’ literally means ‘without a form’. The nickname of ‘nirākāra’ for the Vijñānavādins sounds absurdity as its meaning is not in line with mind transformation carrying an object-form. On that account, the genuine meaning of ‘nirākāra’ under the interpretation of Vijñānavāda should imply ‘the form appearing within the consciousness is unreal’.

5.2.3 Threefold Divisions Theory of Consciousness Proposed by Dignāga

To the Vijñānavāda School, the twofold theory is the fundamental mind structure to support the Mind-only doctrine. Based on the fundamental dualistic model of consciousness, Dignāga develops the vijñāpti-mātra theory by adding svaṣaṇṭvedana as a third element of a consciousness that constitutes the threefold divisions theory. Thereafter, the general theory of mind structure prevailing in the Vijñānavāda was a threefold divisions theory. As explained earlier in chapter three, Dignāga proclaims that every consciousness consists of three “parts” (elements). The “self-cognition” (svaṣaṇṭvedana) is an additional part to identify the function of witnessing the first two parts, i.e. the perceived object (prameya) and perceiving act (darśanabhāga). It is a kind of self-cognizant to give rise to result of knowledge
(pramāṇaphala). In a sense, cognition is an activity of self-understanding and the “object of cognition” is formed by our mind.

As said by Dignāga, this object of cognition is the ‘knowable interior form’ and is a part of the consciousness. This image-in-consciousness is not delusive because it establishes capacity or potencies (sākti). The object-form gives rise to a virtuality, which as its own turns produces a new object-form similar to the previous form of object lying in the consciousness. The other reason the object-form is not delusive is that it is apprehended by the perceiving act. This apprehension is a direct perception that is free from conceptuality (nirvikalpa) and the object is unique with particular form (svalakṣaṇa). These two criteria in the way of potency and direct perception warrant the reality of the object of cognition. Hence, Dignāga is said to be a ‘Sākāra-vijñānavādin’.

5.2.4 Fourfold Divisions Theory of Consciousness asserted by Dharmapāla

The fourfold structure of consciousness established by Dharmapāla consists of the following “parts” respectively: a perceived object (prameya), a perceiving act (pramāṇa), self-consciousness (svasaṣṭvedana) and consciousness of self-consciousness (svasaṣṭvitti-saṣṭvitti-bhāga). The characteristics of the first three parts are same as Dignāga’s. The part (bhāga) that can attest the self-consciousness, i.e. consciousness of self-consciousness, is a new component suggested by Dharmapāla.

What is the justification of the fourfold division theory? As noticed by Dr.

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6 Tola Fernando and Dragonetti Carmen, “Dignāga’s Ālambanaparikṣāvṛtti”, Journal of Indian Philosophy 10, 1982, p. 105-134. Ālambanaparikṣāvṛtti is one of the famous works of Dignāga. In this text, Dignāga attempts to examine the nature of the object of cognition on whether it is derived from an external source or internal consciousness. In Tola Fernando and Dragonetti Carmen’s essay, they have translated the Tibetan text and commentary in English.
Matilal, some Indian philosophers criticized that Dignāga’s doctrine of self-cognition is not really immune to the fault of infinite regress. If the object-form being the apprehensible is apprehended by the cognition-form, and this cognition-form is apprehended by the self-cognition, then by the same token the cognition-form has also the form of an apprehensible and self-cognition would have the form of its apprehension. If the self-cognition obtains a form in this manner then it is liable to be apprehended by another apprehension and so on ad infinitum.\(^7\) In face of this challenge, Dharmapāla claims that the addition of the fourth part, i.e. *svasaṃvitti-samvitti-bhāga*, can dispel the apparent formal fault of infinite regress.

To understand the doctrine of self-consciousness suggested by Dharmapāla, one needs to carefully examine the perceived objects of the third ‘*svasaṃvedana* or *svasaṃvittibhāga*’ and the fourth ‘*svasaṃvitti-saṃvitti-bhāga*’. Among the four parts (*bhāgas*) established by Dharmapāla, the mental image represents only the objective aspect of cognition. The other three parts, in their essential nature, are all capacity of perceiving activities and thus should have both subjective and objective aspects.

“In the forward direction, the third part ‘*svasaṃvedana*’ holds intentionally the second ‘*darsanabhāga*’ [the perceiving act] and backwards, it holds intentionally the fourth ‘*svasaṃvitti-samvitti-bhāga*’. In the forward direction the fourth part holds intentionally the third;... Each [part of] intentional holding has its determinate role, and thus limitation is possible ...”\(^8\) The fourth part is intentionally aware of the self-consciousness, whereas the third part has the capability of ‘awareness of *darsanabhāga*’ and ‘awareness of *svasaṃvitti-saṃvitti-bhāga*’. The double


directions in perceiving different objects are the distinctive features for the third part but not for the fourth part. Both the third and the fourth bhāgas directly perceive their related objects. The establishment of the fourth part (svasaṃvitti-samvitti-bhāga) is to designate its specific function for validating what is being known by the third part.

As the self-cognizing event needs to be evidenced by another part, if the fourth part is lacking, in what way the svasaṃvedana be attested? Can the perceiving act (darsanabhāga) validate its result? For the characteristic of darsanabhāga, since it intentionally apprehends something as being “external”, it could not witness the svasaṃvedana in the reserve direction. But the character of the fourth part, the “recognition of self-cognition” (svasaṃvitti-saṃvitti-bhāga), always cognizes towards the self-consciousness that is not something “external”. Then the awareness can be evidenced immediately in a determinative way. In epistemic sense, for each measurement there must have a corresponding measurer. When the ‘consciousness of consciousness’ recognizes the svasaṃvedana, just like an action of measurement for obtaining certain results, it is conceived as a “pramāṇaphala”.

Here Dharmapāla faces a new difficulty. If a perceiving part has to be attested by another part, the same criteria would then be applied to the fourth part as well in order to obtain a result of knowledge. If so, it would need a fifth part and so on. To avoid the fallacy of infinite regress, Dharmapāla says that it is the third part, the self-consciousness (svasaṃvedana) which attests the fourth (svasaṃvitti-saṃvitti-bhāga) reversibly. But then, the exposition of Dharmapāla seems to defect the whole purpose of Dignāga’s concept of svasaṃvedana.

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(self-consciousness). As we say before, one of the purposes for Dignāga to establish the self-cognition is his attempt to put a stop to the regressive witnessing process. Nevertheless, Dharmapāla takes great pain to prove the necessity of the fourth part in the hope of reconciling the opposite views towards the idea of ‘knowledge of knowledge’. The doubling self-cognition of the third and fourth parts looks like a counter-check mechanism that can validate the result of cognition by attesting one another. By establishing the fourth part to evident the third and vice versa, it can avoid the criticism such as ‘a finger cannot point to itself’ from Vaibhāṣika and Mādhyamika. To uphold the meaning of ‘awareness of itself’ within every consciousness, said by Dharmapāla, “In [the realm of] intentional holding and of the intentionally held, there are always only four parts, there is neither decrease nor increase and there is consequently no infinite regress”. With the finite four parts divisions theory, Dharmapāla is confident that it can take care of all the concerns about the mind structure and perceiving problems, and thus no additional part is required.

The elaboration of Dharmapāla deploys a complicated dualistic relation between these four parts and the function of each part is defined. Moreover, the first two are related to something ‘external’ whilst the latter two are concerned with ‘internal’ objects. In particular the third part, i.e. the self-consciousness (svasaṃvedana or svasaṃvittibhāga), is the most important part among these four. Both Dignāga and Dharmapāla regard all parts of the mind as real because these are all arisen from various causes and conditions. From the conventional point of view, the object image is one of the real aspects of the consciousness. Hence, this line of

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10 Iso Kern refers to Commentary, Taishō 43, p. 320a26-27 for which Dharmapāla’s idea is quoted,
stream is called ‘Sākāra-vijñānavādin’ as ‘sākāra’ means that ‘the form of mental image is real in essence’.

5.3 The Coherence of Cause and Result of Knowledge

To the Indian thinkers, knowledge is taken to be an outcome of a particular causal complex in which the most efficient instrumental cause is technically known as pramāṇa. Therefore, the term pramāṇa denotes the act of “measuring” which stands for “cognizing”. As I have explained Dignāga’s view in Chapter three, pramāṇa refers to both the activity of knowing and the knowledge acquired on that basis which is the outcome (pramāṇaphala). The characteristic of the self-consciousness (svasamvedana) is known as a means of measuring activity (pramāṇa) that can instantly give rise to the result (pramāṇaphala). Thus Dignāga concludes that no separation could be possibly made between the cognizing act and its outcome. This proposition is held by the succeeding Vijñānavādins who have tried to interpret the result of knowledge in relation with the cause of knowledge and finally there appears unanimity about the coherent meaning of cause and result within the system of vijñāpti-māra (Mind-only) doctrines.

What is the meaning of cause of knowledge under the Vijñānavāda system? The cause of the knowledge means the origin of the knowledge that explains the rising up or formulation of knowledge. The specific meaning of ‘cause’ is elaborated in two different aspects: one is related to the so-called ‘substance’ as a token of the supporting base of every consciousness whilst the other refers to the potencies of human cognitive ability. Since the post-Dignāga Buddhists explore the nature of the consciousness and its origination as well, the meaning of ‘cause’ in relation with the

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see “The Structure of Consciousness According to Xuanzang”, Journal of the British Society for
‘result’ is not only applicable to epistemic sense but also to the metaphysical aspect.

5.3.1 Cause in the sense of Substance of Consciousness

Where is the origin of the meaning of “substance” of every consciousness comes from? According to Hsüan-tsang’s Cheng Wei-Shi Lun and Kuiji’s Commentary, the concept of “substance” comes from Dharmapāla and Sthiramati. To understand the different thoughts of the Vijñānavādins, we may need to refer back to the Buddhist doctrine of two truths. The two truths focus on the distinction between the degrees of reality for all the existences and how things appear in relation to the percipients who look at them through views and standpoints, i.e. the relative and ultimate levels. The relative level of truth (satīnyti sat) is the empirical world that we experience in our ordinary life. It is a reality that is amenable to empirical knowledge and linguistic expression. The ultimate truth (pāramārthika sat) can only be apprehended by transcendent experience. For the purpose of distinguishing different nature of the relative truth, the Vijñānavāda put forth ‘three levels of reality’ (tri-svabhāva-lakṣaṇa) as advancement for the doctrine of two truths. The first is the ‘purely imagined nature’ (parikalpita-svabhāva) which is entirely non-existent, such as the inherent substance of things. The second is the ‘other-dependent nature’ or ‘empirical reality’ (pāratāntrika-svabhāva). The third is the ‘perfected nature reality’ (parinispänna-svabhāva) that can equate with suchness (tathatā) or emptiness (śūnyatā). The first two svabhāva (existent) are ascribed to the conventional level whereas the third is the ultimate level of truth. At the level of relative truth, only the ‘other-dependent nature’ has a sense of reality in conventional


11 Apart from Sthiramati who advocates the svasaṁvedaṇa as the substance of the consciousness in his onefold theory, Kuiji mentions that Dharmapāla also conceives the third part as the substance of
world whilst the ‘purely imagined nature’ is considered as unreal.

According to Sthiramati, the true nature of every consciousness itself is not in a state of differentiation into subject and object. The appearances of subject and object emerged from discrimination are falsely perceived as real existence by the sentient beings. The common analogy of the existence of subject and object is like our experience in a dream state. Thus the Vijñānavādins say that all the phenomena are products of one’s own mind. Therefore, concepts of ātman (self) and dharma (things) are mere metaphors to denote the subjective and the objective aspects of cognition. In other words, they are not real existence. Sthiramati declares that there is neither subject nor object because these are products of the human construction (parikalpita). Through detachment from the imaginary subject and object, one comes to realize the state of pure consciousness (vijñāpti-mātra in transcendental sense) in which there is no differentiation between subject and object. The duality of the perceiving act and the perceived object exists only as a matter of opinion but not exist in truth.\textsuperscript{12} Though the structure of consciousness is in triple division, only one part, the svasaṃvedana (self-consciousness) is real. The other two parts are delusive. In this sense, Sthiramati’s mode of cognition is called onefold consciousness theory. Not only svasaṃvedana is the true nature of mind, it is also the cause of cognitive knowledge.

Like Sthiramati, Dharmapāla also conceives svasaṃvedana as the substance of consciousness in both empirical and transcendental levels. Dharmapāla differs with Sthiramati for his assertion that the perceiving act (pramāṇa) and perceived object (prameya) arise from a varieties of real conditions and are thus, like

\textsuperscript{12} the consciousness. From this point of view, they have the same understanding, as seen in Taishō 43, p.
self-consciousness (svasativedana), ascribed to the other-dependent nature of realities (pūratāntrika-svabhāva). Only from the real basis of this dualistic mode, imaginary discrimination (parikalpita-svabhāva which is a function of the intellect) conceives false notions of existence such as the independent objects outside of consciousness and the like. Therefore, the form of mental image (prameya) appears within the mind does exist in conventional world. In ordinary experience, it is inappropriate to say these forms of object are illusive because in effect these forms constitute the content of our human knowledge. We can apply the knowledge in different aspects of our daily lives and achieve various purposeful objectives. We are reminded what Dharmakīrti says, “All successful human action is (necessarily) preceded by right knowledge.” Right knowledge is successful cognition and it is cognition followed by a successful action. It is meaningful not only for the human beings in common sense, but also for the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas who aim at benefiting sentient beings in their preaching.

With respect to the self-consciousness as “substance” of consciousness for which the former two parts arise, in this sense, its primarily meaning seems to be the cause of measurement (i.e. cognition or pramāṇa) rather than the effect. Kuji explains Dignāga’s meaning of “result” of measurement (i.e. outcome of cognition or pramāṇaphala) as follows: “What is the meaning of ‘result’? It means ‘the fulfilled cause’. If that which measures had no result, what would be the use of measuring the object?”

241a2-4.
12 See Kuji’s Commentary in Taishō 43, p. 241b7-21.
15 Iso Kern refers to Kuji’s Commentary, Taishō 43, p. 319b6-7.
knowledge obtained. In this sense, the "fulfilled cause" is to effectuate the cause in relation to a result. Hence, the "result" is a kind of function that cannot be separated from the "cause", i.e. the "substance" of the consciousness. That is the reason for Dharmapāla to unite the "result of cognition" with the "fulfilled cause". As the concept of "cause" can be linked with the concept of "substance", the "fulfilled cause" or the "actualized cognition" can be understood as the consciousness unifying the different aspects of the object and the perceiving act. 16

So far, we note that there are two different features about the self-consciousness (svaṣaṅvedana) as explained above: 1) as a "substance" of the consciousness which is a unifying base for differentiating both perceiving act and perceived object; as claimed by Sthiramati in his onefold theory and Dharmapāla as well; 2) as one "part" or "element" of the consciousness indicating different kinds of functions, i.e. the third part as the reflexive or result of measurement, as suggested by Dignāga, Dharmapāla and Sthiramati. The self-consciousness comprises both cause and effect because in one hand it is the base (cause) for discrimination whilst on the other hand it also performs the realization (result) of the apprehension. It seems that only the second meaning is clearly mentioned in the text of Dignāga's Pramāṇasamuccaya but not the first. Thus, Sthiramati and Dharmapāla's ideas of substance of consciousness (svaṣaṅvedana) can be regarded as a complementary explanation to Dignāga's thought of the indifference between resulting cognition (pramāṇaphala) and means of cognition (pramāṇa), in particular on the ontological aspect.

5.3.2 Cause in the sense of Potencies

The concepts of "cause" and "effect" have their respective relevance with the

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16 Iso Kern, "The Structure of Consciousness According to Xuanzang", Journal of the British Society
Vijñāptimātra theory. Another interpretation of manifestation (parināma) of consciousness lies on the actualization of cognitive states by virtue of ‘seeds’ (bija) or ‘potencies’ deposited in the ālayavijñāna (store-consciousness). With the support of conditional causes, the latency of consciousness becomes active and manifests itself into two functional divisions. In this sense, the potencies are the ‘cause’ and the consciousnesses transformation is the ‘effect’. Hence, Dharmapāla terms the former as “cause-manifestation” (hetuparīṇāma) and the latter as “effect-manifestation” (phalaparīṇāma). Among the four parts of a consciousness, only the substance of the consciousness (i.e. svasaṃvedana) can be called “phalaparīṇāma” because it is the actualization or fulfillment of potential cause (seed). Since the manifestation of mind arises from potencies (bija), the resulted effect (phala or fruit) should not be treated as something illusive on the level of relative truth. It is a phenomenon originated from various causes and conditions. That is why Dharmapāla declares that all “parts” of consciousness are real faculties, in a sense not separating from the mind. The false imaginations (parikalpita-svabhāva) of ātman (real self) and dharma (existent of object) are results of our failure to comprehend the true nature of the mind structure and their operation. If we realize that the semblance of perceived object and perceiving subject are results of dependent origination, then we can achieve insight into their “nature of ultimate reality” (parinispanna-svabhāva).

Based upon the assumption that all consciousnesses manifest themselves into two parts (bhāgas) by the force of potencies, Dharmapāla views the saṃvittibhāga (self-consciousness) as the most essential part. The subjective and objective parts of

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a consciousness are ‘nature of dependence on others’ (pāratāntrika-svabhāva) to the same extent as the saṃvitthāga. He argues that if the two bhāgas which are born of bijas (potencies), were not pāratāntrika, then the saṃvitthāga which is the supporting basis for the two bhāgas, would not be pāratāntrika either. There is no reason for this entity to be pāratāntrika if the two bhāgas are not. The same attributes should be applied to the fourth part (svasaṃvitti-saṃvitti-bhāga or the consciousness of self-consciousness) as well. To Dharmapāla, the interior object-form is not caused by an external object but rather the potencies possessed within the ālayavijñāna (the store-consciousness).

According to Dharmapāla, the origin of knowledge is the seeds (bijas) as the primary cause, then the substance of the consciousness (svasaṃvedana) as the secondary cause. On the basis of svasaṃvedana, the ‘cause’ accompanies the fulfilled ‘result’ in its realization of the cognitive acts. This is a convincing argument to support the theory of ‘sākāra’. The exposition of self-cognition in its ontological and epistemological senses is eventually fitted into the doctrines of vijñānapariṇāma (transformation of mind).

5.4 A Brief Summary

By examining the structure of mind and theory of knowledge, we notice that the two streams of the Vijñānavāda School, the Sākāra-vijñānavādin and Nirākāra-vijñānavādin, represent their understanding of the Vijñānavāda philosophy in different way. Both sects give self-consciousness new insights to explore the structure of cognition in deeper sense, the nature of perceived object in relation to the

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17 Potencies or seeds are equivalent to mean the latencies that generate the physical or mental phenomenon under which one’s own karma (conduct) potentials are ripen.
18 Translated by Wei Tat, Ch’eng Wei-Shih Lun, The Doctrine of Mere-Consciousness, (The Ch’eng

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reality and to give strong enforcement of “Mind-only” theory.

One of the contributions of Dignāga’s philosophy is to construct the self-cognition epistemology for the Vijñānavāda. He advocates a theory of threefold divisions of consciousness. The form of object and the perceiving means are inseparable. They are mutual coexistent and dependent models for cognition, showing the relation of subject and object being grasped by the consciousness and stressing that object cannot be appeared apart from our own mind. The main feature of Dignāga’s epistemology is to unite the function of pramāṇa (the perceiving means) with the self-evidentiality in the cognitive event.

Dharmapāla inherits and develops the self-cognition theory of Dignāga to a large extent. The function of cognition in the deeper level of the mind becomes a mutually related object. The self-cognition part and the part that recognizes the self-cognition part reflect each other as object for cognition, thereby obtaining results of knowledge and its verification. Accordingly to the commentaries of Hsüan-tsang and Kuiji, Dharmapāla is the one who is fully aware of the problem of infinite regress and the possible self-refuting nature of the recognition theory. He has tried to refine the cognitive theory in a way that can provide a reconciliation of opposite point of views. However, Dharmapāla may risks to lose the point of Dignāga’s self-cognizing svasaṃvedana in relation to Nyaya’s anuvyavasāya (cognition by another cognition).

The epistemology of Dharmapāla also makes use of the seed (bhūja) theory of transformable cause and transformable effect for explaining the origin of phenomenon. It provides a rational ground for judging the truth and falsehood of an

Wei-Shih Lun Publication Committee, Hong Kong, 1973), p. 631.
object in terms of ontological interpretation since the object of cognition is not
delusive in conventional world. Regarding the doctrine of three levels of reality,
Dharmapāla accepts the view of Nirākāra-vijñānavāda (consciousness with a form
of object which is unreal) only to an extent: the externality of objects and the inner
substantial self are considered illusory (parikalpita), but not the self-consciousness
itself. The empirical reality (pāratāntrika) of the stream of awareness in our ordinary
experience can explain why we could possibly purifying our mind, which is free of
desire and full of compassion as exemplified in the life of the Buddha. This
knowledge of the ultimate reality (parinīspanna) reveals the suchness (tathatā) or
non-inherent existence of all phenomena since it is without any distortion or
categories of thought. This demonstrates that immediate awareness (svasaṃvedana)
is the bridge to Nirvāṇa (the life liberation) as at that state the immediate awareness
is in its natural and pristine state. As such, pāratāntrika is inseparable with
parinīspanna. It follows that the Sākara-vijñānavāda (consciousness with the form
of an object) appears to inject the earlier Yogācāra soteriology into their account of
svasaṃvedana (self-consciousness) theory. The principles of de-illusionism of the
Dignāga’s tradition is upheld through the efforts of Dharmapāla and it becomes the
significant characteristics of the Sākara-vijñānavāda.

Last but not the least, Nirākāra-vijñānavādins do comply with the doctrines
of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu. Argumentation of Śthirimiti follows the way of
thinking of the mere-consciousness theory. As the ātman (self) and dharmas
(existents) are products of ‘vijñāna-paripāma’ (manifestation of mind), these are not
real entities in the eyes of enlightened saints. Through the continuous efforts of our
detachment to the inherent existence thinking, one can achieve insight of pure
consciousness (the true nature of consciousness) without differentiation into subjective and objectives aspects. This is the essential point of onefold theory designated by Sthiramati. His doctrine not only reflects the effective way of religious practice and soteriology, but also the ontological thinking of mind structure, i.e., there is a unifying base for the dualistic evolution.

Though there are different views of Sākāra-vijñānavāda and Nirākāra-vijñānavāda, we can identify the similar position of Sthiramati and Dharmapāla towards the nature of svāsānveda (self-consciousness) as the substance of every consciousness. For Sthiramati, he is credited to link the svāsānveda with the concept of pure consciousness found by Asaṅga during the meditative experience, which in turns pave the way for soteriological concern.

To conclude, the Sākāra-vijñānavādin emphasizes the dependent arising (pāratāntrika) nature of the object-forms whilst the Nirākāra-vijñānavādin regard these are products of imaginary (parikalpita). In their discussions of the self-consciousness, the Vijñānavādins try to integrate the ontological and practical expositions of the Yogācāra doctrines into Dignāga’s epistemology. Despite their different positions, they both have contributions to the hermeneutic of the vijñāpti-mātra (Mind-only) doctrines particularly with the cognitive theory of knowledge.
CHAPTER SIX
CONCLUSION

From the historical and philosophical reviews of the Buddhist doctrine of self-cognition, we can see that the concept of svasaṃvedana (self-consciousness) was originally an ambiguous idea. Through the persisting philosophical inquiry of the ‘knowledge of knowledge’, cognition has gradually acquired a component of self-aware subjectivity which grounds every cognition in epistemic sense, such that one knows that one knows.

The main question under consideration is “How do I know that I know?” Historically we can trace the view of self-awareness or self-luminosity of experience from the Upaniṣads. A possible explanation of how ‘knowledge’ comes to be conceived as ‘light’ in ancient Indian philosophy is that knowledge illuminates objects as light illuminates things. As a principle of revelation, knowledge is self-effulgent (svaprakāśa) with its identity with the Brahman (the ultimate reality).

The reality to be known and the knower coalesce into one. In other words, ātman (the self) is Brahman. The description of knowledge as ‘luminosity’ is a helpful metaphor for apprehension of the ‘awareness of awareness’ experience from within. The interpretation of the ‘awareness of awareness’ brings up rival theories and challenges from the Indian schools. It is worth the effort in distinguishing different perspectives of conceptual models under different cultural frameworks for an
appreciation of their philosophical concerns. Likewise, similar inquiry and
correlation of the self-awareness consciousness are widely discussed by the
Buddhist scholars. The representatives of the Brahmanical tradition are the
Naiyāyikas who hold a view of anuvyāvasāya (cognition of cognition) and the
Vedāntins who speak of svapraṅkāśatva (self-revelation theory of awareness). For the
four influential Buddhist schools, the Vaibhāṣika-Mādhyamika refute the knowledge
of knowledge whereas the Sautrāntika-Viśṇuṇāvāda advocate the svāsaṃvedana
(self-cognition).

The old Naiyāyikas hold that cognition is usually followed by another
cognition which is an inward perceptual recognition of the first cognition. The
second cognitive state or an inward perception is called anuvyāvasāya. The
self-luminosity (svapraṅkāśatva) view of Vedānta designates the unique distinction of
the principle of revelation. The self and the other objects are recognized as two
necessary referents of the principle of revelation. On the ground that cognition is
effulgent, its luminous character obliging the object would never fail to reveal
because knowledge does not need any further cognitive act for self-revelation. The
difference between Nyāya and Vedānta on the issue of knowledge of knowledge is
that the Nyāya’s cognition of cognition (anuvyāvasāya) is established by a
presupposition of the empirical experience whilst the Vedāntins emphasize on the
self-luminosity (*svaprapakṣatva*) of pure experience in a transcendental state.

According to the Buddhist tradition, initially self-awareness refers to the awareness of one’s feeling and reflection in the training of mindfulness. Following the tradition of yogic practice, Asaṅga of Vijñānavāda schools speaks of a special state of mind characterized as self-luminosity and nondual attributes to be realized through the process of spiritual transcendence. The significance of this mental state forms a primordial substratum that is beyond all conceptuality. When consciousness does not perceive an object, it is in a state of consciousness-only (*vijñapti-mātra*). This primordial substratum is spoken as ‘the very nature of mind’. Such mental state is an ‘awareness of the mind itself’ or ‘reflexive awareness’ that can be understood as a kind of self-consciousness. Later on, it is generalized to the ordinary perceiving activity as the ‘consciousness of consciousness’. The notion ‘*svasampvedana*’ is thus established by the Buddhists to denote the condition of ‘awareness of awareness’ in a cognitive act.

There are several problems incurred for postulation of the reflexive consciousness. Is it necessary to establish this term for explaining the cognitive event? If it does, how does it relate to the cognized object (*prameya*) and means of cognition (*pramāṇa*)? It is inevitable that the speculation of cognition of cognition would result in a fallacy of infinite regress. It would also be conceived as an inner
every existent. Furthermore, whether the characteristics of self-consciousness can guarantee our conviction of the truth of our experience or the reality of the object upon which it is directed is a question to answer. In response to these queries, the basic doctrine of _svasāṇṇvedana_ (self-consciousness) was first found by the Sautrāntika school. However, it is the efforts of Dignāga of the Vijñānavāda school who systematizes the definitions and criteria of _svasāṇṇvedana_.

According to the Vijñānavāda Mind-Only doctrine, the mind itself transforms into the perceived mental object (_nimittabhaṅga_) and the perceiving act (_darsanabhāga_) during the cognizing activities. Objects and subjects are different but they are not different entities. The proposition that everything is consciousness only induced Dignāga to inquire into the characteristic of mind in an innovative way. There should be two appearances to the mind itself, i.e. the object and the self-cognizing aspects. Cognition is self-cognized (_svasāṇṇvedana_) in a sense that a cognitive state in the form ‘I know this’ reveals not only the object expressed by “this” but also the knowing subject as well as the knowledge in question. Thus, ‘I know this’ can be equivalent to ‘I know that I know this.’ The convinced experience when one cognizes certain things with such a certainty by oneself can amount to knowledge. On the analogy of light revealing also the light itself, the word ‘reveal’
depicts a reflexive understanding when applied to knowledge. Hence, Dignāga claims that the ground for establishing the *svasaṃvedana* is based on the two-form appearance of a cognition, i.e. the object appearance (*arthābhāsa*) and the self-cognizing appearance (*svābhāsa*). *Svasaṃvedana* becomes the central concept of the Vijñānavāda doctrines, and is defended with epistemological sophistication by Dignāga and his followers.

Dignāga theory of self-apprehension of our cognitive knowledge is not beyond question. Therefore, the post-Dignāga Vijñānavādins take great pains to prove this mental phenomenon, on which their epistemology and their idealist metaphysics rest. The Vijñānavāda Buddhists make idealistic arguments to the effect that ‘to be is to be perceived’ so as to maintain that there cannot be any objects external to various consciousnesses. They hold different positions in explaining the nature of objects that mark a sharp distinction between *Sākāra-vijñānavāda* (consciousness with form of an object) and *Nirā kāra-vijñānavāda* (consciousness without form of object) among the Vijñānavādins.

Since ‘knowledge of knowledge’ is an integral awareness of the dual aspects of object-form and the self-cognizant, the doctrine of self-cognition closely relates with the issues of ‘awareness with form’ and the ‘structure of mind’. One of the important subjects for the Vijñānavāda (Mind-only) doctrine is the aspect of the cognitive
structure. By exploring the structure of cognition in deeper sense and the nature of perceived object, the Vijñānavādins suggest several theories of mind structure. These include Sthiramati’s onefold, Nanda’s twofold, Dignāga’s threefold and Dharmapāla’s fourfold divisions of consciousness. The twofold divisions theory suggests that the constituents of every consciousness should include a perceived object (prameya) and a perceiving act (pramāpa). The addition of the self-consciousness (svasaṃvedana) to the former two parts forms the threefold theory. The onefold theory is similar to the threefold theory in its structure but Sthiramati only admits the self-consciousness part as a real constituent. By adding the fourth part, the consciousness of self-consciousness (svasaṃvitti-saṃvitti-bhāga) to the former three parts, these four parts make up the fourfold theory. Apart from Nanda’s twofold theory that does not consist of the self-cognitive part, the other three theories give the term self-consciousness new meanings to uphold the principle of “Mind-only” theory that I will comment below.

Through the endeavor of those Buddhist philosophers, such as Dignāga, Dharmakīrti, Dharmapāla and Sthiramati, etc., whether engaging in apologetics for a particular view or attempting to find answers to questions, the terminology ‘svasaṃvedana’ turns out to designate the fundamental cognitive activity in the Vijñāpti-mātra (Mind-only) system. As there are a variety of views regarding the
‘knowledge of knowledge’, it is by no means easy to explain the agreement and
disagreement among different philosophers in this aspect. What I would like to do in
this chapter is to highlight several components of the subject that could reflect the
fundamental concerns of these philosophers in addition to the significance of these
controversies in relation to the problem of self-cognition. It is hoped to clarify the
positions and the different views of these Buddhist scholars from their philosophical
discourses.

6.1 Arguments in response to the Rejection of Svasaṃvedana

The denials of self-consciousness were brought out by Vaibhāṣika and
Nāgārjuna of Mādhyamika school. The similarity of their beliefs is that cognition
does not possess a reflexive awareness character. They deny the ‘cognition of
cognition’ by saying that “a finger cannot point at itself and a knife is unable to cut
itself.” It is believed that they attempt to reject the Naiyāyikas’ idea of anuvyavasāya
(cognition of cognition). The Vaibhāṣika school upholds a realist view on dualism of
mental and physical elements. Since consciousness and object in empirical world are
in separate category, they maintain that an object may exist independently of the
cognizing consciousness and that the mind directly cognizes the form of the object as
it is so in the case of the external object. From the Vaibhāṣika’s point of view, since
the mind is defined as a mental activity that can intentionally perceive an object, it is
self-evidently absurd that the perceiving consciousness can be a self-witness inwardly. Thus, the Vaibhāṣika asserts external objects as being truly established but does not accept self-cognizing consciousness.

Nāgārjuna’s arguments against self-consciousness can be summed up for a few points. Firstly, cognition of an object does not necessitate awareness of that cognition. Secondly, since there is no enduring object possessing intrinsic qualities, the assertion of self-cognition would involve an inherently existent entity that would not exist through the ultimate analysis. Thirdly, its existence would entail infinite regress since it requires another cognition to recognize the preceding cognition.

Some Buddhist schools aggressively refute the view of ‘cognition of cognition’ of their most energetic opponents, the realist school of Nyāya. However, there are some other Buddhist schools such as Sautrāntika and Vijñānavāda contend the necessity in establishing the reflexive nature of consciousness. To respond to the challenge of Nāgārjuna, the Vijñānavāda philosophers involve a highly creative development of the thought from the fifth to seventh centuries to address their new intellectual and soteriological concerns.

Among these proofs, recollection is made possible because our mind is also cognizant of its own seeing. Self-cognition is characterized in epistemological term as the application of memory to later experience. This notion is derived from the
realization of a present object that is the same as an object of a past experience, as retained in our memory. It is understood that the same process actually occurs in all applications of our cognitive experience. Moreover, our perceptions arise with certain feelings through apprehending the cognized objects. Suffering and happiness are not external to consciousness, but integral to our awareness of external objects. Hence, when we cognize something, we are at the same time cognizing this awareness.

Dignāga’s theory of knowledge centers on the concept of svasaṃvedana, with particular interests in the aspect through which knowledge is testified. His argument lies on the thought of double aspects of cognition. The cognition that cognizes a cognition of object has on the one hand the appearance of that cognition which is in conformity with the object, and on the other hand its own appearance. The cognition cognizing of itself demonstrates the fact that the mental object (prameya), the cognizing act (pramāṇa) and the awareness of that cognition (pramāṇaphala) are indeed a single entity of consciousness. Dignāga expounds in his doctrine of pramāṇa (valid cognition) that a cognition of cognition indicates a resulting knowledge (pramāṇaphala) that can evidence the knowledge.

To uphold the Buddhist principle of non-substantiality (anūtman), Dignāga differs radically from the Naiyāyikas in his understanding of the nature of pramāṇa
(means of cognition) and prameya (object). While the Naiyāyikas hold the view that pramāṇa and prameya are real entities, Dignāga claims that they are of ideated character. Regarding the Vedānta’s svapraṅkāśatva (self-revelation theory of awareness), Dignāga agrees with their claim of self-cognizing act but denies the idea of cognizer self (ātman or soul substance). With respect to the reflexivity of mind, Dignāga maintains that ‘the subject is aware that he is aware’ simply means every mental episode is a self-cognition toward its own cognizing act through being aware of an object. Such cognitive activity is a process of momentary direct perception (pratyakṣa) of a flux of evanescent unique particulars (svalakṣatpa).

The idea of reflexivity for any cognitive events becomes the basic tenet of later Vijñānavāda system. From the ontological sense, the self-cognizing consciousness is conceived as the substratum for the manifestation of the dual aspects within the mind itself according to Dharmapāla and Sthiramati. Therefore Hsüan-tsang and Kuiji elucidate the implicit meaning of the svasaṃvedana in terms of ‘substantive consciousness’. The unitary expressions on cause and effect of the knowledge by Dharmapāla and Sthiramati are then highlighted. Subsequently, they provide some answers to the questions of svasaṃvedana concerned from various aspects.

6.2 Arguments for Conventional Existence of Self-consciousness

The way of Nāgārjuna’s argument is to refute any assertions of ontological
substance that would involve the presupposition of an inherently existent entity. The argumentative method employed by Nāgārjuna is to reject one concept after the other, showing that there is nothing independent. He claims that all concepts are relational concepts, such as “subject” and “object”, therefore, they are meaningless alone and presuppose one another. The self-reflexive awareness not only cannot be established through an ultimate analysis but it is also not valid from a conventional view. Nāgārjuna contends that self-cognition is self-refutable, just like a fingertip is unable to touch that same fingertip. Any assertion of ‘cognition of cognition’ would inevitably lead to a false view of intrinsic nature.

But to Dignāga, for a valid cognizing consciousness to certify the apprehension of our instance of cognition, it would have to be able to observe itself and whereby it would be self-conscious. Each episode of awareness in the conscious series is real because one is quite convinced of what one knows. Under such circumstance, if something is to be known, it must be true or it must exist. The intrinsic nature of a cognitive event can be undermined under the momentary theory. Also, Dignāga justifies that non-conceptuality experience is true by claiming that we apprehend the truth of a cognition along with our apprehension of the cognition itself without dependent upon any extrinsic condition. It is justified for Dharmakīrti’s addition of non-erroneous as he tries to mark off the content of error from that of a true
cognition. True knowledge arises from proper causal conditions and is capable of fulfilling a purposeful aim. That is why he claims that all successful human actions are preceded by right knowledge. The goal is reality itself which is the known object. In being aware of this, it incurs no fault for our normal experience. Dharmakīrti’s conception of truth contains both epistemic and ontological components.

As to Dharmapāla, he concerns mainly on the effect of what we cognized and how an infinite regress be avoided under the mechanism of recognition of self-cognition. The fourfold theory of consciousness maintained by Dharmapāla suggests that the structure of every consciousness consists of a perceived object (prameya), a perceiving act (pramāga), self-consciousness (svasaṃvedana) and consciousness of self-consciousness (svasaṃvitti-saṃvitti-bhāga). The self-cognition part (svasaṃvedana) and the part that recognizes the self-cognition part (svasaṃvitti-saṃvitti-bhāga) reflect each other as object for cognition, thereby obtaining results of knowledge and their verification. It is not necessary to establish another part to verify the svasaṃvitti-saṃvitti-bhāga and thus the problem of infinite regress can be resolved.

The premise held by the Śākara-vijñānavāda (consciousness with the form of an object) states that any knowing consciousness must have an object. If mind is self-awareness, it should have itself as its own object. The direct perception of the
object is not expressible in words although this cognitive state has content. I incline to contend that Dharmapāla’s theory of sākara-vijnānavāda advocates a spirit of de-illusionism and denounces the skeptical arguments raised by Nāgārjuna. Dharmapāla’s claim looks like an exasperated attempt to secure the possibility of valid cognition. Dharmapāla contends that it is the internal vāsanā (seeds) that give rise to the perceived form of object. The internal seeds include individual mental dispositions and the residual forces of our past actions. To the Sākara-vijnānavādins, the object is real in conventional sense. This also supports the thought that not every elements of our ordinary life should be considered illusory, especially for the testimony of the Buddhist teaching. There must be some elements of our ordinary existence that may serve as the means of transition to the experience of Nirvāṇa (liberation).

Corresponding to his epistemology of self-cognition, Dharmapāla also expounds this notion from an ontological perspective. The two most basic ontological categories for the post-Dignāga Vijñānavāda are cause and result, substance and attribute. The Vijñānavādins conceive the phenomena as a result of the manifestation of consciousness. To emphasis the transforming capability of every consciousness, both Dharmapāla and Sthiramati claim that the self-consciousness (svasaṃvedana) is the substratum of a consciousness. In this regard, the word ‘substratum’ in terms
of a syntax implies attributes by ‘absorbing’ the ‘result’ into ‘cause’. The latency is ‘cause’ whereas the manifested phenomenon is the ‘result’. Both the cause and result are conjoined into the essential element of the self-consciousness (svasaṃvedana), which should be admitted in conventional reality. Nevertheless, there is no sense of inherent entity for the self-consciousness because these categories are regulated under the law of dependent arising. Their interpretations not only can explain the original thought of Dignāga but also emphasizes the prominence of svasaṃvedana in the system of Vĳñānavāda.

6.3 Distinguishing Two Kinds of Self-awareness

The cognition of consciousness (svasaṃvedana) includes both ‘an awareness of the perceiving act’ and ‘an awareness of [consciousness of self-consciousness]’. To resolve the dispute over the cognition of cognition, it is better to identify different nature of reflexive activities. The credit should be given to Paul Williams who identifies two kinds of self-awareness in the context of Dignāga’s reflexive knowledge:

…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-awareness (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 ... ¹

To distinguish these two types of self-awareness, Paul Williams suggests two different names to denote (i) self-awareness and (ii) reflexive awareness. The act of “seeing blue” is the subjective aspect of a cognition which is to aware the mental image within the mind. This is what Paul Williams refers as ‘self-awareness’.

However, such consciousness of seeing certain objects is inadequate to explain how one can obtain knowledge. It is argued that if one does not know that one knows, then the consciousness itself is unknown and thus it could not know other objects.² Therefore, we should have a ‘reflexive awareness’ that is the experience of ‘seeing that one sees blue’. It is a separate subjective aspect of cognition, i.e. conscious of ‘seeing [seeing blue]’, which is different from the former ‘seeing blue’. To emphasize the validity of cognition and recollection of images, the ‘reflexive awareness’ is regarded as the ‘result of cognition’. Or otherwise, there is no real seeing at all. It makes these two perceiving faculties of consciousness clear by distinguishing two kinds of “self-awareness”. We may conclude that the general denial of doctrine of self-consciousness (svasamvedana) due to the deficiency of infinite regress is directed to the first meaning, but not the latter.

² Ibid, pp. 5-6. Iso Kern also mentioned Xuanzang has argued that if a given consciousness did not include as its part an objective phenomenon it would be either consciousness of nothing or consciousness of everything. See “The Structure of Consciousness According to Xuanzang”, (Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology, Vol. 19, No. 3, October 1988), p. 284.
To clarify these two distinguishing features of self-cognition (*svasaṃvedana*) is helpful for us to avoid engaging into unnecessary controversy. According to Dignāga, only the ‘reflexive awareness’ meets the definition of *svasaṃvedana*: i.e., an awareness of other and itself. Hence, the self-consciousness part has its distinctive feature within the consciousness.

The solution introduced by Paul William evokes my thoughts that in addition to the distinction of two kinds of self-awareness, i.e. ‘self-awareness’ requiring recognition by another cognition and ‘reflexive awareness’ not requiring a further knower, we might distinguish two positional orders of different parts of a consciousness. The first positional order is to place the three components (the perceived object, the perceiving act and the self-cognition) of the very consciousness on a par with each other. It would infer the second act directed to the first, the third directed to the second, etc. In this way, it would give people the impression of infinite regress. Alternatively, another positional order could be a case that the third part (self-cognition) is not on the same level of the first two parts (the perceived object and the perceiving act). That is to say, the self-cognition (*svasaṃvedana*) factuality is not situated at the same level of the mental object and the perceiving act and the whole picture would be different. If the level of perception in a subject-object relationship were viewed completely by the self-cognition
(svasaṃvedana) at an upper level, then the regress could be avoided consequently.

My understanding of Dignāga’s threefold theory is very much the idea of the second positional order, whereas Dharmapāla’s fourfold theory suits the first positional order. It is probable that Dharmapāla conceives Dignāga’s model with the first positional order. This may explain why Dharmapāla apprehends an apparent default of infinite regress in Dignāga’s threefold theory. Of course, it is difficult to provide sufficient testimony for my interpretation. If my point is correct, it could also support the transcendental character of self-consciousness (svasaṃvedana). The self-consciousness, being the third part, is the substratum of the other two parts due to its prominent position.

6.4 Svasaṃvedana as Expression of the High Truth as its Own Object

Dignaga views the relation of self-consciousness with the two manifesting parts as a subtle one. Because of the invariability of their concomitant appearance, they are one entity in a sense that they do not exist apart from one another but they are not conceptually indistinguishable. On top of Dignāga thought, Sthiramati contends the Buddhist soteriological realization as a process of self-consciousness. He attempts to expound Asaṅga’s spiritual experience in line with the doctrine of self-cognition.

Based on the assertion of ‘the mind to see the mind itself’, one is aware of one’s inner state only. With regard to the subjective mode of the svasaṃvedana
(self-consciousness), the yogi’s pure consciousness is said to be in a non-dualistic state. There is no appearance of subject and object because the two aspects of consciousness just seem to be fused. In the extinction of dual appearance, there is no abiding in confused illusion in their mode of cognition. The mind of a saint in the samādhi (meditation) is then characterized as self-awareness as well as self-luminosity.

It follows that the final object of the path of enlightenment is mind itself, and this object is the ultimate reality. Since the goal of enlightenment is to know the true reality, the mind refrained from manifestation is the true nature of the stainless mind. This ‘mind-as-such’ or ‘the very nature of mind’ is a mere gnosis which is reflexive awareness. It can also be related with the idea of primordial substratum which is beyond all conceptuality. In this regard, Sthiramati not only integrate the Mind-only doctrine into his soteriological practice, but also unite the spiritual and objective realities from the ontological perspective. The pure consciousness in terms of svasaṇṇedana expounded by Sthiramati is similar to Vedāntins’ self-revelation theory of awareness (svapprakāśatva) with the character of self-luminosity. However, Sthiramati’s pure consciousness differs from Vedāntins’ svapprakāśatva in that it does not hold identification with the Brahman (the ultimate reality). It is because the non-Buddhists hold a sense of subjective and objective substance from an
ontological standpoint whilst the Buddhists do not have this standpoint. Instead, the Buddhists perceive the stainless mind as a result of removing the attachment to the intrinsic nature of any entities.

6.5 Whether External Objects are Required for an Appearance of the Object?

Regarding the question about knowledge of knowledge, the idea of Dignāga on the svasaṃvedana (self-consciousness) is very much the same as Sautrāntika. However, these two schools have different views of distinguishing the source of the perceived object. Sautrāntika admit the existence of an external object, acting as a cause for the consciousness to reproduce a similarity (sārūpya) of the form. The Vijñānavāda, on the other hand, maintain that the object appearance is an inherent feature of each awareness-event. The object appearance becomes intrinsic to a particular awareness. It is not a representation of anything outside and is not contributed by anything external. The claim of the Sautrāntika that external objects are causal factors for the arising of the appearance of objects is then undermined.

Dignāga contends the cognition possessing the form of an object to be the result of knowledge (phala). Since this form is nothing other than the cognition of the cognition itself, i.e. self-cognition (svasaṃvedana), this ability of the cognition to cognize itself is also considered as pramāṇa (means of knowledge) of the resulting self-cognition. This is because it is the predominant cause of the latter. Through this
exposition, Dignāga attempts to put the criterion of validity of knowledge within the
boundary of consciousness instead of an external source. Thus, the doctrine of
vijñāpti-mātra can be upheld in this regard.

I agree with Dr. Matilal’s comment on Dignāga’s contribution:

This position became very suitable for the Yogācāra school to which Diṅnāga
belonged. For instead of saying with the old Yogācārins, that the external
objects do not exist, for nothing but consciousness (awareness) exists, one can
now say with the exponents of the Diṅnāga school that in their theory of
awareness and mental phenomena in general, references to external objects are
dispensable.3

In the end, the present monograph is an introduction to the historical
development of the concept of svasānvedana with an attempt to identify some of the
issues and arguments that might be of some interests to others. I have endeavored to
elucidate the orientations of some classical Indian philosophical schools supporting
and denying the claims of the svasānvedana. Indeed, lots of discussion of Dignāga
and Dharmakīrti are prevailing in the Tibetan and Western academy. However, the
extent of the study of Dharmapāla and Sthiramati concerning this issue is very
limited. It is probably due to the fact that the original sources were lost and the
Chinese texts have not been translated to the West in full scale. If there were any
contribution of my dissertation, it would be my efforts to track down the evolution
and the implicit meaning of the notion of self-consciousness, and to indicate the

diversity of interpretation of the principal schools of Buddhism. This should be an
area not inquired by the other scholars. The popularity of studying the same subjects
are mainly concentrated on Dignāga’s view, but the relation of Dignāga’s theory
with Vijñānavāda doctrines is not explored in details. As the extent of the study of
Dharmapāla and Sthiramati concerning this issue is limited in the academy, this
thesis provides a thorough exploration of their philosophies from the perspectives of
epistemology, ontology and soteriology. The differences between
Sākāra-vijñānavāda and Nirākāra-vijñānavāda in relation with their mind structure
theory are also identified.

In view of the Buddhist thinkers attempting to resolve the issues in their
philosophical discourse, the intelligent viewpoints of different philosophers, in their
very divergence, could contribute to a great deal of truth in different perspectives. I
would like to take the words of Dr. David Lawrence that could best suit the current
exposure of ‘knowledge of knowledge’:

It is a truism that consensus is never achieved about philosophical matters.
Nobody possesses the single discourse within which all issues will be decided.
Philosophical discussion involves a continuous reevaluation of the arguments
for particular views, that is, the factual premises as well as the types of
inferences for different conclusions. Since there is always the possibility of the
articulation of otherness in the form of philosophical doubt, the process is
intrinsically open-ended.4

4 David Peter Lawrence, Rediscovering God with Transcendental Argument, (Albany: State

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