Philosophy as Pedagogy: Self, Perception and Objects in Vasubandhu, Kumārila and Śaṅkara

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Hazel Collinson

School of Arts, Histories and Cultures
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### Abbreviations

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<tr>
<td>AK</td>
<td>Abhidharmakośa</td>
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<td>AKBh</td>
<td>Abhidharmakośa-bhāsyā</td>
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<td>Br Up Bh</td>
<td>Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad Bhāsyā</td>
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<td>BSBh</td>
<td>Brahma Sūtra Bhāsyā</td>
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<td>GKBh</td>
<td>Gauḍapādiya Kārikā Bhāsyā</td>
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<td>MV</td>
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Abstract

The central argument of this thesis is that Vasubandhu’s discussions of self, perception and objects are fundamentally pedagogical in character. Contemporary studies of Vasubandhu (fourth century CE) appear either to view his work as a philosophical system or as a practical guide for the attainment of liberation. In this study, I seek to challenge this divide, arguing instead that we need to recognise the pedagogical process underpinning Vasubandhu’s writings.

In order to demonstrate this, I develop an approach to the study of classical Indian philosophical traditions, which I term the dialogical approach. This approach, I argue, helps us to comprehend not only how Vasubandhu employs dialogue in his works, but also how later thinkers engaged with these works. I look in particular at the ways in which Kumārila (seventh century CE) and Śaṅkara (eighth century CE) interpreted Vasubandhu’s thought.

In Chapter One I develop the dialogical approach which I go on to apply throughout the thesis. I situate this within the broader context of existing approaches, which I term the thematic approach, the comparative approach and the navigational approach. I then explore some of the methodological challenges involved in the study of classical Indian philosophy in the twenty-first century, demonstrating how the dialogical approach might deal with these challenges.

Chapter Two consists of an exploration of the primary texts used in the thesis. I address some important methodological difficulties relating to these texts, including questions of authorship, authenticity and availability. In addition, I explore why the texts upon which I have chosen to focus are particularly significant in terms of my overall argument.

Chapter Three examines the idea of pedagogy and explains how I will employ the term in the rest of the thesis. Chapters Four, Five and Six focus upon the issues of self, perception and objects respectively, demonstrating how Vasubandhu’s attitude towards these issues serves to support my idea of philosophy as pedagogy. In each of these chapters, I also explore how Kumārila and Śaṅkara respond to the Yogācāra position on these issues.

In the concluding chapter, Chapter Seven, I draw out some of the ways in which the preceding chapters have shown Vasubandhu’s discussions of self, perception and objects to be pedagogical. I demonstrate how the dialogical approach which we developed in the thesis has helped to show this. Finally, I look the question of truthfulness, explaining how it serves to emphasise the significance of pedagogy in Vasubandhu’s thought.
Declaration

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I would like to thank Michael Clark and Lizzy Wall for the various ways in which they have helped me, and for their unending patience and understanding. I am also thankful to Anna Dougherty, who showed me exceptional kindness during the latter stages of my research.

Finally, I wish to express my utmost gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Jacqueline Suthren Hirst, for her support and guidance.
Chapter One
Introduction: A Dialogical Approach to the Study of Indian Philosophy

What do we mean when we talk about the self? What is the role of perception in our experience of the world? What is the ontological status of objects? Questions of this nature are fundamental to understanding the relationship between mental life and the world, and consequently have long preoccupied philosophers in countless traditions and eras. This was no less the case for the philosophical thinkers of classical India, for whom the issues of self, perception and objects played a fundamental role in shaping the parameters of philosophical enquiry. Indeed, these questions were particularly significant for these thinkers, since they were acutely tied up with the more practical issue of how to attain liberation (mokṣa). Understanding the relationship between mental life and the world was vital for explaining the unliberated predicament and – perhaps more importantly – for understanding how it was that one could escape such a predicament.

This study focuses upon the ways in which the issues of self, perception and objects are dealt with by the fourth century Yogācāra thinker Vasubandhu. There are, of course, a number of studies of Vasubandhu which have been published in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, many of which deal with issues relating to ideas about self, perception and objects. These studies, however, appear to fall into two quite distinct categories. On the one hand there are those which treat Vasubandhu as a philosopher, whose ideas can be extracted from their textual context and analysed as freestanding doctrines. On the other hand, there are those which view Vasubandhu’s works as practical guides for the attainment of liberation. Notable among the former are Saam Trivedi, Matthew Kapstein, Yoel Hoffmann and Janice Dean Willis, while those such as Stefan Anacker and Paul Williams lean towards the latter position.

1 I use the phrase ‘classical India’ here to mean roughly the period between the fourth century CE and the beginning of the ninth century CE. As we shall see in this thesis, however, the dialogue between classical Indian thinkers both predated and exceeded this time period.

In the present study, however, we shall seek to challenge the distinction between the philosophical and practical understanding of Vasubandhu’s works that appears to govern the existing literature on Vasubandhu. We shall argue that Vasubandhu’s approach to the issues of self, perception and objects reveals an inseparable link between the practical path to liberation and philosophy, and that it is precisely such a link that is the driving force behind his works. In order to comprehend this, it is imperative that we recognise the pedagogical character of Vasubandhu’s work. In this study, we shall understand pedagogy as a process of learning in which a teacher guides a pupil towards a particular objective. It is important to note at the outset that our claim is not that Vasubandhu explicitly comments on the pedagogical character of his works. Rather, as we are suggesting in this thesis, the pedagogical process is implicit in his works themselves.

The precise nature of this pedagogical process will be discussed in detail in Chapter Three. There is, however, a fundamental feature of this pedagogical process which we ought to note at present, and that is Vasubandhu’s implementation of dialogue. As we will see throughout this study, it is possible to discern two ways in which Vasubandhu employs dialogue in his writings. Most palpable is Vasubandhu’s use of dialogue with other Indian philosophical schools. A notable example is his dialogue with the Abhidharma school. Whilst Vasubandhu’s writings clearly rely to a great extent upon an Abhidharmic conceptual framework, he also reinterprets this framework so that it is more in keeping with his own Yogācāra standpoint. There are a number of technical points in view of which Vasubandhu diverges from the Abhidharma school; notable among these is Vasubandhu’s view of atoms. More generally, however, the difference between Vasubandhu and the Abhidharma school lies in his view that many of the Abhidharma teachings are preliminary, a point which we shall discuss further in Chapter Three.


3 For example, Vasubandhu rejects the Adbhidharma view of atoms. In particular, he argues against the Sautrāntika idea that there is a causal relationship between an atom and a perception. Vasubandhu rejects this notion by pointing to instances where we perceive non-existent objects, such as in the dreaming state. See Viṁśatikā-ṛśṭi 11-12.
Abhidharma, however, is not the only Buddhist school with which Vasubandhu engages; his writings also present clear evidence of engagement with the Madhyamaka school. Vasubandhu’s dialogue with the Mādhyamikas is not, as is sometimes assumed, simply a critique of this school. On the contrary, Vasubandhu frequently positively embraces some of the key tenets of the Mādhyamikas. Indeed, contrary to what is sometimes assumed, Yogācāra did not develop in opposition to Madhyamaka, but was in many ways a continuation of this tradition. As Richard King has remarked,

...the idea that the early classical Yogācāra of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu found any difficulty whatsoever in embracing the basic insights of the Madhyamaka school disregards both the historical and textual evidence, which, on the contrary, displays a spirit of underlying continuity and acceptance.

Evidence of what King terms this ‘spirit of underlying continuity and acceptance’ can be found in Vasubandhu’s adherence to the Madhyamaka notion of two levels of truth. Nāgārjuna develops this idea of two levels of truth towards the end of his Mūlamadhyamaka-kārikā (‘Fundamental Verses of the Middle Way’) in response to the criticism that his notion of śūnyatā (‘emptiness’) undermines the Buddha’s teaching on the Four Noble Truths. Nāgārjuna responds to this criticism by suggesting that the teachings of the Buddha are to be understood in terms of two levels of truth: lokasaṃvṛtisatya (‘truth according to worldly convention’) and paramārtha-satya (‘ultimate truth’). Nāgārjuna claims that without an understanding of the difference between these two levels of truth, one cannot fully understand the Buddha’s teaching.

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4 Nāgārjuna was a Madhyamaka thinker who is thought to have been writing in the second century CE. See Richard King, Indian Philosophy: An Introduction to Hindu and Buddhist Thought (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), p. 19.
6 Mūlamadhyamaka-kārikā, chapter 24.
7 Mūlamadhyamaka-kārikā 24.8.
As we shall see throughout this thesis, this notion of two truths is implicit throughout Vasubandhu’s writings, and is fundamental to his pedagogical approach. We shall explore this in more detail in Chapter Three. At present, we ought simply to note that this is a prime example of a positive way in which Vasubandhu engages with the *Madhyamaka* school. Of course, there are a number of issues in relation to which Vasubandhu diverges from the *Madhyamaka* school. His interpretation of śūnyatā (‘emptiness’) is a case in point. Although the notion of ‘emptiness’ is arguably as important to Vasubandhu as it was to the *Mādhyamikas*, Vasubandhu’s interpretation of this concept differed in a number of respects from the *Madhyamaka* interpretation. The issue of precisely how his interpretation differs is a complex one, and we shall say more about this later in the thesis. Broadly speaking, however, as Richard King has observed, early *Yogācāra* interprets śūnyatā as meaning the ‘existence of non-existence’. This is rather different – although not necessarily opposed – to the *Madhyamaka* use of the term. As we shall see later, Vasubandhu’s particular interpretation of śūnyatā is integral to his development of viśiṣṭa-puñya. Interestingly, however, it is arguably through the *Madhyamaka* idea of two levels of truth that Vasubandhu reshapes this notion of ‘emptiness’ in view of his own conceptual scheme. We shall look in more detail at how Vasubandhu does this later in the thesis.

Thus far, then, we have looked briefly at Vasubandhu’s dialogue with the *Abhidharma* and *Madhyamaka* schools, and we have seen that on many issues Vasubandhu acquiesces with these schools. Non-Buddhist schools of thought are, of course, subject to a much more vehement critique. Notable among those non-Buddhist opponents with whom Vasubandhu converses are the

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8 Stefan Anacker has presented Vasubandhu’s doctrine of the ‘three aspects’ (*tri-svabhāva*) as being an alternative to Nagārjuna’s notion of two levels of truth, and thus argues that Vasubandhu ‘may argue’ with the two truths theory. See Stefan Anacker, *Seven Works of Vasubandhu* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1984), p. 194. However, I would suggest that the two theories – that of the two levels of truth and that of the ‘three aspects’ are not to be read as mutually exclusive. As we shall see throughout the thesis, the idea of two levels of truth is present throughout Vasubandhu’s works, and does not preclude Vasubandhu’s development of the ‘three aspects’ theory.


10 King, *Early Yogācāra and Its Relationship with the Madhyamaka School*, p. 666.
Vaiśeṣikas, whose realist ontology poses a direct threat to Vasubandhu’s system. Vasubandhu’s critique of this school, which is explicitly laid out in the Viṁśatikā, is a prime example of the way in which he employs dialogue with non-Buddhist schools of thought as a means of establishing his own position.

On a more subtle level, however, Vasubandhu’s texts comprise another sort of dialogue, and that is with the Yogācārin pupil who engages with these texts. Unlike Vasubandhu’s other interlocutors, such as those mentioned above, the Yogācārin pupil is absent from Vasubandhu’s texts themselves. Yet he or she is implicated in a more subtle manner. The pupil is the Yogācārin who is engaging with Vasubandhu’s texts for the purpose of attaining liberation. As we shall see throughout this study, Vasubandhu’s texts clearly function as a dialogue with this Yogācārin pupil. That is, they work as a two-way process which relies as much upon the author of these texts as the Yogācārin pupil who engages with them. As we shall see subsequently, this dialogue between teacher and pupil facilitates the way in which Vasubandhu’s texts function as a process of deconstruction of concepts and presuppositions which prevent the attainment of liberation itself.

The absence of the Yogācārin pupil from Vasubandhu’s texts themselves ought not to be taken as indication that the Yogācārin pupil’s role is somehow subordinate to that of the interlocutors who are explicitly identified in the texts. On the contrary, Vasubandhu’s dialogue with his opponents – aside from being a necessary convention of the intellectual milieu in which he is writing – arguably forms a crucial part of Vasubandhu’s dialogue with the Yogācārin pupil. Indeed, as we shall see in Chapter Three, Vasubandhu’s repudiation of his opponents frequently employed to alleviate the doubts or concerns of the pupil, and thus direct him or her on the correct path.

It is thus possible to discern two types of dialogue in Vasubandhu’s work – explicit and implicit. On the one hand there is the dialogue between Vasubandhu and those opponents whom he explicitly

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12 The Vaiśeṣikas held that atoms were real and eternal. The Vaiśeṣikas also held that atoms were imperceptible, and thus when we perceive an object what we perceive is a composite whole. See Anacker, Seven Works of Vasubandhu, p. 11 n.
identifies. On the other hand there is Vasubandhu’s dialogue with the Yogācārin pupil towards whom his works are ultimately directed. Together these two types of dialogue – which as we have already noted are inseparably linked – form the spine of Vasubandhu’s pedagogical approach. Dialogue, of course, is about engagement; that is, it would not be dialogue without the response of the interlocutor. The Yogācārin pupil is, of course, the silent respondent; silent in the sense that his or her response is not set out in Vasubandhu’s texts themselves.

The various responses of Vasubandhu’s opponents are often identified in his texts. These are, of course, articulated by Vasubandhu himself, and thus comprise Vasubandhu’s own representation of his opponents’ positions; they are inevitably framed in terms of Vasubandhu’s own conceptual world, and as such represent only a partial response to Vasubandhu’s theories. Yet there is another set of opponents whose responses Vasubandhu is unable to control. These are those who engaged with – and disputed – Vasubandhu’s theories in the centuries after Vasubandhu lived. Of particular significance in this context are the Pūrva Mīmāṃsā and Advaita Vedānta schools, both of which put forward scathing critiques of Yogācāra, which were frequently directed towards a position which bears a striking similarity to that of Vasubandhu.13 If we are to explore the notion of dialogue in Vasubandhu’s writing then we cannot, it seems, ignore those who responded to Vasubandhu’s position in subsequent centuries. In this thesis, we shall look at the ways in which Kumārila and Śaṅkara responded to Vasubandhu’s theories, focusing particularly upon their respective repudiations of what they considered to be Vasubandhu’s position on the issues of self, perception and objects. We shall explain why we have chosen to focus on these two particular thinkers shortly.

First, however, it is important to emphasise a further reason as to why an exploration of Śaṅkara and Kumārila will be beneficial to the present study, and this relates to the notion of pedagogy which is central to our thesis. Throughout the coming chapters, we will see that Kumārila and Śaṅkara do not always present an accurate version of Vasubandhu’s position. There are a number of possible reasons for this. The first has simply to do with the temporal gap between Vasubandhu’s

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writings and those of Kumārila and Śaṅkara. Given that Kumārila and Śaṅkara are writing at least three centuries after Vasubandhu, it is unlikely that their respective understandings of Vasubandhu’s position are based upon the original sources. The second reason concerns the different conceptual frameworks within which Vasubandhu, Kumārila and Śaṅkara construct their theories. Given the disparate conceptual worlds in which Vasubandhu, Kumārila and Śaṅkara are working, it is to some extent inevitable that Kumārila and Śaṅkara will use their own conceptual frameworks to articulate Vasubandhu’s position.

Yet, as we shall see throughout this thesis, there are instances in which Kumārila and Śaṅkara seem to deliberately reinterpret Vasubandhu’s position in such a way as to facilitate the repudiation of his theories. Of course, such repudiation was generally expected of philosophical works of the time during which Kumārila and Śaṅkara were writing; tarka, or ‘reasoning’ characteristically entailed the refutation of any position which appeared to contradict that which was being upheld. We shall look at this in further detail in Chapter Three. In one sense, then, the deliberate reinterpretation of Vasubandhu’s thought can be seen simply as a means of articulating Vasubandhu’s thought in a way that is most conducive to fulfilling the requirements of tarka. This, in turn, grants legitimacy to the writing of Kumārila and Śaṅkara in terms of the broader intellectual climate in which they are working.

Yet this reinterpretation and repudiation of Vasubandhu’s position – by both Kumārila and Śaṅkara – is significant beyond the fact that it demonstrates their conformity to the conventions of philosophical discourse; it also reveals that there is an important pedagogical component in their works. How is this so? The answer lies in the ways in which Kumārila and Śaṅkara reframe Vasubandhu’s position. This is arguably, in part, indicative of Kumārila and Śaṅkara’s efforts to make their refutation of Vasubandhu accessible to their own pupils, by framing rival views – and their subsequent repudiation – in a language that is familiar to these pupils. In view of this, we can

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see that philosophy functions as pedagogy not only in Vasubandhu’s writings, but in the broader intellectual milieu of which these writings are a part.

This leads us to a further point concerning the importance of broadening our concept of pedagogy beyond the writings of Vasubandhu, namely that pedagogy was of practical importance in the preservation of tradition. It was, of course, through the teacher-pupil relationship that the core tenets of all classical Indian philosophical schools were passed on. This relationship thus had a practical function, in that it served to ensure that the teachings of these schools were preserved, an endeavour which became increasingly important with the growing cross-traditional character of Indian philosophical discourse. Pedagogy, then, was not only significant in terms of the content of these texts, but also in terms of their context. That is, it was largely through a pedagogical process that the transmission of these texts was guaranteed. The idea of text as a process of deconstruction – which we mentioned earlier - is thus not only an internal feature of Vasubandhu’s writings. More broadly, this idea is reflected in the intellectual milieu in which he is writing. That is, the ways in which Kumārila and Śaṅkara deconstruct Vasubandhu’s position can also be seen to be indicative of the process by which Indian philosophical texts were transmitted. For this reason, we need to look beyond Vasubandhu’s works themselves if we are to provide a more comprehensive picture of the significance of pedagogy in the classical era.

As we have already stated, the central argument of this thesis is that Vasubandhu’s writings are pedagogical in character. Over the coming chapters we are going to demonstrate the way in which Vasubandhu’s pedagogical approach manifests itself in his discussions of the issues of self, perception and objects. We will demonstrate this by looking at each issue in turn, and the ways in which they are treated in Vasubandhu’s texts. We will also look at some of the ways in which Kumārila and Śaṅkara engage with Vasubandhu’s view of these issues. In this regard, we will also be taking into account the broader notion of pedagogy which we have just mentioned. It is important to note that we will use the three categories that we have identified – those of self, perception and objects – as heuristic categories. That is to say, we will use them to guide our study
of pedagogy in Vasubandhu. It is imperative that we recognise this, since Vasubandhu, Kumārila and Śaṅkara all have different views of these categories. Furthermore, their treatment of these categories is far from systematic, inevitably so, given that these categories are—of course—inextricably linked. Nonetheless, discussions of self, perception and objects—as we have already mentioned—play an important role in the writings of Vasubandhu, and also in the ways that Kumārila and Śaṅkara reinterpret Vasubandhu’s position. For this reason, they arguably form a useful heuristic framework through which to explore our notion of philosophy as pedagogy.

So what is the methodological approach through which we intend to prove that Vasubandhu’s philosophical discussions of self, perception and objects are pedagogical in character? This is an important question, given the urgency of contemporary discussions on how one ought to approach the study of Indian philosophical traditions. In view of our emphasis upon the significance of dialogue in relation to Vasubandhu’s works, we shall term the approach adopted in this study the dialogical approach. The remainder of this introductory chapter will be dedicated to exploring this approach. In order to do this, it is important to see where this approach is situated in relation to pre-existing methodological approaches to the study of Indian philosophical traditions. This will be the aim of section ii of the chapter. In section iii, we shall explore how our dialogical approach deals with one of the methodological challenges arising from the study of Indian philosophical texts, namely, the problem of incommensurability. First, however, we shall give a brief introduction to Vasubandhu, Kumārila and Śaṅkara. A more detailed exploration of these thinkers and their texts will be carried out in Chapter Two.

A preliminary introduction to Vasubandhu, Kumārila and Śaṅkara

It ought to be noted at the outset that we have very little accurate historical information concerning Vasubandhu, Kumārila and Śaṅkara. Although there is a vast amount of hagiographical material purporting to document their lives—and although this material is interesting in its own right—it provides us with very little credible factual information regarding these three thinkers. This is, of
course, not only the case for these particular thinkers, but more broadly for Indian philosophical thinkers of the classical period. As the historian Sheldon Pollock has remarked, ‘the general absence of historical referentiality in traditional Sanskrit culture remains an arresting, problematic, and possibly unparalleled phenomenon.’ In spite of this problem, however, there is a limited amount of information regarding Vasubandhu, Kumārila and Śaṅkara that we are able to state with some certainty, and which we shall note at present.

Vasubandhu, who is, of course, the focal point of this study, is generally thought to have been writing in the fourth century CE. Vasubandhu belonged to a Buddhist school known as Yogācāra, meaning ‘yoga practice.’ In spite of its name, one must be cautious in assuming that this school was associated primarily with the practice of meditation. Although this was a significant component of the Yogācāra tradition, there is no doubt that many thinkers associated with this school – including Vasubandhu – were part of a broader intellectual tradition which afforded great significance to philosophical discussion and argumentation. This is perhaps better reflected in the alternative names - Cittamātra and Vijñānavāda – by which the tradition is known. Vasubandhu wrote a number of relatively short texts in Sanskrit. Most of these were non-commentarial works, the exception being his ‘Commentary on the Separation of the Middle from Extremes’ (Madhyānta-vibhāga-bhāṣya).

Vasubandhu is perhaps most well-known for his theory of vijnapti-mātra, the most well-known occurrence of which is in his Viṃśatikā (‘Twenty Verses’). We shall discuss Vasubandhu’s theory of vijnapti-mātra in some detail in Chapter Four.

Kumārila (seventh century CE), who as we have already noted was a vehement critic of Yogācāra, belonged to the Pūrva Mīmāṁsā or ‘Prior Exegesis’ school of thought. The origins of the Pūrva Mīmāṁsā tradition can be traced back to around 200 BCE, when the final version of the Mīmāṁsā

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16 As we shall see in Chapter Two, there is some controversy over whether or not there were two authors named Vasubandhu.
17 Cittamātra is translated in various ways. Examples are ‘mind-only’, ‘thought-only’ and ‘consciousness-only.’ Vijñānavāda can be translated as ‘theory of consciousness’ or ‘doctrine of consciousness’.
18 This phrase has been translated in various ways by scholars of Vasubandhu. This will be discussed in Chapter Four.
sūtras of Jaimini is thought to have been composed. There are three main works attributed to
Kumārila: the Ślokavārttika, the Tantravārttika and the Tuptika. For reasons which we shall discuss
in Chapter Two, this thesis will focus largely upon the Ślokavārttika. In spite of the commonly held
view that Kumārila was concerned primarily with ritual injunction, it is our contention in this study
that he was more interested in developing a theory of Vedic language. We shall explore this idea
further in Chapters Two and Three.

The second critic of Yogācāra whom we shall look at in this thesis – and perhaps the most well-
known – is Śaṅkara. Writing in the eighth century, Śaṅkara was a key proponent of Advaita
Vedānta, or ‘non-dual’ Vedānta. The majority of works which are generally considered to be
authentic to Śaṅkara are commentaries. Most of these are commentaries on the Upaniṣads, with the
exception of the Brahma-sūtra bhasya. There is, however, one non-commentarial work attributed to
Śaṅkara, and this is the Upadeśasāhasrī, or ‘Thousand Teachings’. We shall discuss these works in
more detail in Chapter Two. Śaṅkara is perhaps most well-known for his attempt to show that the
Upaniṣadic texts demonstrate the identity of the Self and Brahman. Yet during the course of this
study we will see that Śaṅkara addressed a number of other philosophical issues, including those of
Self, perception and objects.

So why should this study – which focuses upon Vasubandhu – incorporate an exploration of two
thinkers who were writing at least three centuries after Vasubandhu? We have already hinted at the
reasons for this in the introductory section of this chapter. As we have noted, Kumārila directs
many of his arguments concerning self, perception and objects towards the Vijñānavādin Buddhists.
A number of these arguments seem to be aimed at views which closely reflect those of
Vasubandhu.19 Śaṅkara also attempts to refute certain views of self, perception and objects which
closely resemble those of Vasubandhu. We can see, then, that there is a clear link between the
writings of Kumārila and Śaṅkara, and those of Vasubandhu. The link between Kumārila and
Śaṅkara is not so immediately apparent. Although they are generally considered to have been

19 Whether Kumārila draws his material directly from Vasubandhu’s works is unclear. See Taber, ‘Kumārila’s
Buddhist’. 
contemporaries, it is unclear whether Kumārila was familiar with Śaṅkara’s work. What is clear, however, is that Śaṅkara overtly criticises aspects of the Pūrva Mīmāṁsā school, and in particular what he sees as their prioritising of ritual action over knowledge. Although Śaṅkara refers only to the school which he is criticising and not to individual authors, the fact that he criticises the Mīmāṁsā conception of liberation indicates that he is likely to be directing these criticisms towards Kumārila.20

We thus have sufficient evidence to claim that Vasubandhu, Kumārila and Śaṅkara were operating within the same intellectual milieu, and it is for this reason that the writings of Kumārila and Śaṅkara are especially relevant to this study. It is particularly interesting that Kumārila and Śaṅkara trouble themselves with criticising Vasubandhu’s views, since he did not share their allegiance to the Vedic texts. This is arguably because Vasubandhu’s works are emblematic of what Steven Collins has termed ‘the adoption of Sanskrit as the language of Mahāyāna intellectualism.’21 Collins argues that there are two types of Mahāyāna literature. The first type, according to Collins, follows in the same vein as the Theravāda literature, in that it consists largely of ‘catalogues of analytic lists and synonyms.’22 The second type of Mahāyāna literature, Collins argues, consists of ‘philosophical texts’ and ‘shows the entry of Mahāyāna into the wider and more variegated world of Indian religious thought and philosophy generally.’23 So how does this help us to place Vasubandhu in the same intellectual arena of Kumārila and Śaṅkara? As Collins notes, ‘These texts, unlike those of Theravāda, came explicitly to place themselves in, and argue in terms of, mainstream Indian logic and philosophy, opposing themselves in detail to varieties of Hindu thought as well as to other schools of Buddhism.’24 One of the central aims of these texts, then, was to secure a place for the Mahāyāna tradition within a broader intellectual milieu – one which

20 Śaṅkara was particularly opposed to the Pūrva Mīmāṁsaka view that ritual action could lead to liberation. Such a view was not fully developed by the Mīmāṁsakas until the time of Kumārila. See A. J. Alston, Śaṅkara on Rival Views (London: Shanti Sadan, 1989), p. 7.
24 Collins, Selfless Persons, pp. 24-25.
included both Buddhist and non-Buddhist opponents. These texts, then, were characteristically dialogical; not only did they allow the Mahāyāna Buddhists to engage with other schools of thought, they also enabled these other schools of thought to engage with them.

It is precisely because Vasubandhu’s texts belonged to this second type of literature, that he is able to engage with other schools of thought; and it is also because of this that Kumārila and Śaṅkara are able to engage with Vasubandhu’s deliberations on the issues of self, perception and objects. This brings us back to the notion of dialogue, which, as we have already noted, will form the crux of our methodological approach in this study. In adopting what we are terming a dialogical approach to Vasubandhu, we can account for the ways in which his discussions of self, perception and objects function within a broader intellectual milieu. This is a possibility which is arguably lacking in other methodological approaches to the study of Indian philosophical traditions. It is to such approaches that we now turn, with a view to situating our dialogical approach within the study of Indian philosophy more generally.

**Approaches**

Since the late twentieth century, the study of classical Indian philosophy has become increasingly self-conscious; that is to say, scholars have become progressively more concerned with enumerating and problematising the methods through which they study Indian philosophical traditions. The purpose of this section is to explore our own methodological approach to the study of Vasubandhu, and to situate this approach within the context of other methods which are employed in studies of Indian philosophical thinkers. Aside from clarifying the methodological framework underpinning our own particular study, it is hoped that this section might also contribute to discussions of method in the study of Indian philosophy more generally. Despite the aforementioned trend for scrutinising approaches to the study of Indian philosophy, there are surprisingly few attempts to explore these approaches systematically. In the present section of our study, however, we shall attempt to give a
systematic account of some of the methodological approaches adopted in studies of classical Indian philosophical traditions.

The study of Indian philosophy has, of course, been approached – and continues to be approached – in numerous different ways. In what follows, however, we shall argue that these various approaches can be grouped into three main categories. Firstly, there are studies whose primary aim is to advance our understanding of a particular thinker or school. Hereafter I shall refer to this type of approach as the *thematic approach*.25 Secondly, there are studies whose main purpose is to compare a particular Indian thinker or theme with a figure or figures from a western philosophical context. This I shall refer to as the *comparative approach*. Thirdly, we find studies whose primary objective is to demonstrate the relevance of classical Indian philosophical thought to contemporary issues in western philosophical discourse.26 We shall call this the *navigational approach*. With a view to situating our own *dialogical* approach more clearly, we shall now turn to a brief explanation of these approaches. In addition – and in order that our discussion remains relevant to the present study - we shall provide some examples of how these approaches have been effected in works on Vasubandhu, Kumārila and Śaṅkara respectively.

i) *The thematic approach*

The studies of Indian philosophy which I have categorised under the *thematic approach* are those whose main objective is to further our understanding of an Indian philosophical thinker or tradition, usually through a particular theme. Such studies are of interest to two main sets of scholars - those who are concerned with the thinker or school itself, and those who are concerned with the themes the author uses to explore that thinker or school.

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25 I use the term ‘thematic’ here, because, as we shall see below, these studies usually employ a particular theme through which to study a particular thinker or school.

26 Although I recognise that the term ‘western’ is problematic, I use it here because many studies which adopt the comparative approach explicitly make the distinction between ‘western’ and ‘Indian’ philosophy.
One of the most notable proponents of the thematic approach in relation to Vasubandhu is Stefan Anacker. His main work, *The Seven Works of Vasubandhu*, includes one of the few full translations of Vasubandhu’s major writings, in addition to some detailed explanations of these texts and some substantial background material on Vasubandhu.27 Two years before the publication of *The Seven Works of Vasubandhu*, Thomas A. Kochumuttom published *A Buddhist Doctrine of Experience*, which also includes translations of some of Vasubandhu’s works.28 A further notable proponent of the thematic approach is the German scholar Lambert Schmithausen. Of particular significance is his valuable study of the *Yogācāra* concept of ālayavijñāna.29

There are also numerous studies of Kumārila which can be categorised under the thematic approach. Noteworthy among these are Govardhan P. Bhatt’s *The Basic Ways of Knowing: An In-depth Study of Kumārila’s Contribution to Indian Epistemology*, and Francis X. Clooney’s *Thinking Ritualy: Rediscovering the Pūrva Mīmāṃsā of Jaimini*.30 Whereas the former explores Kumārila’s thought from an epistemological standpoint, the latter explores the Mīmāṃsā system through the theme of ritual. A further thematic study, which is of particular significance in terms of the present study, is Francis X. D’Sa’s work, *Śabdaprāmāṇya in Śabara and Kumārila*.31 This work differs from the majority of thematic studies on Kumārila in that it holds Vedic language – as opposed to

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29 Lambert Schmithausen, Ālayavijñāna: *On the Origin and Early Development of a central concept of Yogācāra Philosophy*, 2 vols. (Tokyo: International Institute for Buddhist Studies, 1987). The term ālayavijñāna is commonly translated as ‘store-consciousness’, because it ‘stores’ the seeds of our experience. In *Yogācāra* it was developed as a way of explaining the continuity of experience without needing to posit the existence of a permanent self.


Vedic ritual — to be the central concern of the Mīmāṃsa system. We shall use D’Sa’s work to support some of our subsequent observations on Kumārila.

One of the key proponents of the thematic approach in relation to Śaṅkara is A. J. Alston. As well as publishing his own translation of Śaṅkara’s Thousand Teachings, Alston has also published a series of studies of different aspects of Śaṅkara’s works.32 Notable among other thematic studies of Śaṅkara is Roger Marcaurelle’s Freedom Through Inner Renunciation, which explores the role of renunciation in Śaṅkara’s works.33 In this work, Marcaurelle offers some particularly valuable insights into the notion of jīvanmukti (‘liberation in life’), to which we shall refer at a later point in this thesis. In addition to the works, we can also find thematic studies which focus more broadly on Advaita, placing Śaṅkara within the context of other Advaitin thinkers. Notable among these is a recent work by Sthaneshwar Timalsina, which explores the Advaita tradition through the theme of consciousness.34

We have thus looked briefly at some examples of what we have termed the thematic approach to the study of Indian Philosophy. As we have seen, all of these studies can be said to share the same objective; that is, to advance our understanding of a thinker or tradition through a particular theme. We shall now turn to the second of the three methodological approaches which we have identified — the comparative approach.

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34 Sthaneshwar Timalsina, Consciousness in Indian Philosophy: The Advaita doctrine of ‘awareness only’ (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009).
ii) *The comparative approach*

The *comparative approach* comprises those studies which compare an Indian philosophical thinker with a thinker from a western philosophical tradition. Studies which adopt this kind of approach can be further divided into two subcategories. On the one hand there are those studies in which comparisons are directed towards the establishment of a perennial philosophy. On the other hand, there are comparative approaches which are not necessarily motivated by the search for a *perennial philosophy*; the aspiration is rather to enhance communication between philosophical traditions.

The first subcategory – the search for a *perennial philosophy* – was particularly prominent in the first half of the twentieth century. It was popularised through writers such as Aldous Huxley (1894-1963) and Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (1888-1975), both of whom were heavily influenced by the particular strand of *Vedānta* propounded by Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902). The notion of *perennial philosophy* – as expressed in the writings of Huxley and Radhakrishnan – was founded upon the conviction that all philosophical traditions were expressions of a universal Truth.\(^{35}\)

\(^{35}\) Huxley’s interest in *perennial philosophy* is particularly apparent in his later works, written whilst he was living in the United States. This interest was precipitated by Huxley’s membership of the Vedanta Society of Southern California, founded by Swami Pravadananda, which he joined in 1938. Huxley contributed numerous articles to their publication, *Vedanta and the West*. See Hal Bridges, Aldous Huxley: Exponent of Mysticism in America Journal of the American Academy of Religion, 37.No. 4 (Dec., 1969), pp. 341-343.

Notable among those works which exhibit Huxley’s interest in perennial philosophy are his 1944 introduction to Pravadananda and Isherwood’s translation of the *Bhagavad Gītā*, his 1945 work, *The Perennial Philosophy*, and his 1962 novel, *Island*.


Among Radhakrishnan’s writings is his own translation of the *Bhagavad Gītā* and the *Upaniṣads*, as well as a substantial two-volume work entitled *Indian Philosophy*. Radakrishnan also published a number of articles, in which he frequently attempted to draw comparisons between Indian and European thinkers. For example, his 1919 articles on ‘Bergson and Absolute Idealism’ draw parallels between the ideas of the French philosopher Henri-Louis Bergson and the *Upaniṣadic* texts.


Huxley observes in his 1945 work, *The Perennial Philosophy*, ‘Rudiments of the perennial philosophy may be found among the traditional lore of primitive peoples in every region of the world, and in its fully developed forms it has a place in every one of the higher religions.’

Radhakrishnan expresses a similar idea in his introduction to *The Principal Upaniṣads*, where he writes,

> The Upaniṣads speak to us of different forms of genuine religious experience. Whether it is contemplation of the Absolute, or meditation on the Supreme Person or worship of the Cosmic Spirit, or absorption in the world of nature, they are all genuine forms, as they aim at the same ultimate conclusion of self-transcendence.

This idea that ‘Truth’ could only be realised through intuitive religious experience was central to the writings of Radhakrishnan and Huxley.

So how did this search for a perennial philosophy manifest itself in studies of Vasubandhu, Kumārila and Śaṅkara? Since comparative approaches which sought to establish a perennial philosophy focused particularly upon Vedic traditions, Vasubandhu’s works appear to have been largely overlooked in this context. The *perennial philosophy* movement did, however, have a significant impact upon studies of Kumārila and *Pūrva Mīmāṃsā*, in that the *Mīmāṃsā* system was frequently subordinated precisely because it was considered to lack the kind of philosophical insights which would contribute to the establishment of a perennial philosophy. Underpinning this was the idea that *Pūrva Mīmāṃsā* was primarily a ‘ritualistic’ and not a ‘philosophical’ system.

Radhakrishnan’s works were fundamental in propounding this view. In his introduction to *The Principal Upaniṣads*, for example, he writes,

> The avowed aim of the Pūrva Mīmāṃsā is to examine the nature of dharma. Its interest is more practical than speculative. The philosophical speculations found in it are subordinate

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37 Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upaniṣads*, p. 143.
38 This may also have been because relatively little was known about the Yogācāra tradition in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. As we shall see subsequently, it was certainly the case that Sanskrit critical editions of Vasubandhu’s *Viṃśatika* and *Trṃśikā* were not available until 1925.
to the ritualistic purpose. For the sake of the integrity of dharma, it is obliged to affirm the reality of the soul and regard it as a permanent being possessing a body, to whom the results of acts accrue.  

Radhakrishnan’s view of *Mīmāṃsā* appears also to have been influenced by the work of the German scholar Max Müller (1823-1900). In his well-known and influential work, *The Six Systems of Indian Philosophy*, Müller argues that ‘There is little room for real Philosophy’ in the *Pūrva Mīmāṃsā* tradition. The legacy of Müller and Radhakrishnan’s view of *Mīmāṃsā* is still evident in contemporary scholarship on Kumārila, which – notwithstanding the work of D’Sa – still tends to propound the idea that Kumārila’s system is fundamentally ritualistic.

The impact of the perennial philosophy movement upon studies of Śaṅkara was something of the reverse, in that these studies tended to elevate Śaṅkara on the basis of what were considered to be his profound philosophical insights into the nature of Reality. Particularly notable among studies of Śaṅkara influenced by the notion of perennial philosophy was Rudolph Otto’s 1926 work, *West-Östliche Mystik*, the English translation of which, *Mysticism East and West*, was published in 1957. The work consists of a comparison of Śaṅkara and the fourteenth century Christian theologian, Meister Eckhart. As is indicated by the title of his work, it is the concept of ‘mysticism’ which forms the basis of this comparison. Otto identifies a number of features in support of his contention that Śaṅkara and Eckhart are both ‘mystics’. Ultimately, however, it is ‘salvation’ which Otto sees as being central to the works of both thinkers, and it is this, he claims, ‘which makes the two men first truly mystics and colours all their concepts with mysticism.’ From a contemporary perspective, the drawbacks of Otto’s approach are plain to see; most conspicuous among these is the fact that his comparison is firmly rooted within a Judeo-Christian conceptual framework. What is important in terms of the present discussion, however, is that Otto’s work is


42 A notable example is Otto’s comparison between Śaṅkara’s use of the Sanskrit term *sat* (‘being’ or ‘reality’) and Eckhart’s notion of *ipsum esse* (‘being itself’).

pertinently emblematic of comparative approaches to the study of Indian philosophy which are
driven by the search for a perennial philosophy.

As we stated previously, there is a second subcategory within comparative approaches to the study
of Indian Philosophical traditions, the intention behind which, it seems, is to enhance
communication between philosophical traditions. One of the central driving forces behind this kind of 
comparative approach was the journal, Philosophy East and West. Founded in 1951, Philosophy
East and West was an extension of the University of Hawaii’s East-West Philosophers’ Conference,
the aim of which was ‘to explore the significance of Eastern ways of thinking as a complement to 
Western thought, and to develop a possible synthesis of the ideas and ideals.’

The journal Philosophy East and West – which is still in print today – was founded along the same
principles of the East-West Philosophers’ Conference. With the subtitle, A Journal of Oriental and
Comparative Thought, the journal – particularly in its early years – published many articles which
sought to compare thinkers from India and China with thinkers from western philosophical
traditions. An article published in the very first issue entitled ‘True Philosophy is Comparative
Philosophy’, by Paul Masson-Oursel, expresses the underlying sentiment of the journal. In this
article, Masson-Oursel writes,

    Just as it is possible to compare religions, so too it is possible to compare philosophies. Such
a comparison will not take the form of a simple inventory, or the form of a pure theory,
although we are familiar with both. Rather, comparative philosophy will be the general
examination of the ways in which human beings of all races and cultures act upon their
reflections.

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44 Website of the Department of Philosophy, University of Hawaii.
The first conference, held in 1939, was organised by Professors Charles A. Moore, Wing-tsit Chan and Gregg Sinclair.
Thus we can see that the journal was not seeking a ‘pure theory’ of philosophy – in the spirit of comparisons which sought to establish a perennial philosophy – but rather attempting to create a greater awareness of the ways in which philosophy is expressed in various cultures.\(^{46}\)

Although the earlier volumes of *Philosophy East and West* were clearly sincere in their efforts, they were not without their drawbacks. Perhaps most disquieting was the fact that they still embraced the distinction between ‘philosophy’ and ‘religion’ which featured strongly in eighteenth century scholarship.\(^{47}\) An article by S. C. Chatterjee, which was published in the first volume of the journal, states, ‘While the general trend of philosophy in the East, especially in India, has been towards the transcendent and the spiritual, that of the West has been toward the present, the sensible, and the empirical.’\(^{48}\) Chatterjee’s position is emblematic of many of the earlier publications in *Philosophy East and West*. Aside from propounding a dichotomy that was largely artificial, there were other negative consequences of this separation of ‘philosophy’ and ‘religion.’ Most notably, it encouraged a tendency to posit the superiority of one tradition over another. In some articles, what is deemed to be the ‘religious’ nature of Indian traditions was favoured over and above the apparently ‘philosophical’ approach of western traditions.\(^{49}\) In others, the western ‘philosophical’ approach was viewed as superior to the seemingly ‘religious’ tendencies of Indian traditions.\(^{50}\) In either case, the problem was that the assumed distinction between ‘philosophy’ and ‘religion’ encouraged a somewhat judgemental approach in an enterprise which was otherwise genuine in its aspirations.

\(^{46}\) This enterprise was, perhaps, partly inspired by attempts to improve political relations in the post-war era. This is evident in some articles published in earlier volumes of the journal. See, for example, P. T. Raju, ‘Idealisms: Eastern and Western’, *Philosophy East and West* 5.3 (Oct., 1955), p. 212.

\(^{47}\) As Richard King has argued, ‘The historical factors behind the distinction between the disciplines of philosophy and religion as two separate spheres of activity arise from the dispute and subsequent divorce of the two as a result of the Enlightenment, the rise of science and anti-clerical feeling in the ‘Age of Reason’.’ See Richard King, *Indian Philosophy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), p. 32.


\(^{49}\) See for example, A. R. Wadia, ‘Can Indian and Western Philosophy Be Synthesized?’, *Philosophy East and West* 4.4 (Jan., 1955), p. 293.
So how has the *comparative approach* manifested itself in studies of Vasubandhu, Kumārila and Śaṅkara respectively? The majority of comparative studies of Vasubandhu exhibit a tendency to view Vasubandhu’s thought as a kind of ‘idealism’, thereby making direct comparisons between Vasubandhu and western philosophical thinkers who associated with idealist philosophy.\(^{51}\) It is only relatively recently that some scholars have begun to question whether Vasubandhu’s thought ought to be considered a form of ‘idealism’.\(^{52}\) Somewhat surprisingly, however, no one – perhaps with the exception of Stefan Anacker – has looked at the reasons as to why Vasubandhu came to be so commonly associated with ‘idealism’ in the first instance.\(^{53}\) There are, however, a number of historical reasons behind this association of Vasubandhu with ‘idealism’, which include the influence of early Chinese translations of Vasubandhu’s works, the availability of Vasubandhu’s texts in the original Sanskrit and the influence of western idealist philosophy upon nineteenth century scholarship on Vasubandhu – the legacy of which is very much still present in contemporary studies.\(^{54}\) Such factors, it seems, have led to numerous studies seeking to make direct comparisons between Vasubandhu and western ‘idealists’.

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\(^{51}\) The tendency has been to compare Vasubandhu with western thinkers such as Berkeley and Descartes. See, for example, Yoel Hoffman, Yoel, ‘Dream-world philosophers: Berkeley and Vasubandhu’, in *Philosophy east – philosophy west* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 247-268.


\(^{54}\) It was not until 1925 that the first critical editions of Vasubandhu’s *Viṃśatika* and *Trimśikā* became available. These were published in Sylvain Lévi’s, *Bibliothèque de L’École des Hautes Études*, sciences historiques et philologiques, Librairie Ancienne Honoré Champion, Paris, 1925. Until this point, the main source for Vasubandhu’s ideas was the work of the seventh century Chinese thinker Hsüan-tsang. Anacker has argued that ‘the standard discussion of Vasubandhu as an “idealist” philosopher’ is based upon Hsüan-tsang’s reading of Vasubandhu’s works.’ See Anacker, *Seven Works of Vasubandhu*, p. 2. However, the idea that Vasubandhu is an ‘idealist’ can also, it seems, be traced back to Thomas Huxley (1825-1895), whose work had a significant impact on Buddhist scholarship in the nineteenth century. Although Huxley did not focus specifically on Vasubandhu, he did make comparisons between Buddhist thought and Berkeley’s idealism. See Vijitha Rajapakse, ‘Buddhism in Huxley’s “Evolution and Ethics:” A note on a Victorian Evaluation and Its “Comparative Dimension”’, *Philosophy East and West, 35.3* (Jul., 1985), 295-304. T. W. Rhys Davids, who founded the Pali Text Society in 1881, was profoundly influenced by Huxley. The Pali Text Society was pivotal in promoting the view that Yogācāra was a ‘philosophical’ system, and as such represented a deviation from the Pali texts. See T. W. Rhys Davids, T. W., ‘Report of the Pali Text Society for 1882’, *Journal of the Pali Text Society*(1882), 1-14.
Conversely, there appear to be very few studies of Kumārila which adopt this kind of *comparative approach*. This is most probably due to the fact that historically – as we saw previously – *Pūrva Mīmāṃsā* has not been widely viewed as a ‘philosophical’ system. In view of this, it is easy to see why Kumārila’s thought was of little interest to those who were interested in comparing Indian and western philosophical traditions. Müller’s view – which we mentioned previously - that the *Mīmāṃsā* system does not constitute ‘real philosophy’, hardly lends itself to this kind of comparison.

Unlike Kumārila – as we saw previously – Śaṅkara’s thought was much more readily considered to be a philosophical system. For this reason, we find numerous studies of Śaṅkara which have adopted the comparative approach. S. N. L. Shrivastava’s ‘The Absolute in Bradley and Śaṅkara’ and Ramakant Sinari’s, ‘The Real and the Constructed: Śaṅkara and Husserl’ are notable examples. The latter – being a relatively recent publication – shows that the *comparative approach* is still adopted by some contemporary scholars of Śaṅkara.

Since the 1980’s, however, there have been a number of works which have sought to challenge the *comparative approach*. Significant in this regard was an anthology of essays entitled, *Interpreting across boundaries: New Essays in Comparative Philosophy*, published in 1988. The purpose of the volume – which includes contributions from well-known scholars such as Karl Potter, Eliot Deutsch and Ninian Smart – was to break down some of the presuppositions which characterised the *comparative approach*. In the introduction to *Interpreting Across Boundaries*, Gerald Larson

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identifies the following five ‘biases’ or ‘presuppositions’ which he deems to be characteristic of the early versions of Philosophy East and West:

...a tendency to favor disciplinary boundaries that separate philosophy from religion, art, literature, law, science, and other cognitive pursuits; a tendency to favor philosophical boundaries of European thought since Descartes for identifying conceptual problems in general; a tendency to favor large, holistic boundaries of language, culture and history; a tendency to treat conceptual systems as “entities” or “things” that can be externally compared; and a tendency to favor similarities in comparative work while ignoring or glossing over differences.\textsuperscript{58}

The purpose of the essays in Interpreting Across Boundaries is, according to Larson, to challenge such tendencies.\textsuperscript{59} The first ‘tendency’ identified by Larson – to frame ‘conceptual problems’ in Cartesian language – is particularly important in terms of the present study. It is indicative of a broader issue concerning tensions between conceptual worlds, which is a methodological challenge not only for those who adopt the comparative approach, but for scholars of Indian philosophical traditions more generally. We shall return to this issue in the third section of this chapter.

As we have seen, then, the comparative approach has been taken in two directions. On the one hand, it has been adopted as a means through which to establish a perennial philosophy; on the other hand it has been used as a means of creating awareness of different philosophical traditions. Both types of approach have – as we have seen – fallen subject to scrutiny in contemporary scholarship. So what, if anything, has contemporary scholarship offered as an alternative? An important approach in this regard is that which we have termed the navigational approach, and it is to this that we now turn.

\textsuperscript{58} Gerald James Larson, ‘Introduction: The “Age-Old Distinction Between the Same and the Other”’, in Larson and Deutsch (eds), Interpreting Across Boundaries, p. 9.

\textsuperscript{59} Larson, ‘Introduction: The “Age-Old Distinction Between the Same and the Other”’, in Larson and Deutsch (eds), Interpreting Across Boundaries, pp. 9-10.
iii) The navigational approach

In addition to the thematic and comparative approaches, it is possible to identify a third approach, which I have named the navigational approach for reasons that will soon become clear. The central objective of studies which fall within this category is to demonstrate ways in which classical Indian philosophy can contribute to discussions in contemporary western philosophical discourse. Initially, we might be tempted to draw parallels between this type of study and the comparative approach discussed above. After all, both approaches explore the Indian philosophical material in relation to an alternative system or systems. There is, however, a vital difference with the navigational approach in that it aims to create a space for a positive dialogue between alternative traditions.\(^{50}\) This is a far cry from the kind of rudimentary comparisons which frequently characterised the comparative approach. Indeed, the navigational approach can be seen to have developed – at least in part - as a reaction against the subordination of Indian philosophical traditions which was frequently effected by the comparative approach.

The navigational approach to the study of Indian philosophical traditions is a relatively recent phenomenon, which gained popularity in the latter part of the twentieth century, primarily through the writings of Bimal Krishna Matilal (1935-1991). With an exceptional level of proficiency in both classical Indian and contemporary western analytical traditions, Matilal was unwavering in his conviction that the debates which took place during the classical period of Indian philosophy constituted ‘an important chapter’ in what he termed ‘global philosophy.’\(^{61}\) Thus, Matilal was

\(^{50}\) As we shall see subsequently, this is different from the sense in which we are understanding ‘dialogue’ in relation to our dialogical approach.


In his earlier years, Matilal studied at the Sanskrit College in Calcutta, and the Department of Sanskrit at the University of Calcutta, India. In 1962 he moved to the United States where he studied under the Indologist D. H. H. Ingalls at Harvard. It was here that Matilal developed his interest in the western analytic tradition. He subsequently spent eleven years in Toronto, before being appointed Spalding Professor of Religion and Ethics at the University of Oxford. For further biographical information, see J. N. Mohanty, ‘Introduction: Bimal Matilal, the Man and the Philosopher’, in P. Bilimoria and J. N. Mohanty, *Relativism, Suffering and Beyond: Essays in Memory of Bimal K. Matilal* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 1-15.

It is telling indeed that one of the central endeavours of Matilal’s 1986 work, *Perception*, is to defend a position which he terms ‘Nyāya realism.’\footnote{Matilal, *Perception*, p. 1.} Aside from revealing his deep-seated interest in the Nyāya school, such an endeavour is symptomatic of Matilal’s broader vision; a vision, that is, of a kind of global arena in which philosophical discourse could take place.\footnote{The Nyāya school was with concerned logic, and in particular the process of reasoning. The earliest existing Nyāya text is the Nyāya sūtras attributed to Gautama (c.250-450CE). See Richard King, *Indian Philosophy: An Introduction to Hindu and Buddhist Thought* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), p. 59.} There is a notable difference, then, between Matilal’s approach and those *comparative approaches* – mentioned previously – which classify Vasubandhu’s thought as ‘idealism’, in that Matilal does not use the term ‘realism’ as the basis for a comparative study, at least not in the rudimentary sense of the term *comparative*. Rather, Matilal’s characterisation of Nyāya philosophy as ‘realism’ is a pertinent example of his attempt to reframe classical Indian philosophy using contemporary western terminology. Thus, the phrase ‘Nyāya realism’ is indicative of Matilal’s concern with re-establishing the ‘study of Indian philosophy’ as an academic pursuit, one which, he claims, ‘has been much neglected and largely forgotten.’\footnote{Bimal Krishna Matilal, *Logic, Language and Reality*, Second Edition (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1990), p. xv.} Matilal’s widespread renown among scholars of Indian philosophical traditions today suggests that such efforts were not in vain. So too does the fact that a number of writers have adopted and developed such an approach.

Notable among these writers is Jonardon Ganeri, who studied under Matilal at Oxford University.\footnote{Jonardon Ganeri is currently one of the few scholars of Indian philosophy to hold a position in a UK philosophy department. He is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Sussex.}

In a work entitled, *Philosophy in Classical India: The Proper Work of Reason*, Ganeri explores the ways in which certain Sanskritic traditions might be able to contribute to contemporary discussions on ‘reason’ and ‘rationality.’ He states that his aim is ‘to discover new forms of rationality and
applications of the concept of reason, and so to enrich a common philosophical vocabulary." Such an endeavour is palpably evocative of the type of approach advanced by Matilal. Ganeri’s more recent work, *Artha: Meaning*, follows in a similar vein, but looks instead at the ways in which Sanskritic traditions — and in particular the Nyāya school — might enhance contemporary western discussions on philosophy of language.\(^{68}\)

Ganeri’s approach has not been without its critics. In 2003, the Swedish Indologist Claus Oetke published a disparaging review of Ganeri’s, *Philosophy in Classical India*.\(^{69}\) One of Oetke’s central criticisms of this book has to do with the way in which Ganeri employs the terms ‘reason’, ‘rational’ and ‘rationality’. Oetke contends that there is a notable lack of clarity in the way that Ganeri employs these concepts. His initial criticism is that there is an apparent failure on Ganeri’s part to clarify whether he perceives these concepts as being embedded in the Sanskrit texts, or as heuristic categories. Oetke explains such a distinction in terms of the difference between *de dicto* and *de re*.\(^{70}\) He suggests that Ganeri’s use of the terms ‘reason’, ‘rational’ and ‘rationality’ might be understood in the sense of *de re*. Oetke contends, however, that this reading brings to light a new problem, namely that if Ganeri’s statements about rationality *are* to be read *de re*, then we still need to understand precisely what he means by the terms ‘reason’, ‘rational’ and ‘rationality’. According to Oetke, however, Ganeri is unclear in this regard, and thus we are left with the question of whether there is any purpose in using these terms at all. We shall return to this point later, since it


\(^{68}\) See Jonardon Ganeri, *Artha: Meaning* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). This is the second book in a series published by Oxford University Press entitled *Foundations of Philosophy in India*, which was the brainchild of the Centre for Philosophy and Foundations of Science, New Delhi. The first book in the series was Bina Gupta’s *Cit: Consciousness*, to which we will refer later on in the thesis. According to the publisher’s website, the series ‘aims to make available a critical reassessment of the philosophical achievement of the classical Indian tradition in such a way that it contributes to the dialogue between civilizations of the new century.’ See http://www.oup.co.in/category.php?cat_id=132133 [accessed 19 August 2010]. As Ganeri writes in the introduction to his book, ‘This conception is one I wholeheartedly endorse, and I very much hope that the approach to the Indian literature on meaning I have taken in this book makes a contribution to the important ambition of the series.’\(^{68}\) (p. 5)


\(^{70}\) Oetke, Review of *Philosophy in Classical India*, p. 137.

Oetke is referring here to the sense in which *de dicto* (lit. ‘of word’) and *de re* (lit. ‘of thing’) were used by logicians of the medieval period.
has implications not only for writers such as Ganeri, but for the study of classical Indian philosophy 
more generally.

In addition to Matilal and Ganeri, there is a third writer who has been instrumental in promoting 
what we have called the navigational approach, and this is J. N. Mohanty (b. 1928). Like Matilal 
and Ganeri, Mohanty advocates the view that classical Indian philosophy can function in dialogue 
with contemporary western philosophy.\textsuperscript{71} In Mohanty’s case, however, his interest in western 
philosophical thought lies in the field of phenomenology.\textsuperscript{72} As he writes in an essay entitled 
\textit{Phenomenology in Indian Philosophy}, ‘It is only quite natural...to expect that the great philosophers 
of ancient India should exhibit phenomenological investigations of high order. And the expectation 
stands fulfilled.’\textsuperscript{73} Although Mohanty’s intellectual interests diverge in some respects from those of 
Matilal and Ganeri, all three writers are driven by the same objective in their studies of Indian 
philosophical traditions. In Purushottama Bilimoria’s words, Mohanty ‘has lived a dual intellectual 
life; or so it appears from the perceptions of those who are familiar with Professor Mohanty’s 
distinctive specialities and interests.’\textsuperscript{74} It is this ‘dual intellectual life’ which Matilal, Ganeri and 
Mohanty share in common, and which is the foundation of what we have termed the navigational 
approach to the study of Indian philosophy.

We are reminded, in this regard, of Roger Ballard’s concept of ‘skilled cultural navigators.’\textsuperscript{75} As an 
anthropologist, Ballard formulates this concept in relation to young South Asians living in Britain. 
He uses it to contest ‘the popular view that young people of South Asian parentage will inevitably

\textsuperscript{71} Like Matilal and Ganeri, Mohanty was also trained in Nyāya Philosophy. See Purushottama Bilimoria, ‘Editor’s 
introduction by Purushottama Bilimoria.

\textsuperscript{72} This is due largely to the influence of figures as Heidegger and Husserl, with whom Mohanty came into contact 
during his doctoral studies in Göttingen, Germany. See Bilimoria, ‘Editor’s Introduction’, in Mohanty, \textit{Essays in Indian 
Philosophy}, edited with an introduction by Bilimoria, pp. xiv-xv.

\textsuperscript{73} J. N. Mohanty, ‘Phenomenology in Indian Philosophy’, in Mohanty, \textit{Essays in Indian Philosophy}, edited with an 
introduction by Bilimoria, p. 249.

\textsuperscript{74} Bilimoria, ‘Editor’s Introduction’, in Mohanty, \textit{Essays in Indian Philosophy}, edited with an introduction by Bilimoria, 
p. ix.

suffer from “culture conflict” as a result of their participation in a number of differently structured worlds’.\textsuperscript{76} Ballard argues that ‘they are much better perceived as skilled cultural navigators with a sophisticated capacity to manoeuvre their way to their own advantage both inside and outside the ethnic colony.’\textsuperscript{77} This idea, however, can just as usefully be applied to scholars of Indian philosophy such as Matilal, Ganeri and Mohanty.\textsuperscript{78} For they too, in a sense, ‘manoeuvre their way’ between two traditions – the traditions of Sanskritic philosophy and those of contemporary western philosophical discourse. Furthermore, this notion of ‘skilled cultural navigators’ helps to distance these writers from the sense of ‘culture conflict’ which so often emanates from studies which adopt the comparative approach. It is in view of Ballard’s notion of ‘skilled cultural navigators’, then, that I have termed the approach of those such as Matilal, Ganeri and Mohanty as the navigational approach.

We have thus discussed three different methodological approaches to the study of Indian philosophical traditions, and have termed these the thematic approach, the comparative approach and the navigational approach. Although we have classified these approaches separately, there is, of course, a certain amount of overlap between them. For example, some of those studies which we have classified under the thematic approach also share some of the objectives of the navigational approach. Timalsina’s recent work, which we referred to previously, is – at least to some extent – an example of the conflation of these two approaches. That is, although its primary purpose appears to be to further our understanding of the Advaita tradition through the theme of consciousness, it does by using – at least to an extent – the conceptual framework of contemporary western discussions of ‘consciousness.’ As such, it goes some way to advancing the kind of approach put forward by Matilal, Ganeri and Mohanty. The comparative approach also exhibits some similarities to the navigational approach. Most notably, it creates a space for dialogue between Indian and western philosophical traditions, however limited and biased that space may be.

\textsuperscript{76} Ballard, ‘The Emergence of Desh Pardesh’, p. 31.
\textsuperscript{77} Ballard, ‘The Emergence of Desh Pardesh’, p. 31.
\textsuperscript{78} Ballard, ‘The Emergence of Desh Pardesh’, p. 31.
Thus we can see that it is possible to discern certain similarities between the three methodological approaches which we have identified; the difference, then, lies in the respective emphases of these approaches. This is also the case with our own approach – the *dialogical approach* - which – as we will see subsequently – shares some of the features of these three approaches. It is to an exploration of this approach that we now turn.

iv) The Dialogical Approach

So what do we mean by saying that we are to adopt a *dialogical approach* to Vasubandhu’s view of self, perception and objects? The idea is that we will explore the way in which Vasubandhu’s approach to these issues relies upon *dialogue*. As we have already mentioned, there are three senses in which dialogue is significant in terms of Vasubandhu’s writings. In one sense, as we have seen, an important feature of his writings is dialogue with other schools of thought. In a more subtle sense, Vasubandhu’s works rely upon dialogue with the *Yogācārin* pupil. Finally – as we noted earlier – there is also a broader sense in which dialogue is significant in terms of Vasubandhu’s works, and that has to do with the way in which other thinkers responded to these works. Through adopting a *dialogical approach* to our study, then, we see how these three different types of *dialogue* shape Vasubandhu’s position on the issues of self, perception and objects. The third type of dialogue which we have noted is clearly different from the first two, in that it is not innate to Vasubandhu’s works themselves, but is rather a feature of the intellectual milieu in which Vasubandhu is working. It is arguably just as significant, however, because it demonstrates the way in which other thinkers engaged with Vasubandhu’s work. Thus, it emphasises the broader dialogical process of which Vasubandhu’s works are a part.

So how does this dialogical approach help us to understand the pedagogical treatment of the issues of self, perception and objects in Vasubandhu’s works? As we shall see throughout this study, dialogue is employed in Vasubandhu’s works for the purpose of teaching; the dialogical character of Vasubandhu’s discussions of self, perception and objects is indicative of his primary aim – that
is, to guide the Yogācārin pupil towards liberation. All of the three types of dialogue identified above are directed towards this aim. Vasubandhu’s dialogue with rival schools serves not only as a means of preserving Yogācāra as the correct path in the face of his opponents, but also—as we shall see subsequently—as a means of removing any doubts or misconceptions which might hinder the Yogācārin pupil’s progress on this path. Vasubandhu’s dialogue with the Yogācārin pupil, who, as we have already noted, is not explicitly identified in Vasubandhu’s texts themselves, acts as a way of deconstructing the kinds of assumptions which might prevent the pupil from attaining liberation. The third sense in which we are understanding dialogue in this study—as the response of thinkers within the broader intellectual milieu—is also helpful for understanding the importance of teaching. In this case, however, it helps us to understand the pedagogical character of philosophical dialogue within the broader intellectual milieu of which Vasubandhu is a part, and in particular in relation to the ways in which Kumārila and Śaṅkara reinterpret Vasubandhu’s position on self, perception and objects. We can see, then, that the dialogical approach is particularly apposite for exploring the pedagogical function of Vasubandhu’s philosophical deliberations on the issues of self, perception and objects.

Despite the fact that in the present study we are using the dialogical approach to explore Vasubandhu, such an approach could just as usefully be applied to any Indian thinker who was writing during the classical period. This is because the majority of philosophical texts written in Sanskrit during this period did not function in isolation, but rather formed part of a dialogue with other schools of thought. This has to do with what Dan Arnold has identified as the development of ‘conceptual tools and vocabulary’, which allowed Indian philosophical thinkers ‘to argue across party lines’. As Arnold argues,

This made possible more fruitful debate among different perspectives, which...developed their arguments in conversation with the claims and arguments of rival perspectives. When they thus anticipate and address the arguments of predecessors and contemporaries, writing the voices of the interlocutors into their texts, the various schools of Indian philosophy

79 Dan Arnold, Buddhists, Brahmins and Beliefs (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005, p. 2.)
quickly grow in subtlety and sophistication; philosophical problems virtually take on a life of their own when they are subjected to conceptual pressure, as they are when competing voices are pressing claims for their entailment.  

What Arnold terms ‘conversation’ here – and what we are terming ‘dialogue’ - was integral in shaping Sanskritic philosophical texts of the classical era.

In view of this, it is somewhat surprising that very few scholars – with the notable exceptions of Dan Arnold, John Taber and Richard King – have focused on the dialogical aspect of these texts. Furthermore, the dialogical character of these texts has yet to be translated into a methodological approach through which to study classical Indian philosophical traditions. Through articulating and adopting the *dialogical approach* in the present study, then, we aim not only to further our understanding of the way in which Vasubandhu treats the issues of self, perception and objects, but also to offer an alternative method for studying classical Indian philosophical thinkers more generally.

There are, of course, elements of the *dialogical approach* which overlap with the other three approaches discussed previously, most notably with the *thematic* and *navigational* approaches. The *dialogical approach* bears some similarity to the *thematic approach* in that it is intended – at least in part – to further our understanding of a particular thinker. Primarily, in this particular study, it serves to further our understanding of Vasubandhu through exploring his position on the issues of self, perception and objects. However, there is a vital difference between the *dialogical* and *thematic* approaches, which is that the *dialogical approach* takes a much broader perspective on a particular theme. That is, it looks not only at a particular thinker, but at the way in which that particular thinker engages with other philosophical thinkers. Not only this, but it acknowledges that understanding this process of engagement is vital for understanding this thinker’s philosophical

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80 Arnold, Buddhists, Brahmins and Beliefs, p. 2.
81 See Arnold, Buddhists, Brahmins and Beliefs; John Taber, A Hindu Critique of Buddhist Epistemology: Kumārila on Perception. The “Determination of Perception Chapter of Kumārila Bhaṭṭa’s Ślokavarttika (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2005); King, Indian Philosophy.
views. Moreover, the *dialogical approach* looks at the way in which subsequent thinkers engaged with Vasubandhu’s position. Thus rather than isolating one particular thinker or school, it places this thinker or school within the broader context in which they are writing.

The *dialogical approach* also shares some similarities with the *navigational approach*, most notably in that both of these approaches focus – albeit in different senses – on the notion of dialogue. However, there is an important point in view of which these two approaches diverge. Whereas the *navigational approach* emphasises dialogue between Indian and western philosophical traditions, the dialogical approach focuses on the role of dialogue within Indian philosophical traditions. To an extent, of course, the *navigational approach* does look at dialogue between Indian philosophical traditions. Matilal’s work, *Perception*, which explores the dialogue between what he terms ‘Nyāya realism’ and ‘Buddhist phenomenalism’, is a case in point.\(^\text{82}\) However, as we saw previously, this dialogue is explored in a ‘global’ context; that is, it is part of an overall endeavour to show that classical Indian philosophical schools can form part of a dialogue with contemporary western philosophical traditions. Such an endeavour relies – at least to an extent – on removing Indian philosophical ideas from their textual context. The *dialogical approach*, on the other hand, views dialogue as integral to the historical context of classical Indian philosophical schools. Indeed, it is through the *dialogical approach* that we relocate these traditions within their historical context.

We have thus shown above what we mean by the *dialogical approach*, and have demonstrated how this approach can help us to understand the pedagogical character of Vasubandhu’s writings. We have also demonstrated how this approach might be applied to the study of Indian philosophy more generally. It is important to note, however, that any study of Indian philosophical traditions presents us – regardless of the approach taken – with a number of methodological challenges, which cannot be overlooked. In what follows, therefore, we will explore some of these challenges, and attempt to show how we might respond to them using our own *dialogical approach*.

Methodological challenges

One of the central methodological challenges facing the western scholar of India philosophy in the twenty-first century is as follows. When we study Indian philosophical traditions, we invariably face the challenge that we are inevitably involved in a process of translation. Regardless of which approach one adopts, there is bound to be disparity between the concepts which we seek to explain and those which are available to us to make such an explanation possible. This is not only a matter of translation from Sanskrit to English, although this is of course one facet of the challenge. More broadly, it is a matter of translating from one conceptual framework to another, in cases where the assumptions underpinning these two conceptual frameworks differ.

Broadly speaking, this methodological difficulty can be articulated through the notion of incommensurability, a term which gained popularity in the 1960’s through the work of the physicist and historian of science, Thomas Kuhn. Despite the fact that Kuhn used the term in relation to what he termed ‘scientific revolutions’, it came to be used more broadly in the Humanities and Social Sciences, largely through the work of philosophers such as Richard Rorty and Donald Davidson. In this context, discussions of incommensurability came to be indicative of the growing concern about our ability to comprehend conceptual worlds which are different from those within which we are working. As Richard J Bernstein remarks in the aforementioned volume Interpreting Across Boundaries,

84 Donald Davidson challenged the notion of incommensurability on the basis of his conviction that there is no such thing as an ‘untranslatable language.’ See Donald Davidson, ‘On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme’ Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association, 47 (1973-1974), 5-20.
“Incommensurability,” “otherness,” “alterity,” “singularity,” “difference,” “plurality.” These signifiers reverberate throughout much of twentieth-century philosophy. For all their differences, they are signs of a pervasive amorphous mood—a mood of deconstruction, destabilization, rupture and fracture—of resistance to all forms of abstract totality, universalism and rationalism.85

The growing concern with incommensurability—and related concepts—was thus symptomatic of a more general trend for questioning the existence of abstract ‘truths’ in academic enquiry.

In the context of the present discussion, the problem of incommensurability manifests itself in two ways. The first is internal to the subject of the study itself. That is, it is questionable whether the respective conceptual schemes of Vasubandhu, Kumārila and Śaṅkara are commensurable, and thus whether we are justified in exploring the relationship between these three thinkers. It is clear that Vasubandhu, Kumārila and Śaṅkara are—to an extent—working within very different conceptual schemes. As we shall see throughout this thesis, their respective discussions of self, perception, and objects only serve to reinforce this. Is it then acceptable—or indeed possible—to explore the connection between these three thinkers?

The second way in which the problem of incommensurability manifests itself in our study relates to the potential disparity between our own conceptual scheme and that which underpins the subject of our enquiry. Broadly speaking, western philosophical discourse has been shaped by a number of assumptions which are at odds with those underpinning the language of Sanskritic philosophical traditions. A pertinent example of this is the tension between the Cartesian conceptual framework within which western philosophical discourse has developed, and the Śāṅkhyan conceptual framework which forms the basis of much classical Indian philosophical thought.86 Given, then, that Cartesianism is largely inbuilt within western philosophical discourse, how can we use western philosophical language to understand Vasubandhu’s system?

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So how does our *dialogical approach* help us to address the former possible instance of incommensurability – between the systems of Vasubandhu, Kumārila and Śaṅkara? The key, it seems, lies in the very fact that there is dialogue between these systems. Donald Davidson’s article, ‘On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme’, can help us to explain how this is the case. In his article, Davidson questions the validity of the idea that conceptual schemes are ‘not intertranslatable’ – his own phrase for what Kuhn terms ‘incommensurable.’ Davidson’s basis for questioning this notion is that it ‘seems to betray an underlying paradox.’ The paradox, Davidson observes, is this: the notion of different conceptual schemes only makes sense if there is a common system upon which we can ‘plot’ them. Yet the existence of such a common system would undermine the idea that conceptual schemes are incommensurable. ‘What we need’, Davidson argues, ‘is some idea of the consideration that sets the limit to conceptual contrast.’

So how does Davidson’s contention support our claim that it is reasonable to explore the relationship between Vasubandhu, Kumārila and Śaṅkara? In view of Davidson’s observations that a common measure is needed in order to understand that conceptual schemes are different, we can suggest that it is only possible to discern the differences between our three thinkers’ respective conceptual schemes precisely because there is some commonality between them. Without such commonality, it would be impossible to explore the ways in which Kumārila and Śaṅkara reinterpret Vasubandhu’s position in terms of their own conceptual schemes. Recognising that such reinterpretation takes place is an essential part of comprehending our thinkers’ systems. Indeed, if conceptual language were wholly ‘untranslatable’, then it would not be possible for Kumārila and Śaṅkara to embark upon such an enterprise. It seems, then, that the apparently *incommensurable* aspects of our three thinkers’ systems can be seen to be such precisely because these systems are – to an extent – *commensurable*.

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So how does our dialogical approach help us to deal with the second problem, that is, the potential incommensurability between our own conceptual scheme and that of Vasubandhu? The answer to this lies in the fact that the dialogical approach – as mentioned earlier – relies on the use of western philosophical concepts as *heuristic* categories. We are not claiming, then, in using the categories of self, perception and objects that exact equivalents can be found in Vasubandhu’s texts themselves. Rather, we are using these concepts as signposts which might help us to understand the pedagogical character of Vasubandhu’s works. To clarify what we mean here, it may be useful to refer to a remark made by Wilhelm Halbfass in his 1992 work, *On Being and What There Is.*

Although the main body of this work focuses upon the *Vaiśeṣika* school, Halbfass explores some of the more general methodological issues faced by the western scholar of classical Indian philosophy, and in particular the question of the extent to which we can use contemporary western concepts and categories in the study of Indian Philosophical traditions. In the course of this exploration, Halbfass makes the following observation:

> Conceptual devices that have been developed by Western philosophical thought will be indispensable tools of translation, interpretation and analysis; but we will have to use them cautiously. We have to be aware that our own ontological concepts and premises are problematic. We have to be able to withhold familiar concepts and conceptual distinctions. We cannot simply “apply” such notions as substance, quality and universal, essence and existence, actuality and potentiality, or even extension and intension. We must be ready to see them not just as tools of analysis or interpretation, but also as open problems and objects of comparison.

So not only does Halbfass recognise the potential gap between the conceptual framework of the scholar and the topic of study, he also observes the ambiguities and discrepancies that are innate within the scholar’s own terminology. Yet for Halbfass, these problems, if addressed appropriately, can also become part of the solution to our predicament. In recognising these terms and concepts as *problems* within our own conceptual framework, we can begin to see how these problems might be

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addressed within conceptual schemes other than our own. If we frame this in terms of the aforementioned distinction made by Claus Oetke, Halbfass, then, seems to understand such concepts as *de re*, rather than *de dicto*.

It is precisely this idea of concepts as ‘problems’ that is central to our dialogical approach. By treating the issues of self, perception and objects as ‘tools of analysis’—to use Halbfass’s words—we can allow for the differences in the ways they are approached by Vasubandhu, Kumārila and Śaṅkara respectively. Moreover, we make room for the process of transformation which these concepts undergo in Vasubandhu’s writings. For as we shall see throughout this thesis, Vasubandhu does not treat self, perception and objects as static concepts, but rather as malleable problems, which are constantly being developed and transformed as part of a pedagogical process. It is only fitting that this flexibility with which Vasubandhu treats these problems is reflected in our own method. To simply apply these concepts would be to go against the very notion of philosophy as pedagogy, which we are advancing in this study.

We have thus seen how our *dialogical approach* deals with the problem of *incommensurability* in the study of Indian philosophical traditions, and particularly in the context of our own study. Clearly, we are not claiming to have resolved the methodological difficulties which have now preoccupied scholars of Indian philosophical traditions for many decades. However, we have demonstrated that the *dialogical approach* might go some way to lessening the severity of the challenge implied in the very notion of *incommensurability*.

In this chapter, then, we have outlined three different approaches to the study of Indian philosophical traditions, which we have termed the *thematic approach*, the *comparative approach* and the *navigational approach*. We have also developed a fourth approach in addition to these—the *dialogical approach*. It is this approach throughout the rest of the thesis, which will be structured as follows.
In Chapter Two, we shall look in some detail at the texts which we shall draw upon throughout the study. We shall begin by exploring Vasubandhu’s texts, before moving on to an exploration of the texts of Kumārila and Śaṅkara. The aim of this chapter will be twofold. Firstly, we will explore the conceptual backgrounds within which these texts are grounded. Secondly, we shall draw out some of the key ideas addressed in each of these texts, so that we can subsequently show how these ideas are treated pedagogically.

Since the idea of philosophy as pedagogy is central to our study, Chapter Three will address this issue in some detail. We will build upon the definition of pedagogy identified above, and will explore how this definition helps us to understand Vasubandhu’s attitude towards the issues of self, perception and objects. Most importantly, we shall look in more detail at the function of dialogue in Vasubandhu’s works, exploring how the different types of dialogue which he employs are indicative of his pedagogical approach. In addition, we shall look briefly at the question of whether this concept of pedagogy is helpful in understanding Kumārila and Śaṅkara’s respective views of self, perception and objects, particularly with reference to the ways in which they can be seen to reinterpret Vasubandhu’s position.

Chapters Four, Five and Six will focus on the role of dialogue in Vasubandhu’s discussions of self, perception and objects respectively. In Chapter Four, we will look at Vasubandhu’s discussions on the issue of self. We shall explore the ways in which he implements dialogue in his works in order to deconstruct the idea of self as a normative entity. We shall then look at the way in which the issue of self is addressed by Kumārila and Śaṅkara respectively, focusing on the ways in which they reconstruct Vasubandhu’s discussions of self. In so doing, we shall see how Vasubandhu’s view of self becomes part of a process of dialogue in the context of the broader intellectual world to which he belongs.

In Chapter Five, we will explore – in a similar way – the function of dialogue in Vasubandhu’s discussions of the issue of ‘perception’. We shall look first at Vasubandhu’s view of sense-
perception (pratyakṣa) and the way in which he employs Abhidharma terminology concerning sense-perception as part of a process of deconstruction. We shall then see how a similar process of deconstruction is employed in order to undermine the apparent distinction between ‘perceiver’ and ‘perceived’. In addition, we shall explore Kumārila’s dialogue with the Yogācāra school in relation to the issue of perception. We shall then see how Śaṅkara reinterprets Vasubandhu’s position on perception.

In Chapter Six, we shall look at the role of dialogue in Vasubandhu’s discussions of ‘objects’. In particular, this chapter will focus upon the way in which the example of dreaming is employed as a vehicle for this dialogue. We will argue, on the basis of Vasubandhu’s use of the dream analogy, for an interpretation of his view of objects which differs from much of the existing scholarship. We shall then explore how Kumārila reinterprets Vasubandhu’s discussions of dreaming, focusing particularly on the ways in which the Mīmāṃsā realist ontology shapes this reinterpretation. Finally, we shall explore Śaṅkara’s dialogue with Vasubandhu on the issue of objects, in view of his own use of the analogy from dreaming.

In the final chapter, Chapter Seven, we shall reflect upon what our study has told us about the pedagogical character of Vasubandhu’s discussions of self, perception and objects. We shall explore the way in which our dialogical approach has served to draw out our notion of philosophy as pedagogy. In addition, we shall look at what our study has shown about Vasubandhu’s approach to truthfulness, and how this ties in with attitudes to truthfulness adopted by Kumārila and Śaṅkara. In so doing, we aim to reinforce the importance of understanding the pedagogical character, not only of Vasubandhu’s works, but of classical Indian philosophical traditions more generally.
Chapter Two
Texts

As we noted in the previous chapter, we have access to very little accurate historical information concerning Vasubandhu, Kumārila and Śaṅkara, and indeed concerning any of the Indian philosophical thinkers who were writing during the same period. Although this is frustrating, it is not especially disadvantageous in terms of the present study, for our thinkers’ texts themselves provide a fairly comprehensive picture of the relationship between the traditions to which Vasubandhu, Kumārila and Śaṅkara belonged. Thus in spite of the fogginess which surrounds the biographical history of our three thinkers, their texts depict their own kind of history; this is a history of dialogue, not only of dialogue between teacher and pupil, but between rival philosophical traditions. The texts attributed to our three thinkers reflect an intellectual milieu which was characterised by philosophical disputes between rival traditions. Indeed, it is largely through these disputes that we are granted an insight into Vasubandhu, Kumārila and Śaṅkara's respective attitudes towards self, perception and objects.

Since it is the texts of our three thinkers that are so fundamental to our study, we shall – in the present chapter – explore these texts in some detail. We shall look at the relationship between these texts and the broader traditions to which they belonged. We shall also address any methodological difficulties concerning these texts which might affect our study, including issues of authorship, authenticity and availability. We shall then identify the specific works upon which this thesis will focus, giving a brief explanation of the contents of these works and explaining why they are of particular relevance to our study.

It is important to note at the outset that Vasubandhu, Kumārila and Śaṅkara, like many Indian thinkers of their time, were prolific writers. Thus to explore each one of their texts in detail clearly lies well beyond the capabilities of the present study. Aside from this feasibility issue, it is not in the interest of the present discussion to attempt such an exploration. Since our study focuses upon
the issues of self, perception and objects, we are justified in looking only at those texts which can assist us in this endeavour. We shall begin, then, with Vasubandhu.

Vasubandhu

Of each of our three thinkers, it is Vasubandhu whose works present us with the greatest methodological difficulty, in that the texts attributed to him appear to fall into two different categories. On the one hand there are those which appear to belong to the Sarvāstivāda-Vaibhāṣika Abhidharma tradition. Vasubandhu’s Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya, or ‘Commentary on the Treasury of Abhidharma’ (hereafter AKBh) clearly fits into this category. The AKBh is a commentary on the Abhidharmakośa (hereafter AK), also written by Vasubandhu. The AK is a collection of verses purporting to outline the doctrines of the Vaibhāṣika system. The verses are grouped into eight chapters, each of which deals with a particular theme of this system. The AKBh, written in prose, expands the verses and critiques the Sarvāstivāda tradition from a Sautrāntika viewpoint.

On the other hand there are a number of texts attributed to Vasubandhu which – despite employing many of the technical terms of Abhidharma – appear to be affiliated more closely with the Yogācāra tradition. Each of Vasubandhu’s texts which we will classify as Yogācāra refers – either directly or indirectly – to those Mahāyāna sūtras which provide the doctrinal foundations of the Yogācāra school. On some occasions they incorporate quotations from the sūtras themselves, whilst on others they identify and develop theories which have their origins in the sūtras. Either

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93 The literal meaning of Sarvāstivāda is ‘teaching that all exists’. The Sarvāstivāda-Vaibhāṣika Abhidharma tradition can be traced back to the second or third centuries CE, when a group of Sarvāstivādin Abhidharmikas started to compile an authoritative Abhidharma commentary or vibhāṣā. See Rupert Gethin, The Foundations of Buddhism (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 205. This group of scholars are known as the Vaibhāṣikas, or ‘exponents of the Vibhāṣā’.


94 The text is one of a number of ‘summary Abhidharma manuals’ produced by the Sārṇāstivādins.


way, those texts of Vasubandhu’s which fall into this category exhibit allegiance to particular theories from the Mahāyāna sūtras which were appropriated by the Yogācāra tradition, and which were largely absent from Abhidharma. We shall identify some of these theories shortly. Among Vasubandhu’s Yogācāra texts are the Viṃśatikā or ‘Twenty Verses’ (hereafter Viṃśl) together with its auto commentary - the Viṃśatikā-ṛṣṭtī (hereafter VV), the Triṃśikā-kārikā or ‘Thirty Verses’ (hereafter TK), the Tri-svabhāva-nirdeśa or ‘Teaching on the Three Aspects’ (hereafter TSN) and the Madhyānta-vibhāga-bhāṣya or ‘Commentary on the Separation of the Middle from Extremes’ (hereafter MVBh).

Of course, the distinction between Abhidharma and Yogācāra is not as clear-cut as the above distinction might suggest. As Richard King has observed, ‘Madhyamika and Yogācāra thinkers both established and contested their theories within a theoretical framework which was unquestionably Abhidharmic in style, content and presentation.’ King’s observation is clear to see in all of Vasubandhu’s Yogācāra works, which are largely dependent upon Abhidharma for their technical vocabulary. It is, however, the way in which this vocabulary is employed – in addition to the inclusion of certain theories which are clearly unique to the Yogācāra tradition – which renders Vasubandhu’s Yogācāra texts distinct from his Abhidharma texts.

So how are we to account for the fact that Vasubandhu’s texts appear to belong to two different traditions? One possibility is that we follow Erich Frauwallner’s theory of two Vasubandhus. In 1951, Frauwallner published a work suggesting there were two authors named Vasubandhu: an ‘elder’ Vasubandhu who was writing in the fourth century CE, and a ‘younger’ Vasubandhu who was writing in the fifth century CE. In accordance with traditional accounts, Frauwallner maintains that the elder Vasubandhu was converted from the Sarvastivāda tradition to the Mahāyāna tradition

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by his brother Asaṅga.\textsuperscript{98} It was, according to Frauwallner, this elder Vasubandhu who was the author of the \textit{Yogācāra} texts. The younger Vasubandhu, Frauwallner suggests, was the author of the \textit{Abhidharmakośabhyāsyā}.\textsuperscript{99} Frauwallner argues that,

The discrimination between these two persons eliminates all the seeming contradictions of the tradition, because the apparently contradictory elements distribute themselves partly on the younger and partly on the elder Vasubandhu.\textsuperscript{100}

Indeed, if Frauwallner’s theory is correct, then it seems that our problem concerning the two categories of text may be resolved. However, there are some additional factors which complicate the matter.

Firstly, Frauwallner observes that we are unable to determine to which of the two Vasubandhus the \textit{Viṃś} and \textit{TK} belonged.\textsuperscript{101} Thus we cannot be certain that these texts belong to the same Vasubandhu who wrote the other \textit{Yogācāra} treatises. Secondly, in 1958, Padmanabh S. Jaini published an article which argued that the younger Vasubandhu may have also been converted from \textit{Sarvāstivāda} to \textit{Mahāyāna}.\textsuperscript{102} This means, argues Jaini, that the younger Vasubandhu was the author of both \textit{Abhidharma} and \textit{Yogācāra} texts. Jaini includes, among these texts, the \textit{TSN}.\textsuperscript{103} According to Jaini, then, there were two Vasubandhus, both of whom wrote texts belonging to the \textit{Yogācāra} and \textit{Abhidharma} traditions. If this is the case, then our problem is in fact augmented,


\textsuperscript{99}Frauwallner, \textit{On the Date of the Buddhist Master of the Law Vasubandhu}, p. 54.

\textsuperscript{100}Frauwallner, \textit{On the Date of the Buddhist Master of the Law Vasubandhu}, p. 54.

\textsuperscript{101}Frauwallner, \textit{On the Date of the Buddhist Master of the Law Vasubandhu}, p. 56.


\textsuperscript{103}Jaini makes this argument on the basis of the \textit{Abhidharma-dīpa} and its commentary, the \textit{Vibhāṣa-prabhā-vṛtti}, a \textit{Vaibhāṣika} work which was probably written around the time of the younger Vasubandhu. The work is largely, according to Jaini, an ‘imitation’ of Vasubandhu’s \textit{Abhidharmakośabhyāsyā}. Jaini identifies three features of the \textit{Vibhāṣa-prabhā-vṛtti} which, he claims, indicate that the younger Vasubandhu was converted from \textit{Sarvāstivāda} to \textit{Mahāyāna}. The first is that the author of the \textit{Abhidharmakośa} is referred to as \textit{sarvāstivāda-vibhrāṣṭha}, meaning ‘one who has deviated from the \textit{Sarvāstivāda}’. The second is that the \textit{Vibhāṣa-prabhā-vṛtti} refers to the \textit{tri-svabhāva} theory, or ‘three aspects’ theory, which was put forward by the \textit{Yogācāra} school. The third feature is that the text implies that it was the author of the \textit{Abhidharmakośabhāsyā} who formulated this theory.
rather than resolved. More recently, Stefan Anacker has argued that there is no evidence to support any theory that there were two Vasubandhus. He argues instead that there was only one Vasubandhu, and that he was converted from the Abhidharma to the Yogacāra tradition.\textsuperscript{104}

As we can see, then, the question of authorship remains unresolved, and we continue to face the predicament of how to deal with the two categories of texts attributed to Vasubandhu. However, if we bear in mind our methodological approach - which we have termed the dialogical approach - the problem becomes less significant in terms of the present discussion. As was pointed out in the previous chapter, one of the main benefits of the dialogical approach is that it enables us to explore the relationship between Vasubandhu, Kumārila and Śaṅkara. In terms of dialogue concerning the issues of self, perception and objects, it is the Yogacāra tradition – rather than the Abhidharma tradition – towards which Kumārila and Śaṅkara’s criticisms are directed. Since it is the issues of self, perception and objects with which this study is concerned, it seems that we are justified in looking only at Vasubandhu’s texts which belong clearly to the Yogacāra tradition.

There is a further problem, however, in that some of the texts which seem to fall into the Yogacāra category are not available in the original Sanskrit. Notable among these is the Pañcaskandhaka-prakaraṇa or ‘A Discussion of the Five Aggregates’.\textsuperscript{105} In looking at Anacker’s translations of this text, however, it appears that the Pañcaskandhaka-prakaraṇa would provide us with little material that would enhance or change that contained in the texts for which the Sanskrit translations are available. Furthermore, it appears that there is little in Kumārila and Śaṅkara’s accounts of the

\textsuperscript{104} Anacker, Seven Works of Vasubandhu (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas, 1984), p. 2.
\textsuperscript{105} As Stefan Anacker observes, the Sanskrit text of the Pañcaskandhaka-prakaraṇa has been lost. Anacker’s English translation is from the eighth century Tibetan translation by Indian translators Jinamitra, Śilendrabodhi, and Dānāśila, and the Tibetan scholar Yešes-sde (Peking/Tokyo Tibetan Canon, vol. 113, pp. 231-239). See Anacker, Seven Works of Vasubandhu, p. 2.

There are two more works in Anacker’s Seven Works of Vasubandhu which do not survive in Sanskrit, and which do not obviously belong to the Yogacāra tradition. The first of these is the Vāda-viddhi (A Method for Argumentation’), which is primarily a work on logic.

The second is Karma-siddhi-prakaraṇa (‘A Discussion for the Demonstration of Action). In a separate article on this text, Stefan Anacker claims that it is ‘a work totally resistant to classification by “schools.”’ See Stefan Anacker, ‘Vasubandhu’s Karmasiddhi-prakaraṇa and the Problem of the Highest Meditations’, Philosophy East and West, 22.3 (Jul., 1972), p. 247.
Yogācāra tradition which cannot be found in Vasubandhu’s Yogācāra texts which are available in Sanskrit.

In view of this, our study will focus upon the Viṃś and the VV, the TK, the TSN and the MVBh, all of which are Yogācāra texts which are available in the original Sanskrit.106 During the course of the thesis, there will be occasions upon which we shall need to refer to the AKBh for explanations of specific Abhidharma terms. After all, the AKBh is a vital source for such explanations, being one of only two Abhidharma texts which survive in Sanskrit.107 We shall, however, use the AKBh as a reference point for the Abhidharma tradition in general, without making any assumptions about its authorship.

We ought to mention one further difficulty, which relates to our use of the TSN. P. S. Jaini – in his aforementioned article – has suggested that the TSN was written by the same Vasubandhu who produced the AKBh. If Jaini’s theory is correct, then our use of the TSN might be considered questionable. As we shall see shortly, however, the triśvabhāva (‘three aspects’) theory upon which the TSN focuses belongs quite clearly to the Yogācāra tradition. This – in itself – justifies our decision to include the TSN in the present study. Even if the author of the TSN is different from the author of the other Yogācāra texts, the TSN still predates the writings of Kumārila and Śaṃkara by at least two centuries. Thus it would certainly have contributed to the model of the Yogācāra tradition which had been consolidated by the time of Kumārila and Śaṃkara, and towards which many of their criticisms are directed. This provides us with sufficient grounds upon which to justify


107 The other text is Yaśomitra’s commentary on the AKBh. See Leo M. Pruden’s introduction to Louis de La Vallée Poussin (Tr.), The Abhidharmakosa of Vasubandhu, 4 vols, tr. by Leo M. Pruden (Berkeley, California.: Asian Humanities Press, 1988-1990), p. xxi.
our use of the TSN in the present discussion. We shall now explore briefly each of those texts of Vasubandhu’s upon which we have chosen to focus, indicating our reasons for including them in this thesis.

The Viṃś is a short text, which in spite of its name consists of twenty-two verses. As we noted previously, it is accompanied by an auto-commentary (the VV) in which Vasubandhu expands upon each of these verses. The text is most commonly associated with Vasubandhu’s theory of the Yogācāra doctrine of vijñapti-mātra. We shall refrain from translating this phrase at present, since it presents some complex issues which will be addressed at a later stage in the thesis. Although Vasubandhu’s use of vijñapti-mātra is certainly an important feature of the VV, the tendency among scholars to focus solely on this phrase is—at least in part—a consequence of historical influences upon the study of Vasubandhu, as was discussed Chapter One. Such a tendency provides us with a somewhat distorted picture of the text itself. Aside from Vasubandhu’s discussions of vijñapti-mātra, the text provides us with a significant insight into Vasubandhu’s attitude towards sense-perception and sense-objects. In addition, as will become apparent throughout this thesis, the Viṃś and its VV provide one of the most pertinent examples of the significance of pedagogical process in Vasubandhu’s writings.

The TK is, again, a relatively short text, consisting of thirty verses. Unlike the Viṃś, this text is not accompanied by an auto-commentary. There are a number of features of this text which locate it quite clearly within the Yogācāra tradition. Most crucially, it refers to the notion of vijñapti-mātra, which—as we have just seen—is also found in the Viṃś and VV. Indeed, it is in the TK that we see most clearly the way in which Vasubandhu employs vijñapti-mātra as part of a pedagogical process. An additional feature of the TK which locates it within the Yogacāra tradition is its references to the ‘three aspects’ theory. As we are about to see, this theory is developed more fully in the TSN.
The TSN is a text consisting of thirty-eight verses, again without an auto-commentary, and is devoted primarily to a discussion of the ‘three aspects’.\textsuperscript{108} Briefly stated, this theory holds that experience can be characterised in terms of: the constructed aspect (parikapitasvabhāva), the dependent aspect (paratantrasvabhāva) and the perfected aspect (parinispannasvabhāva). The discussion of the ‘three aspects’ theory in the TSN places the text firmly within the Yogācāra tradition. Embedded within the TSN’s discussion of the three aspects are some valuable insights into Vasubandhu’s attitude towards the notion of ‘self’, which is another reason why the text is so important in terms of the present discussion. In addition to this, the TSN exhibits quite clearly the idea of pedagogical process which is so fundamental to our thesis. The text also provides some particularly pertinent examples of the ways in which Vasubandhu employs examples as part of this pedagogical process.

The fourth and final text belonging to Vasubandhu upon which our study will focus is the MVBh, a commentary on the Madhyāntavibhāga attributed to the fourth century Yogācāra thinker Maitreya. The MVBh discusses a number of Yogācāra theories, including the aforementioned ‘three aspects’ theory. Yet it differs in some respects from the three works discussed above, in that its discussions take place in a framework that is based quite clearly upon meditational practice. As Stefan Anacker has observed, the MVBh follows a meditational ‘program’ which had been previously outlined in Maitreya’s Abhisamayālaṅkara.\textsuperscript{109} Indeed, Anacker argues that Chapter Four of the text ‘is in fact unintelligible, existentially at least, unless the practices described there have been engaged in.’\textsuperscript{110}

This need not imply, however, that any attempt to comprehend the text in an academic context is futile. On the contrary, this emphasis upon meditation is – in itself – of significance to our study, for it appears to provide a structure for Vasubandhu’s pedagogical attitude towards the issues of self, perception and objects. In addition, the alternative style of the MVBh is indicative of Vasubandhu’s

\textsuperscript{108} The Yogācāra theory of the ‘three aspects’ originated in the Saṃdhinirmocana sūtra. See Williams, Mahāyāna Buddhism, p. 83.


reluctance to conform to one particular genre of text. As we shall see in Chapter Three, this is in itself integral to Vasubandhu’s pedagogical approach.

By now we ought to have a clearer picture of the kinds of works which Vasubandhu was writing. The questions of whether or not there were two Vasubandhus – and of which works belonged to each – is still a matter of debate in contemporary scholarship. However, these unanswered questions do not present a grave threat to our study. As we have discussed, there are at least four Yogācāra works – extant in Sanskrit – which are attributed to an author or authors named Vasubandhu. These works will no doubt have contributed to the model of the Yogācāra tradition with which Kumārila and Śaṅkara were familiar. For this reason, these four works – the Viṣṇu and its VV, the TK, the TSN and the MVBl – are invaluable in terms of the present study. We shall now turn to an exploration of Kumārila’s works.

Kumārila

Although we know only of a small number of works attributed to Kumārila, these works were nonetheless of great significance, in that they played a fundamental role in bringing the Pūrva Mīmāṃsā tradition – to which Kumārila belonged – into the broader Sanskritic philosophical arena. We know of three main works attributed to Kumārila: the Ślokavārttika or ‘Commentary on the Verses’ (hereafter ŠV) the Tantravārttika or ‘Commentary on the Tantra’ (hereafter TV) and the Tupttika or ‘Full Commentary’ (hereafter TT). Together these works make up Kumārila’s Mīmāṃsā Vārttika, a commentary on the Śabara Bhāṣya, which is in turn a commentary on the Mīmāṃsā sūtras (hereafter MS) attributed to Jaimini. Thus prior to exploring the work of Kumārila himself, it will be helpful to give a brief explanation of the work of his Mīmāṃsaka predecessors - Jaimini and Śabara.

The MS dates back to approximately 200 CE. They comprise the earliest substantial text of the Pūrva Mīmāṃsā school, although this text is thought to be the result of a process of redaction which
started long before this. The MS present themselves as an enquiry into dharma. The precise meaning of dharma in the sūtras is far from clear, and to investigate this issue here would only divert us from the task at hand. At present, therefore, it will suffice to cite the following passage from a work by Damodar Vishnu Garge, which provides an indication of the role of dharma in the sūtras without constricting itself to a specific definition of the term:

The aim of the Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā, says Jaimini, is the correct knowledge of ‘Dharma.’ It is laid down that ‘Dharma’ is that which is described in all statements which refer to any kind of sacrificial activity whether such statements are met with in the Vedas or in popular parlance. As the Veda is the only source of and authority for our knowledge of the details of all sacrificial procedure comprised under Dharma, determination of this procedure is not possible without a correct understanding of the authorities viz. the Vedic texts. When, therefore, the Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā Śāstra undertakes the settlement of all the sacrificial problems raised by the Vedic passages of sacrificial import in the interest of a knowledge of Dharma, the clarification of sacrificial ritual and hermeneutics both naturally fall into its purview. In view of this explanation, we can see that the investigation into dharma – which lies at the heart of the MS – is an investigation into the language of sacrificial injunction, as laid down in the Vedic texts. As we shall see subsequently, this investigation into dharma took on its own unique character in the work of Kumārila.

The MS consists of around 2,700 sūtras, which are divided into twelve parts or Adhyāyas. Yet the clear structure of the text ought not to mislead us into thinking that its contents are easily comprehensible. Dan Arnold provides an indication of the obscurity of the text’s content when he asserts that ‘the passages in Jaimini are so pithy as to be largely unintelligible without a

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111 See Francis X. Clooney, Thinking Ritually: Rediscovering the Pūrva Mīmāṃsā of Jaimini (Vienna: Institut für Indologie der Universität Wien), p. 51. Indeed, in view of the Mīmāṃsaka emphasis on the notion of apauruṣeyatva or “authorlessness”, Clooney contends that ‘it would be inappropriate for us to see the system as a highly personal creation’, p. 51.

112 Damodar Vishnu Garge, Citations in Śabara Bhāṣya (Poona : Deccan College Post-graduate and Research Institute, 1952), p. 5.
commentary.\textsuperscript{113} Even the task of determining the subject of each Adhyāya is far from straightforward. As Francis X. Clooney has observed,

Our approach to the text is obstructed by its complexity, its shifts in modes of discourse, its dialectic nature. Jaimini, after treating wider issues in the First Adhyāya (and II.1), seems to enter upon a series of circles and repetitions...When he states explicitly a topic at hand...we are still not sure what to make of the notice...’\textsuperscript{114}

In terms of the present discussion, however, we need not be overly concerned about the details of the sūtras’ contents, especially since – as we shall see subsequently – Kumārila’s Mīmāṃsā Vārttika can to some extent be seen as an independent treatise.

As we said earlier, Kumārila’s Mīmāṃsā Vārttika is a commentary on Śabara’s commentary on the MS. Although the dating of Śabara has been a point of contention among scholars, it is now widely thought that Śabara was writing in either the third or fourth century CE. The Bhāṣya of Śabara is the earliest existing commentary on the MS, although, as Jhā has observed, frequent references to other commentators in the Bhāṣya indicate that it was not the first commentary composed on the MS.\textsuperscript{115} In general the Śabara Bhāṣya can be said to follow the same structure of the MS, being divided in the same way into 12 Adhyāyas. The depth and complexity of the Śabara Bhāṣya means that we should be hesitant about attempting to give an overview of its contents here. For now, then, we shall simply say that one of Śabara’s main concerns is to demonstrate that a full understanding of dharma can only be achieved through codanā – the force behind Vedic injunction. We shall say more about this concept of codanā at a later point in the thesis.

As was noted previously, Kumārila’s commentary on the Śabara Bhāṣya consists of three works – the ŚV, the TV and the TT. The ŚV is a substantial work composed in verse form and deals with the first Pāda of the first Adhyāya of the Śabara Bhāṣya. This first Pāda is called the Tarka Pāda, or

\textsuperscript{113} Dan Arnold, Buddhists, Brahmans and Belief (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), p. 63.

\textsuperscript{114} Clooney, Thinking Ritually, p. 55.

\textsuperscript{115} See Jhā, Gangānātha (tr.), Ślokavārttika, Translated from the original Sanskrit with extracts from the commentaries of Sucarita Miśra (the Kāśikā and Pārtha Sārathi Miśra (the Nyāyaratnākara), Biblio Indica: Collection of Oriental Works (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1907), Introduction.
'section on reasoning.' The ŚV follows these sūtras, but is also subdivided into its own chapters which are titled according to particular topics of discussion. The TV – largely in prose but with some verses - deals with the last three Pādas of the first Adhyāya and the whole of the second and third Adhyāyas. The TT is a much shorter work, and consists of a gloss on selected sūtras from the remaining Adhyāyas, 4-12. In the present study, we shall focus only on the ŚV, and we will explore our reasons for this presently.

Before this, however, we ought to note that the relationship between Kumārila’s works and those of Jaimini and Śabara is perhaps not as clear-cut as the description above suggests. In the first instance, the Śabara Bhāṣya itself diverges – at least to an extent – from the sūtras of Jaimini. As Clooney has observed, Śabara’s commentary is ‘a generally faithful interpretation’ but ‘even in its most faithful moments is nevertheless something new, a reformulation of Jaimini’s position on various smaller and larger issues.’ Secondly, the fact that Kumārila’s ŚV is a commentary on the Śabara Bhāṣya does not mean that is in agreement with all of Śabara’s arguments. As Garge has pointed out, the ŚV ‘is as much a critical commentary on the said portion of the Bhāṣya as an original work of the Pūrva Mīmāṃsā system.’ Arnold has suggested that Kumārila’s divergences from the Śabara Bhāṣya can be accounted for on the basis of the category of commentary to which the ŚV belongs. He writes, ‘As we should expect of a commentary that is styled vārttika, there is here greater scope for criticism of the foundational text than is typical of other commentarial genres (bhāṣya, vṛtti, ṭīkā, etc.).’ Thus although the Tarka Pāda of the Śabara Bhāṣya provides a basic framework for Kumārila’s ŚV, the ŚV remains – to some extent – an independent treatise.

So what are our reasons for focusing upon the ŚV in this discussion, rather than the TV or TT? One of the main reasons is that much of the ŚV is written in the form of dialogue between the

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116 See Jhā, (tr.), Ślokavārttika, p. iii.
117 Clooney, Thinking Ritually, p. 222.
118 Damodar Vishnu Garge, Citations in Śabara Bhāṣya (Poona : Deccan College Post-graduate and Research Institute, 1952), p. 9.
119 Arnold, Buddhists, Brahmins and Belief, p. 66. Earlier in his text, Arnold notes that the meaning of a vārttika in grammatical discourse is a rule clarifying ‘the meaning of what was said, what was left unsaid, and or what was inadequately said’ – utkānkataduruktārthacintākāri tu vārttikam. See note 22 to introduction, notes, p. 221.
Mīmāṃsaka and his rivals. The fact that the text is based upon the Tarka Pāda of the Šabara Bhāṣya is no doubt a contributory factor in terms of the ŚV’s dialectical character. Of particular relevance to the present discussion is the fact that a substantial amount of the ŚV criticises theories which Kumārila deems to belong to the Yogācāra school. The entirety of the Nirālambanavāda chapter – as well as parts of the Śūnyavāda chapter – is directed towards this aim.¹²⁰ The issue of Kumārila’s opponents in the chapter is a complex one, and we shall explore this in some detail in Chapter Six.

As will become evident over the course of the coming chapters, the primary aim of the ŚV is to provide an explanation of Vedic language. However, the intellectual climate in which Kumārila was writing forced him to address some of the most important philosophical issues of the time, which included, of course, those of self, perception and objects. Indeed, Kumārila put forward numerous self-standing arguments relating to these issues. It was essential that these arguments were philosophically viable, since Kumārila needed to engage with his Buddhist opponents, who did not share his conviction in the ultimate authority of the Vedic texts. These rigorous arguments provide us with a clear insight into Kumārila’s attitude towards the issues of self, perception and objects.

As we shall see throughout the coming chapters, Kumārila’s arguments concerning the issues of self, perception and objects are interwoven with constant reiterations about the authority of the Vedas. In fact, as will become apparent, Kumārila uses the issues of self, perception and objects to reinforce the authority of Vedic language. As we shall see in the next chapter, this is part of the

¹²⁰ Nirālambana literally means ‘without a basis.’ Thus the term Nirālambanavāda was used by Kumārila to refer to the doctrine of momentariness held by the Yogācāra school. We can conjecture that the title has a double meaning. In the first place it alludes to the Yogācāra doctrine of momentariness, which holds that there is no permanent substratum other than a series of moments. Yet it is likely – given Kumārila’s disparaging critique of the school – that in using the term he is insinuating that the Yogācāra school is itself ‘without a basis’, that is, it is, according to Kumārila, doctrinally unsound.

Śūnya literally means ‘empty’, and thus the name Śūnyavāda refers to the Madhyamaka Buddhist school, which propounded the doctrine of ‘emptiness.’ Again, Kumārila’s use of the term Śūnyavāda may also be intended to have derogatory connotations, implying that that the Madhyamaka school itself is ‘empty’ of any valid arguments. This conjecture may be further supported by the fact that Śaṅkara also uses the term Śūnyavāda when criticising the Madhyamaka Buddhists.
pedagogical process underpinning the ŚV, and is thus a further reason as to why we have chosen to look specifically at this text.

We have thus offered a brief explanation of Kumārila’s works, locating these works within the broader context of the Mīmāṃsā tradition. We have identified the ŚV as being particularly relevant to our study. In support of this we have noted the text’s dialogical character as well as its insights into Kumārila’s views of self, perception and objects. In addition we have mentioned the way in which these views are woven into Kumārila’s overall aim – which is to elicit in the reader a comprehensive understanding of Vedic language. Kumārila’s pedagogical approach to achieving this aim will be demonstrated throughout the coming chapters.

Śaṅkara

Śaṅkara was perhaps the most prolific writer of our three thinkers, and is traditionally thought to have composed more than four hundred works which still exist today.\(^{121}\) In the early twentieth century, S. K. Belvackar usefully separated these works into three main categories, according to their respective genres.\(^{122}\) The first category consists of Śaṅkara’s commentaries; in addition to his numerous commentaries on the Upaniṣads, Śaṅkara also composed a commentary on the Brahma Sūtras as well as on the Bhagavad Gītā. The second category includes hymns, poems and incantations composed in verse form. The third category consists of independent treatises, among which is Śaṅkara’s Upadeśasāstras or ‘Thousand Teachings’, a text which we shall explore in some detail shortly.\(^{123}\)

It ought to be noted at the outset that in modern scholarship there has been a great deal of uncertainty about which of the works traditionally attributed to Śaṅkara should actually be considered authentic. Indeed, Natalia Isayeva describes this as ‘one of the most controversial

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\(^{123}\) Isayeva, *Shankara and Indian Philosophy* p. 92.
problems of present-day Śaṅkara studies'.\textsuperscript{124} This problem was first addressed in detail by the German scholar Paul Hacker, who attributed historians’ doubts about authorship to the diversity of content among the works traditionally attributed to Śaṅkara.\textsuperscript{125} In view of this, Hacker proposed a threefold method through which to investigate the authenticity of texts attributed to Śaṅkara. Since then, a great deal of progress has been made in establishing which texts are likely to be authentic to Śaṅkara. This is especially the case regarding Belvākar’s first and third categories of text – the commentaries and the independent treatises, although the question of which of the second group of texts are authentic to Śaṅkara still remains somewhat problematic.\textsuperscript{126}

The uncertainty surrounding the authenticity of Śaṅkara’s works is not, however, particularly disadvantageous in the context of the present thesis, since the works upon which we shall focus are generally considered authentic to Śaṅkara. In this study, we shall focus primarily upon Śaṅkara’s Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad Bhāṣya (hereafter Bṛ Up Bh), Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya (hereafter BS Bh) and Upadeśasāhasrī (hereafter Upad).\textsuperscript{127} In Chapter Six, we shall also refer to the Gauḍapādiya Kārikā Bhāṣya (hereafter GKBh), which incorporates Śaṅkara’s Māṇḍukhyā Upaniṣad Bhāṣya.\textsuperscript{128}

The Bṛ Up Bh is Śaṅkara’s commentary on the Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad (hereafter Bṛ Up). The Bṛ Up itself belongs to the earlier group Upaniṣads, which were composed approximately between 800 and 400 BCE.\textsuperscript{129} It comprises three main sections, or kāṇḍas, each of which is divided into two books. In addition to its discussions of Vedic ritual, the Bṛ Up contains a substantial amount of material on the issue of self, much of which takes the form of dialogues between a teacher and pupil. This material, found largely in books Two, Three and Four of the Bṛ Up, is of particular

\textsuperscript{124} Isayeva, Shankara and Indian Philosophy, p. 92.
\textsuperscript{125} Paul Hacker, ‘Śaṅkarācārya and Śaṅkarabhaṅgavatpāda: Preliminary Remarks Concerning the Authorship Problem’, New Indian Antiquity, 9.4-6 (1947), 1-12.
\textsuperscript{126} See Isayeva, Shankara and Indian Philosophy, p. 95.
\textsuperscript{127} We shall use Upad G to refer to the Prose section of this text (Upadeśasāhasrī Gadyabandha) and Upad P to refer to the Metric section (Upadeśasāhasrī Padyabandha).
\textsuperscript{128} The GKBh is Śaṅkara’s commentary on Gauḍapādiya’s Kārikās. Although the authorship of the GKBh has been disputed, Jacqueline Suthren Hirst has argued convincingly that it is authentic to Śaṅkara. See Jacqueline Śaṅkara’s Advaita Vedānta: A way of teaching (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2005), pp. 21-23.
\textsuperscript{129} Other Upaniṣads in this group include the Chāndogya, Aitareya and Taıttrīya Upaniṣads.
interest to Śaṅkara, and is thus the focus of the most detailed discussions in his commentary. As Jacqueline Suthren Hirst has argued, it is these books that ‘give Śaṅkara ample material for developing his textually based Advaitin way of teaching.’\footnote{Jacqueline Suthren Hirst, Śaṅkara’s Advaita Vedānta: A way of teaching (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2005), p. 20.} It is the pedagogical nature of the Brūp material – and indeed Śaṅkara’s pedagogical method of dealing with this material – that makes the Brūp Bh particularly relevant in terms of the dialogical approach which we adopt in this study.

On one level, the dialogical character of the Brūp Bh manifests itself in its various discussions between teacher and pupil. In addition, however, much of Śaṅkara’s Brūp Bh is written in the form of dialogue between the Advaitin and particular opponents of the Advaitin school. Of course, Śaṅkara – as the author of the text - is responsible for constructing not only his position, but that of his opponent. It is important to bear this in mind, since - as we shall see later in the thesis - it is frequently the case that Śaṅkara reframes the opponent’s position in terms of his own Advaitin conceptual scheme. A fairly substantial part of the Brūp Bh takes the form of a dialogue between the Advaitin and the Yogācāra Buddhist. Moreover, the Yogācāra position expounded by Śaṅkara bears a striking resemblance to that held by Vasubandhu. This – together with the fact that much of this dialogue focuses upon the issues of self, perception and objects – renders the Brūp Bh particularly pertinent in terms of our study.

The second of Śaṅkara’s texts upon which this discussion will focus is the BSBh, Śaṅkara’s commentary on Bādarāyana’s Brahma Śūtras (hereafter BS). The final version of the Brahma Śūtras, also known as the Vedānta Śūtras, dates back to approximately 400-500 CE.\footnote{See Richard King, Indian Philosophy (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), p. 54. King notes that although the text is usually attributed to Badārayāṇa, it is made up of material which was collected over a period of roughly 700 years.} The text itself attempts to provide a systematic summary of material found in the Upaniṣads. It is divided into four Adhyāyas. The first is an attempt to reconcile the differences between various Upaniṣads. The second discusses the views of those schools perceived to be opposed to Vedānta, and focuses in particular on the Sāṅkhya school. The third Adhyāya deals with meditations, and the fourth
addresses the issue of the identity of self and Brahman. Śaṅkara’s BS Bh mirrors the structure of the BS. Its detailed explanations, however, provide a point of contrast with the terse sūtras of the BS itself.

The BS Bh is widely regarded by contemporary scholars as one of Śaṅkara’s most important works. This is due partly to its influence upon other commentators on the BS. As Swami Gambhirananda has written in the foreword to his own translation of the BS Bh, all subsequent commentators ‘have been influenced, knowingly or unknowingly, by Śaṅkara’s commentary which has served as the model.’

It is perhaps – at least in part – this idea of Śaṅkara’s BS Bh as ‘the model’ which has led Sengaku Mayeda to view the work as a ‘masterpiece’ and ‘the fundamental text of the Vedānta school.’

Aside from its value within the Advaita school, there are further reasons as to why the BS Bh is so fundamental to our study. The first is that, similarly to the Br Up Bh, the BS Bh contains a substantial amount of dialogue between Advaita and rival schools. Like the Br Up Bh, it contains an entire passage which is dedicated to the pursuit of refuting Śaṅkara’s Yogācāra rivals. Again, the position of the Yogācārin towards whom Śaṅkara’s criticisms are directed often bears close similarity Vasubandhu’s position. The BS Bh is also of particular value to us because it affords a significant insight into Śaṅkara’s view of objects.

The third text of Śaṅkara’s upon which this discussion will focus is the Upadeśasāhasrī or ‘Thousand Teachings’. This text differs from the two aforementioned texts, since it is the only non-commentarial work attributed to Śaṅkara whose authenticity is widely accepted. Although this factor alone grants the Upad a rightful place in the present study, there are other reasons for its inclusion which we shall come to shortly. The Upad consists of two sections, one in prose and one

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132 See Suthren Hirst, Śaṅkara’s Advaita Vedānta, pp. 19-20.
135 See Mayeda, (tr.), A Thousand Teachings, p. 6.
in metric form. The prose section, which adopts the form of a dialogue between an Advaitin teacher and pupil, consists of three chapters. The first chapter discusses the role of the teacher-pupil relationship on the path to liberation. The second chapter addresses the Advaitin theory of the changelessness of the Self. The third chapter of the prose section discusses the function of repetition on the path to liberation.

The metric section of the Upad consists of nineteen chapters, which treat issues ranging from the nature of the ‘witness’ (sākṣin) to dream and memory. It is however, chapter eighteen – which has the well-known Upaniṣadic phrase tat tvam asi (‘that you are’) as its title – that is arguably the most important chapter. Indeed, the succession of chapters prior to this one can be viewed as reflecting the gradual process by which the Advaitin pupil attains liberation.

The fact that the Upad clearly demonstrates a kind of pedagogical process is one of the main reasons that we have chosen to include this text in the present study. Although such a process is also evident in the Br Up Bh and BSBh, it is arguably felt most strongly in the Upad. This is largely because Śaṅkara not only constructs the text as a kind of pedagogical process, but also comments explicitly upon the importance of the teacher-pupil relationship. He clearly outlines the prerequisites for the pupil wishing to embark upon the path to liberation, as well as the necessary qualities of the teacher who will guide him. Thus we find in the text a kind of meta-theory of pedagogy, which renders the text particularly useful in terms of the present discussion.

In addition to its overtly pedagogical character, the Upad exhibits a number of other factors in view of which it can be deemed especially relevant to our study. In addition to the dialogue between teacher and pupil, the Upad also contains dialogue with other non-Advaitin traditions. The chapter entitled Thou Art That incorporates objections from a number of different opponents, including, once again, the Yogācāra Buddhists. The text thus proves fitting in terms of the dialogical approach adopted in this study. Furthermore, the discussions on self – which actually underpin the
majority of the chapters in both the prose and metric sections – render the Upad invaluable as a source for understanding Śaṃkara’s attitude towards the issues of self, perception and objects.

In the present chapter, then, we have explored the texts attributed to Vasubandhu, Kumārila and Śaṃkara respectively, and have identified those particular texts upon which this study will focus. The foregoing discussion has brought out three particular features of these texts which render them especially relevant to the present discussion.

Firstly, each of the texts discussed above are to some extent dialogical. That is, they contain a substantial amount of dialogue between their authors and rival traditions. In the case of Śaṃkara – and perhaps more subtly in Vasubandhu and Kumārila – the texts also consist of dialogue between teacher and pupil. Thus the texts upon which we have chosen to focus are important in terms of the dialogical approach adopted in this thesis. Secondly, in terms of their content, these texts provide a wealth of material relating to the issues of self, perception and objects, issues which are – of course – the focus of this study. Thirdly, underpinning each of the texts discussed above is a kind of pedagogical process, although this process takes on different guises according to the particular thinker we are looking at. These texts thus bear out the idea of philosophy as pedagogy which underpins the present study. In the next chapter, we shall explore this notion of pedagogy in some detail, outlining the way in which it manifests itself in the works of Vasubandhu. In addition, we shall look briefly at some ways in which the respective works of Kumārila and Śaṃkara might be deemed pedagogical. It is to this chapter that we now turn.
Chapter Three
Pedagogy

As we stated in our introductory chapter, the aim of this thesis is to demonstrate the pedagogical character of Vasubandhu’s discussions concerning the issues of self, perception and objects. As we saw previously, existing scholarship on Vasubandhu does not address – at least not explicitly – the significance of pedagogy in his writings. Indeed, in numerous studies – particularly those which uphold the idea that Vasubandhu is an ‘ideal’ – the possibility that Vasubandhu’s works comprise a teaching process is entirely overlooked. Although scholars such as Stefan Anacker, Paul Williams and Bruce Cameron Hall allude to the significance of teaching for Vasubandhu, they do not go so far as to articulate the idea that Vasubandhu’s writings are fundamentally pedagogical in character.136

Yet as we have already suggested, recognising the pedagogical process which underpins Vasubandhu’s works is essential for understanding the ways in which he deals with the issues of self, perception and objects. In view of this, it is important that we are clear about precisely what we mean by pedagogy in this context, and that we look at the kind of pedagogical techniques which Vasubandhu employs in his discussions of self, perception and objects. As we stated in our introductory chapter, we are understanding pedagogy in this study as a process of learning in which a teacher guides a pupil towards a particular objective. The purpose of the present chapter is to see how this definition of pedagogy applies to Vasubandhu, and to identify the particular pedagogical techniques which Vasubandhu employs in his writings.

As we will see in what follows, each of the pedagogical techniques which Vasubandhu employs are directed towards the deconstruction of conceptuality, the clinging to which, Vasubandhu contends,

impedes the attainment of liberation. As we shall see throughout the thesis, Kumārila and Śaṅkara – whether intentionally or unintentionally – tend to overlook this endeavour when they engage with Vasubandhu’s ideas. Indeed, the ways in which they engage, respectively, with Vasubandhu’s position on self, perception and objects can arguably be seen as a re-construction of conceptuality. That is to say, both Kumārila and Śaṅkara frequently reinterpret Vasubandhu’s position by reifying the very concepts which Vasubandhu seeks to undermine.

This leads us to another issue, which concerns the extent to which Kumārila and Śaṅkara’s works might be viewed as pedagogical. Given the fact that the dialogical approach adopted in our study has led us to explore the ways in which Kumārila and Śaṅkara engaged with Vasubandhu’s ideas, it seems only fitting that we extend the question of the significance of pedagogy to these two thinkers. A fairly substantial amount of work has already been carried out on the importance of pedagogy in the writings of Śaṅkara. Most notable is Jacqueline Suthren Hirst’s study, Śaṅkara’s Advaita Vedānta: A way of teaching. Very little work, it seems, has been done on the role of pedagogy in Kumārila, although – as we shall see subsequently – there are a number of ways in which teaching can be seen to form an important element of Kumārila’s works. As we have already noted, existing scholarship on Vasubandhu does not explicitly address the importance of pedagogy in his writings. For this reason – and given that Vasubandhu is the main focus of our study - the majority of this chapter will be devoted to an exploration of the pedagogical techniques employed in his works. We shall also, however, look briefly at the role of pedagogy in Śaṅkara and Kumārila.

Before we do this, there is one particular issue which needs to be clarified, and this relates to the question of whether our notion of pedagogy is simply an alternative way of articulating what was simply the conventional style of debate within the intellectual milieu to which Vasubandhu, Kumārila and Śaṅkara can be said to have belonged. The philosophical debates which took place within this intellectual milieu were largely grounded in pramāṇa-vāda, the style of debate which was originally laid out by the Nyāya school. Nyāya thinkers held that knowledge arrived at must be

shown to have resulted from a fivefold *sthāpanā* (‘demonstration’), which consisted of i) *pratijñā* (statement of the thesis), ii) *hetu* (statement of the reason), iii) *udāharaṇa* (exemplification to illustrate the relationship between the *praujñā* and *hetu*, iv) *upanaya* (application of the rule to the present case) and v) *nigamana* (conclusion).\textsuperscript{138} The *Nyāya* school itself employed this process to establish its own realist ontology; as we saw in Chapter One, Matilal used the phrase ‘*Nyāya* realism’ to denote the position of this school.\textsuperscript{139} Although this ‘realist’ standpoint was by no means accepted by all philosophical schools of the classical era, the means by which this ‘realism’ was established – that is the aforementioned fivefold process of reasoning – generally came to be the customary means by which a philosophical position was demonstrated in classical Indian philosophy.

Indeed, as Matilal has suggested, the *Nyāya* method can be seen as ‘a general philosophic method acceptable also to other schools.’\textsuperscript{140} He goes on to argue, ‘There was...a tacit agreement among the philosophers of ancient and classical India regarding the efficacy of the *Nyāya* method.’\textsuperscript{141} There appears to be no doubt, then, that the *Nyāya* process of reasoning was instrumental in shaping the nature of philosophical enquiry in classical India. As Richard King has observed,

The *pramāṇa-vāda* tradition initiated by the *Nyāya* school and subsequently adopted by other Hindu and Buddhist schools of thought provided a public framework within which different philosophical positions could interact, ‘fine-tune’ their own theoretical perspectives and develop an in-depth understanding of the philosophies of other schools. The development of a wide-ranging and public framework for inter-scholastic debate not only provided an impetus for the refinement of the philosophical positions and arguments of the various schools (*darśana*) and traditions (*sampradāya*), it also left an unmistakably discursive imprint upon Indian philosophical writing.\textsuperscript{142}


\textsuperscript{140} Matilal, *Perception*, p. 69.

\textsuperscript{141} Matilal, *Perception*, p. 69.

\textsuperscript{142} King, *Indian Philosophy*, p. 136.
Clearly, then, the style of philosophical texts produced in Classical India was heavily influenced by the conventions of *pramāṇa-vāda*. Moreover, the general acceptance of these conventions shaped the way in which philosophical texts were viewed in this era. That is to say, philosophical texts were subject to constant reinterpretation by both opponents of – and subsequent adherents to – the tradition within which they were composed.

Now the *Nyāya* method was, of course, intended as a process through which one was to demonstrate ‘truth’ – ‘reason must have a purpose’, asserts Ganeri in the course of his explanation of the *Nyāya* method.\(^{143}\) So what does it mean to suggest that classical Indian philosophical discussions were *pedagogical*, other than to say that they were shaped by conventional practices? After all, as we stated in our introduction, we are understanding pedagogy in this study as a process through which liberation is attained; or put in another way, through which ‘truth’ is realised.

The answer lies in the respective objectives of *Nyāya* process of reasoning and what we are terming *pedagogical* process. Crucially, the *Nyayā* process of reasoning is about *demonstrating* Truth; as we saw in the quotation by King cited previously, it was very much a ‘public framework for interscholastic debate’. The reason for conforming to the conventions of such a framework thus had to with recognition; recognition, that is, from other schools of thought which were also operating within that framework. Although it could certainly be said that such an endeavour was – to an extent – a means of guiding a pupil away from the allure of rival traditions, the impetus was essentially to defend one’s position against rival views, or to respond to what Dan Arnold has termed ‘the pressure of dialectical scrutiny’.\(^{144}\) The aim of participating in the formalities of this shared intellectual world was to *demonstrate* that the ‘truth’ of one’s own tradition was being arrived at through valid means, and indeed to show that it was ultimately the only ‘truth’ which could be arrived at.

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Pedagogy, on the other hand - as a process underpinning India philosophical texts - is about realising Truth; that is to say, it is the means by which a pupil of a particular philosophical tradition attains liberation. Whereas the conventions of pramāṇa-vāda are adhered to in order to engage with external forces, the pedagogical process engages those students who are internal to the tradition; that is, students who are already convinced of the tradition’s worth. It is thus a means by which the practical goal of liberation is attained. The precise character of this process varies from school to school, and although the conventions of Nyāya dialectics frequently influence particular pedagogical techniques, they by no means dictate the overall character of the pedagogical process. Indeed, as we shall see later in this chapter, a significant feature of Vasubandhu’s pedagogical approach is to defy convention altogether.

It might be argued, of course, that pramāṇa-vāda also has a pedagogical function, in that its conventions are frequently employed in dialogue between a teacher and pupil of the same tradition. As Esther Solomon has observed in her detailed study of classical Indian dialectics:

...vāda is that only form of controversy (kathā) which one holds with the teacher and other such friendly persons; that is to say, in which an honest inquirer after truth enters into a controversy with his teacher and other friends, with a view to gaining knowledge of what he does not know, remove his doubts and obtain the corroboration of what he already knows; so for the sake of this seeker after truth, it is necessary for the other party to set forth arguments so long as the enquirer does not obtain the true knowledge he is seeking, as in vāda he is not an opponent to be silenced, but an honest enquirer after truth who is to be enlightened.145

Clearly, then, dialectics form an important part of path of any inquirer’s search for Truth in Indian philosophical traditions. This does not, however, mean that highlighting the importance of pramāṇa-vāda is simply an alternative way of expressing the significance of pedagogy in these traditions. Indeed, the importance of the pramāṇa-vāda arguably serves to support our conviction

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that Indian philosophical texts can be viewed as pedagogical. The notion of pedagogy – as we are understanding it – signifies much more than adherence to the conventions of *pramāṇa-vāda*. As we shall see in what follows, the pedagogical techniques employed by Vasubandhu – and in addition by Śaṅkara and Kumārila – incorporate elements which are not laid out in the conventions of *pramāṇa-vāda*.

This will become clear when we come to explore Vasubandu’s pedagogical techniques in some detail subsequently. Before this, however, we will look briefly at the pedagogical techniques which can be found in the writings of Śaṅkara and Kumārila respectively. As we have already observed, the role of pedagogy in Śaṅkara is widely recognised. Sutren Hirst’s study, in particular, has been instrumental in calling attention to Śaṅkara’s role as teacher, and the way in which this manifests itself in his writings. For this reason, it will not be necessary to explore the pedagogical character of Śaṅkara’s works in too much detail. The present section, then, will serve as a brief reminder about existing scholarship on the pedagogical techniques employed by Śaṅkara.

Śaṅkara

Śaṅkara understands the unliberated condition as being characterised by suffering. We suffer, according to Śaṅkara, because due to *avidyā* (‘misconception’), we fail to realise that all that exists is the one universal self. Embroiled in the multiplicity of worldly existence (*saṃsāra*), we see as real what is merely superimposition (*adhyāsa*). Śaṅkara does not deny that we *experience* worldly existence; what he denies is that this experience is true in any ultimate sense. Hence Śaṅkara makes the distinction between *vyabhārīka-satya* (‘conventional truth’) and *Pāramārthika-satya* (‘ultimate truth’). Worldly existence – that is, the world of individual selves, perceptions and objects – belongs to the realm of *vyāvahārīka-satya*. The existence of the one self – also known as *brahman* – is *pāramārthika-satya*. It is important to recognise this distinction, since it plays an important role in structuring Śaṅkara’s teaching methods.
The importance of teaching for Śaṅkara is evident in the fact that many of his theories are played out through the interchanging of ideas between a teacher and pupil. This is most explicitly the case in the Upād, the entire prose section of which consists of a dialogue between an Advaitin teacher and his pupil. Furthermore, in many of his works, Śaṅkara speaks quite candidly about the necessity of the teacher-pupil relationship on the path to liberation. In Upād G 1.3, for example, he cites a number of quotations from the Upaniṣads which stress the importance of the teacher: ‘The person possessing a teacher, knows’¹⁴⁶; ‘For knowledge is known by a teacher alone’¹⁴⁷; ‘The teacher is the one who causes you to cross’¹⁴⁸. Śaṅkara is equally as keen to stress the importance of the role of the pupil in the pedagogical process. Śaṅkara is quite candid in his assertions that the efforts of the pupil are of vital importance on the path to liberation. In BS Bh. 1.1.1., Śaṅkara states that the Advaitin pupil must satisfy the following requirements in order that he might embark on the path to liberation:

…discrimination between things eternal and non-eternal, lack of passion for enjoyment of results here and in the future, accomplishment of practices such as calm, restraint, etc., and desire for the state of liberation.¹⁴⁹

This last quality, ‘desire for the state of liberation’ (muṇukṣutvaṁ) is particularly significant, since it demonstrates that for Śaṅkara, it is not enough to have a teacher who is willing to teach; the pupil must also be willing to learn.

So which particular pedagogical techniques does Śaṅkara employ? Suthren Hirst identifies five: Questioning, Renunciation, Examples, Story and Interiorization.¹⁵⁰ Questioning, she argues, is a means by which Śaṅkara can ‘enable the pupil to engage with the Advaitin teaching and embrace it personally.’¹⁵¹ According to Suthren Hirst, the pedagogical function of questioning in Śaṅkara is fourfold. Firstly, it enables the teacher to determine what the pupil already comprehends. Secondly, it helps the pupil to communicate latent ideas. Thirdly, it serves as a means by which the pupil can

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¹⁴⁶ Ch Up 6.14.2: ācāryavān puruso veda
¹⁴⁷ Ch Up 4.9.3: ācāryāddhaiva vidyā viditā
¹⁴⁸ ācārayaḥ plāvityā (Quotation unlocated).
¹⁴⁹ BS Bh 1.1.1: nityāntāyavastu-vivekāḥ īhāmatrārthabhogavirāgāḥ śamamādādisādhanasampat muṇukṣutvaṁ ca
¹⁵⁰ Suthren Hirst, Śaṅkara’s Advaita Vedānta, ch. 4.
¹⁵¹ Suthren Hirst, Śaṅkara’s Advaita Vedānta, p. 70.
tackle his doubts. Finally, its function ‘is to increase the pupil’s self-awareness.’ Suthren Hirst argues that there are three different ways in which Śaṅkara employs questioning – by citing examples of questioning which occur within the Upaniṣads themselves, through commenting on these Upaniṣadic passages, and through the composition of non-commentarial passages in the Upad.153

As we stated previously, the second of Śaṅkara’s pedagogical techniques which Suthren Hirst identifies relates to renunciation (vairāgya) and more specifically the renunciation of one’s desire for the fruit of actions.154 Suthren Hirst argues that Śaṅkara encourages such renunciation through a ‘cumulative method’.155 That is, after the ‘initial turning away from the fruit of actions’, the pupil is encouraged to reflect upon the human body and worldly existence more generally, this process of reflection being guided by the appreciation that such existence is a consequence of avidyā (‘misconception’).156 The idea is that this process will eventually culminate in the pupil’s realisation of the oneness of the self.157

The third of Śaṅkara’s teaching techniques discussed by Suthren Hirst is the use of examples. She argues that the examples which Śaṅkara uses often have a ‘scriptural’ basis; that is, Śaṅkara draws these examples from the Upaniṣads themselves. There are, Suthren Hirst argues, three senses in which the Upaniṣads shape Śaṅkara’s use of examples:

First, the Upaniṣads identify the focus of theologically significant examples. Second, they give specific instances for the commentator to employ. Third, they lay down the method of using examples fruitfully. This last is perhaps the most crucial.158

As Suthren Hirst observes, among the examples which Śaṅkara employs are the spark and fire, and the clay pot, both of which not only have a ‘scriptural’ basis, but can be successfully used as

152 Suthren Hirst, Śaṅkara’s Advaita Vedānta, p. 73.
153 Suthren Hirst, Śaṅkara’s Advaita Vedānta, pp. 70-74.
154 Suthren Hirst, Śaṅkara’s Advaita Vedānta, p. 74.
155 Suthren Hirst, Śaṅkara’s Advaita Vedānta, pp. 74-76.
156 Suthren Hirst, Śaṅkara’s Advaita Vedānta, pp. 74-76.
157 Suthren Hirst, Śaṅkara’s Advaita Vedānta, p.76.
158 Suthren Hirst, Śaṅkara’s Advaita Vedānta, p.76.
**drṣṭānta** (‘examples’ in the context of formal argument as laid out in the aforementioned Nyāya process of reasoning).\textsuperscript{159}

The fourth of Śaṅkara’s pedagogical techniques identified by Suthren Hirst is his use of ‘story’. Śaṅkara’s use of ‘story’, she contends, relates closely to his use of examples, especially in terms of the role of scripture:

Both focus on realization of the one brahman within; instances are given in scripture that provide the base of, but do not limit, the commentator’s repertoire; scripture itself legitimizes the method by its own example and, importantly, by explaining its own use.\textsuperscript{160}

Suthren Hirst refers to three stories which illustrate these scriptural underpinnings: the story of the blindfolded man from Gandhāra, the story of the tenth man and the story of the prince and the fowler.\textsuperscript{161}

The final of Śaṅkara’s pedagogical techniques identified by Suthren Hirst is interiorization, a technique by which,

‘...Śaṅkara takes both cosmological and psychological explanations, unstructured as well as structured, and turns them into interiorizing techniques that progressively focus attention on the self and enable the pupil successively to discard misidentifications with what is not the self.’\textsuperscript{162}

Central to this process of interiorization, according to Suthren Hirst, is the way in which Śaṅkara uses – and encourages the pupil to use – ‘the structures of the world’ in order to realise the oneness of the self.\textsuperscript{163} That is to say, Śaṅkara makes use of worldly conventions in order to demonstrate that they are simply conventions, and that realisation of the true nature of things consists in an awareness that this is so.

\textsuperscript{159} Suthren Hirst, Śaṅkara’s Advaita Vedānta, pp. 76-80.

\textsuperscript{160} Suthren Hirst, Śaṅkara’s Advaita Vedānta, p.80.

\textsuperscript{161} See Suthren Hirst, Śaṅkara’s Advaita Vedānta, pp. 81-83.

\textsuperscript{162} Suthren Hirst, Śaṅkara’s Advaita Vedānta, p. 83.

\textsuperscript{163} Suthren Hirst, Śaṅkara’s Advaita Vedānta, p. 86.
We can see, then, how the aforementioned distinction between ‘conventional’ and ‘ultimate’ truth is significant in terms of Śaṅkara’s pedagogical endeavour. Śaṅkara is able to make use of features of worldly existence because they are true, conventionally speaking. Yet it is precisely because they are only conventionally true that he is able to gradually strip them away, and to talk about the existence of the universal self as the only ultimate truth. Śaṅkara is not the only classical Indian philosophical thinker to take the view that worldly existence is somehow preliminary. As we noted in our introductory chapter, underpinning Vasubandhu’s works is the Madhyamaka idea of two levels of truth.\(^{164}\) In both Vasubandhu and Śaṅkara, then, we find the somewhat puzzling situation whereby liberation from worldly existence is somehow contingent upon worldly existence itself.

How, then, are we to make sense of this apparent tension? It seems that our notion of pedagogy is fundamental in this regard. When Śaṅkara and Vasubandhu discuss issues such as self, perception and objects – which are inextricably tied up with worldly existence, they are doing so in a conventional sense; that is, they are not attributing ultimacy to such issues. Rather, they are employing these discussions as a means of facilitating the realisation that self, perception and objects as we experience them in the world are only conventionally true. Of course – as we shall see throughout the remaining chapters of this thesis – Śaṅkara and Vasubandhu take rather different views on the issues of self, perception and objects. Yet the important point to note at present is that for both thinkers these issues are discussed within a conventional context. It is because of this that such issues can be left behind when ultimate truth is realised. Pedagogy – as we are understanding it in this study – is essential to comprehending this. In viewing Indian philosophical texts as embodying a pedagogical process, we allow that concepts such as self, perception and objects are taken seriously by Vasubandhu and Śaṅkara, but are not attributed the status of ultimate truth. Our notion of pedagogical process thus permits the move from the conventional to the ultimate.

\(^{164}\) Suthren Hirst notes that Śaṅkara’s distinction between ‘conventional’ and ‘ultimate’ truth is very likely to have been influenced by the two levels of truth found in the Madhyamaka school, through the writings of Gaudapāda. See Suthren Hirst, Śaṅkara’s Advaita Vedānta, p. 90.
The structures of *pramāṇa-vāda*, which we discussed earlier in the chapter, are very much located within the world; in fact, *pramāṇa-vāda* can be said to rely upon worldly convention. The pedagogical process – albeit heavily reliant upon the conventional world – is a means by which one becomes liberated from that world. When we understand concepts as *pedagogical*, we thus understand them as guides which can be employed and disposed of with some ease. This reinforces the need to recognise the notion of pedagogy in Indian philosophical traditions. We shall now explore briefly whether it is possible to identify pedagogical techniques in Kumārila’s writings.

**Kumārila**

We have already seen that pedagogy is quite clearly a significant feature of Śaṇkara’s writings. The question of the extent to which Kumārila’s writings can be viewed as pedagogical is, however, rather more problematic. There are two reasons as to why this is the case. The first is that Kumārila does not explicitly acknowledge the importance of teaching in the way that Śaṇkara does; Śaṇkara’s writing is something of a gift in this regard. The second reason relates to the more general problem of discerning the overall objective of Kumārila’s writings. Kumarila’s *Śloka-vārttika* is a dense assortment of deliberations on a variety of topics, which range from the structure and function of language to the relationship between Self and agency. Yet nowhere among these deliberations – which are in themselves rigorous and systematic - does Kumārila explicitly verbalise the overriding purpose of the text. Thus, by and large, it is left up to the reader to try to extrapolate what this might be.

Contemporary scholarship on Kumārila does not – for the most part – offer much clarification in this regard. Many studies propound the view that the primary concern of Kumārila – and of *Mīmāṃsā* in general – is to discuss performance of Vedic ritual. However, as we observed in Chapter One, such a view is largely rooted in nineteenth and early twentieth century scholarship, which tended to characterise the *Mīmāṃsā* system as ‘ritualistic’. In view of this, *Mīmāṃsā* was
granted a somewhat subordinate status in comparison to traditions such as Advaita, which were
deemed to epitomise the ‘philosophical’ endeavours of classical Indian philosophical traditions.

An exception in this regard is the work of Francis X. D’Sa. In his Šabdaprāmāṇyaṃ in Šabara and
Kumārila, which we mentioned in Chapter One, D’Sa critiques the widely-held view that the main
focus of Kumārila’s system is Vedic ritual.165 Conversely, he argues that, ‘though the practical
preoccupation of the Mīmāṃsā was the interpretation of the ritual texts and the articulation of
principles on which such interpretations were based..this was not their primary purpose.’166 So what
was the ‘primary purpose’ of Mīmāṃsā according to D’Sa, and how does this translate itself in
Kumārila’s writings? In view of Mīmāṃsā sūtra 1.1.1, D’Sa conceives of dharma as central to the
Mīmāṃsā enterprise. ‘The primary meaning of Dharma’, he writes, ‘is to connect one with
niḥśreyasam.’167 Niḥśreyasam is, for the Mīmāṃsaka, the aim towards which sacrificial rites are
ultimately directed. D’Sa translates the term as ‘ultimate significance’.168 Through focusing upon
‘Significance’, D’sa encourages us to distance ourselves from the preoccupation with ritual action
that characterises much of the extant scholarship on Mīmāṃsā. D’Sa advocates an alternative
approach, which places ābda – or ‘word’ - at the heart of the Mīmāṃsā enterprise.169

So how does this shape D’Sa’s view of Kumārila’s overall objective in the Ślokavārṭṭika? D’Sa
argues that it is the authority of ābda that is Kumārila’s primary concern. He writes:

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165 See Francis X. D’Sa, Šabdaprāmāṇyaṃ in Šabara and Kumārila: Towards a Study of the Mīmāṃsā Experience of
Language, Publications of the De Nobili Research Library, edited by Gerhard Oberhammer (Vienna: De Nobili
Research Library, 1980), D’Sa refers to a number of writers, including Max Müller, who have identified ritual action as
the central concern of the Mīmāṃsā system. See pp. 44-45n.
166 D’Sa, Šabdaprāmāṇyaṃ in Šabara and Kumārila, pp. 44-45n.
167 D’Sa, Šabdaprāmāṇyaṃ in Šabara and Kumārila, p. 44.
168 He explains ‘Significance’ as ‘that experience which produces in us a care or concern for someone or something;
and experience which moves us deeply and touches our inner core.’ (D’Sa, p. 25). ‘Ultimate significance’, he says, ‘is
not an abstract concept; it is an active commitment that is constantly striving to concretise itself in aspiration and
ambition, in value and venture, above all in our religion and philosophy.’ (D’Sa, p. 26). It is questionable whether
D’Sa’s explanation of ‘Significance’ is particularly useful in terms of our understanding of the Mīmāṃsā goal. Since his
understanding of the term is so broad, we might argue that its use is no more beneficial than simply using the Sanskrit
term niḥśreyasam.
169 The Sanskrit term ābda can also mean ‘sound’. 
The ultimate aim of Kumārila’s works in general, and of the Ślokavārttikam in particular is to establish beyond the shadow of any doubt the absolute authority of the Veda.\footnote{D’Sa, Šabdarānīyam in Śāhara and Kumārila, p. 114.}

Although it is widely recognised among scholars of Kumārila that śabdaniyatvam – the ‘eternity of word’ – is a feature of Kumārila’s writings, it is rarely acknowledged that the overall aim of Kumārila’s system is to establish this ‘truth’. It seems, however, that D’Sa is justified in viewing the establishment of śabdaniyatvam as the main goal in Kumārila. This is because, as we shall see over the course of the remaining chapters of this thesis, the notion of the ultimate authority of Vedic language underpins all of Kumārila’s philosophical deliberations on the issues of self, perception and objects. Moreover, more frequently than not, such discussions seem to function as precursors to a fervent declaration of śabdaniyatvam.

So how – if at all – does this lead us to a pedagogical reading of Kumārila’s works? As we noted previously, Kumārila’s role as teacher is not made explicit in the way that Śaṅkara’s is. However, it seems quite clear that Kumārila’s discussions of Vedic language must be directed towards a particular audience. Of course, in one sense, these discussions function within the context of pramāṇa-vāda, and as such they serve to establish the validity of his position in the broader intellectual milieu in which he is writing. Yet given the need to preserve the Mīmāṃsā tradition – and the tradition of teaching that is so deeply ingrained within the Indian philosophical context more generally - it must also be the case that these discussions are directed towards the Mīmāṃsāka pupil. It is, after all, only he who is part of this tradition that will be able to realise the eternity of Vedic language. It is in this sense, then, that we can see a more subtle pedagogical endeavour at work in Kumārila’s writings.

So what are the pedagogical techniques which Kumārila employs in order to bring about this realisation? The first we are going to call linguistic grounding.\footnote{It is important to note that we are not using the term ‘grounding’ in the specific sense in which it is used by contemporary metaphysicists such as Rosen and Schaffer, who use the term to denote metaphysical dependence. See Gideon Rosen, ‘Metaphysical Dependence: Grounding and Reduction’, in Modality: Metaphysics, Logic, and Epistemology, ed. by Bob Hale and Aviv Hoffman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 109–136; Jonathan} Essentially, this technique
involves the *grounding* of philosophical issues in a *linguistic* framework. It is important to note that we are not understanding ‘linguistic’ here in the sense that ‘linguistics’ may be used to denote a field of academic study. Rather, we are using it in the broader sense of ‘relating to language’. When we talk about Kumārila using a technique of *linguistic grounding*, then, we are saying that he discusses philosophical issues – such as self, perception and objects – in relation to what he perceives to be the structures and functions of language. In some cases, this does entail detailed grammatical analysis. However, although we will refer to such cases on occasion, this is not our overriding concern in terms of our exploration of Kumārila. The point is rather to show how Kumārila reframes epistemological and ontological issues in terms of questions about Vedic language.

In one sense, Kumārila’s use of *linguistic grounding* can be seen as a way of fulfilling his role in the context of *pramāṇa-vāda*; that is, it enables him to engage with philosophical concerns of his contemporaries whilst preserving the traditional *Mīmāṃsā* enterprise. However, Kumārila’s use of linguistic grounding is also arguably a pedagogical technique, in the sense that it is clearly directed towards a *Mīmāṃsaka* pupil’s understanding of the eternality of Vedic language. Kumārila is clearly aware that the *Mīmāṃsaka* pupil will be subjected to the philosophical debates of rival schools. For this reason, he cannot ignore these debates. What he can do, however, is use these debates to guide the pupil towards an understanding of the eternality of Vedic language. He does this, we contend, through this process of *linguistic grounding*.

Like Śaṅkara, Kumārila uses examples. We saw previously how, according to Suthren Hirst, Śaṅkara uses examples in a pedagogical manner; that is, such examples become more than simply *dṛṣṭānta* – formal examples used in the fivefold *Nyāya* process of reasoning. So how is this the case for Kumārila? How can we justify our claim that Kumārila’s use of examples is pedagogical, as opposed to simply exemplifying his need to conform to the conventions of *pramāṇa-vāda*? The answer lies, it seems, in Kumārila’s realist view of the world. Kumārila frequently alludes to the

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idea that the effectiveness of certain examples is contingent upon the extrinsic reality of the world. That is, the world exists outside of our perception of it. The most pertinent illustration of this can be found in his discussions of the dream example, which we shall discuss in some detail in Chapter Six.

Thus far, then, we have briefly discussed two pedagogical techniques which can be found in Kumārila’s writings—*linguistic grounding* and the use of examples. In addition, he can be said to use a third pedagogical techniques, which relates to his repudiation of rival views. As we noted in Chapter One, the repudiation of rival views is expected of any Indian philosophical thinker who is involved in *tarka*—‘reasoning’. In this sense, Kumārila’s repudiation of rival views might be understood as demonstrating nothing more than his adherence to the conventions of the intellectual milieu in which he is writing. However, on closer examination—as we shall see over the coming chapters—the way in which Kumārila engages with his opponents is more complex than this. That is to say, Kumārila appears to select his opponents strategically, choosing those whose views might seriously threaten what he perceives to be the eternality of Vedic language. This is evident in the fact that Kumārila engages at some length with Vasubandhu and Diññāga—both of whom present theories on the relationship between language and the world which might detrimentally impinge upon Kumārila’s adherence to the absolute authority of Vedic language. Through engaging with such opponents, then, Kumārila is able to repudiate those ideas which might undermine the authority of the Vedas.

Clearly there is a sense in which this technique and the first technique, which we characterised as *linguistic grounding*—are linked. Broadly speaking, both can be seen as a means of reframing philosophical discussions in a linguistic context. It is important, nonetheless, that we retain a distinction between these two techniques, and there are two reasons as to why this is so. The first reason is simply methodological. Kumārila’s repudiation of opponents is a complex issue, and for the purpose of clarity it is thus useful to view the repudiation of rival views as a pedagogical technique in its own right. The second reason is that looking specifically at Kumārila’s repudiation
of rival views enables us to see how he reinterprets his opponents’ positions. This is particularly important in the context of the present study, since our main reason for exploring Kumārila is to see how he reinterprets Vasubandhu’s position.

We have thus identified three pedagogical techniques which are employed by Kumārila: linguistic grounding, use of examples and repudiation of rival views. As we have seen, Kumārila uses all of these techniques to guide the Mīmāṃsaka pupil towards an understanding of the eternality of Vedic language, which is – we are contending – the overriding goal of his system. Prior to this, we saw how Śaṅkara employs particular pedagogical techniques in order to guide the Advaitin pupil towards an understanding of the oneness of the self. It is important that we acknowledge the significance of pedagogy for Śaṅkara and Kumārila, especially since over the coming chapters we are going to see how these two thinkers engage with Vasubandhu’s deliberations on the issues of self, perception and objects. It is, however, Vasubandhu who is the central focus of this study, and so the rest of the present chapter will explore the objective of Vasubandhu’s works, and the pedagogical techniques which he employs in order that this objective might be achieved.

Vasubandhu

As we stated in our introductory chapter, the central argument of this study is that Vasubandhu’s discussions of self, perception and objects are essentially pedagogical in character. We have already seen that this idea offers a new perspective in terms of contemporary scholarship on Vasubandhu. But in what ways does it build upon existing scholarship on the role of pedagogy in Indian philosophical traditions more generally, and in particular on the work of Suthren Hirst which we have already explored? There are two ways in which our study can be seen to offer something new in this context.

Firstly, in regarding Vasubandhu’s works as pedagogical, we are showing that pedagogy is not only important in Indian philosophical traditions which adhere to the authority of Vedic texts. As we
have seen, all of Śaṅkara’s pedagogical techniques are inextricably linked with his acceptance of the Vedic texts as authoritative. As Suthren Hirst argues, ‘it is impossible to study Śaṅkara without paying close attention to the way in which he comments on scriptural texts’. All of the Śaṅkara’s pedagogical techniques, as identified by Suthren Hirst, are embedded within his Vedic world-view. We have also seen that this is very much the case for Kumārila – despite the fact that there are some key differences between the two thinkers.

Yet thus far, existing scholarship on pedagogy in Indian philosophical traditions has not extended beyond those thinkers who adhere to the authority of the Vedic texts. The question remains, then, of the extent to which those thinkers who are outside the Vedic fold – but who belong in the same intellectual milieu as those inside the Vedic fold – can be perceived to employ pedagogical techniques in their writings. The present study, then, addresses this question in the context of Vasubandhu, who as a Buddhist does not accept the authority of the Vedic texts. Vasubandhu, of course has – in a sense – his own ‘scriptural’ backdrop in the form of the Mahāyāna sūtras. Yet these texts do not function in the same way that the Vedic texts did; that is to say, Vasubandhu frequently alludes to the sūtras – and indeed quotes from the sūtras – arguably as a means of locating his philosophical position within a Mahāyāna framework. However, unlike Śaṅkara and Kumārila, these scriptures do not constitute the central focus of his works. Indeed, as we shall see subsequently, much of his writing is devoted to deconstructing any presuppositions the Yogācārin pupil might have, including those found in the Mahāyāna sūtras themselves.

Part of the purpose of looking at the pedagogical character of Vasubandhu’s discussions of self, perception and objects is thus to explore the extent to which the significance of pedagogy extends beyond Vedic traditions. Such an exploration raises the question of whether the significance of pedagogy is cross-traditional; that is, whether it is a feature of a broader intellectual world, as opposed to simply being a consequence of allegiance to the Vedic texts. This relates back to our dialogical approach, which we outlined in Chapter One. One advantage of adopting this approach –

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172 Suthren Hirst, Śaṅkara’s Advaita Vedānta, p. 5.
as we saw—was that it enables us to see how Indian philosophical discourse, in the classical era, functions across Vedic and non-Vedic traditions. Essentially, then, one of the main aims of our study is to explore the significance of pedagogy in Vasubandhu through using what we have termed the dialogical approach. Through looking at the role of pedagogy in Vasubandhu, then, we are broadening the scope of existing scholarship on the pedagogical character of Indian philosophical traditions.

The idea that pedagogy functions within a Buddhist as well as Advaitin context leads us to the second way in which our study can be seen to offer something new in terms of existing discussions on pedagogy in Indian philosophical traditions. This has to do with the Mahāyāna ideal of the bodhisattva, a term which means literally ‘being of awakening’. As is well-known, the goal of all Buddhist traditions—broadly speaking— is the attainment of nirvāṇa. Once a practitioner has attained nirvāṇa, he or she becomes a buddha, or ‘enlightened one’. In the Mahāyāna, the highest ideal in terms of ‘buddha-hood’ is the bodhisattva, who, having been released from suffering through the attainment of nirvāṇa, then turns his attention towards teaching non-enlightened beings, in order that they might, in turn, be freed from suffering. Thus, in the Mahāyāna tradition, pedagogy is inextricably bound up with the ideal of the bodhisattva.

Now although the significance of the bodhisattva is widely recognised in contemporary studies of Buddhist traditions, there appear to be very few studies which look specifically at the way the bodhisattva ideal manifests itself in Mahāyāna texts and in particular those philosophical texts of the classical era which, broadly speaking, can be said to belong to the Mahāyāna tradition. Stefan

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173 The literal meaning of the Sanskrit term nirvāṇa is ‘extinguishing’ or ‘blowing out.’ See Rupert Gethin, *The Foundations of Buddhism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 75. Although its usage varies among Buddhist traditions, nirvāṇa can broadly be said to denote the attainment of liberation from the suffering that characterises worldly existence.

174 The Abhidharma tradition holds that there are types of buddha: the pratyeka-buddha (‘solitary’ or ‘private’ buddha) and the śrāvaka (‘hearer’) buddha. The Mahāyāna tradition— to which the Yogācāra school belonged – also accepts these two types of Buddha. Yet for Mahāyāna, the pratyeka and śrāvaka buddhas are essentially inward-looking, and thus do not represent the highest ideal.

175 The work of Har Dayal in the early twentieth century might be considered an exception. See especially Har Dayal, *The Bodhisattva Doctrine in Buddhist Sanskrit Literature* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1932; Delhi: Motilal
Anacker’s work – and in particular his article on Vasubandhu’s *Madhyāntavibhāgabhāṣya* – might be considered an exception in this regard.176 As we noted in our introductory chapter, however, Anacker’s work focuses primarily upon the soteriological aspect of Vasubandhu’s works. His discussions of the *bodhisattva* ideal in Vasubandhu thus centre primarily upon the way in which this ideal shapes those parts of Vasubandhu’s works which refer specifically to meditative practice. Anacker does not, it seems, explore the way in which this ideal manifests itself in Vasbandhu’s ‘philosophical’ deliberations. Yet as we will see in the present study, the *bodhisattva* ideal has an important role to play in this regard. Through exploring the pedagogical character of Vasubandhu’s writings, we thus hope to demonstrate the significance of the *bodhisattva* in classical Indian philosophical discourse, an enterprise which is seemingly lacking in contemporary scholarship.

The third way in which our study differs from existing scholarship on pedagogy is more specifically related to the underlying framework of Vasubandhu’s works. As we shall see in what follows, Vasubandhu’s writings are primarily directed towards a deconstruction of conceptuality; that is, they are grounded in the need to question the reification of linguistic constructs. Thus each of the pedagogical techniques which he employs is shaped by the assumption that language is, in a sense, what binds us to the world of suffering. His pedagogy, then, is motivated by this idea. Although – as we shall see subsequently – Vasubandhu does employ some similar pedagogical techniques to those employed by Śaṅkara and Kumārila, the framework in which he uses these techniques is distinct from these two other thinkers. Although Śaṅkara, to some extent, denies the ultimacy of language, he still asserts the existence of a permanent self. Vasubandhu, on the other hand, seeks to deconstruct the very concepts that he himself puts forward. This is not to say that Vasubandhu does not have a position. As we shall see throughout the thesis, it is quite clear that he does. However, his pedagogical methods are embedded within an assumption that linguistic concepts need to be deconstructed.

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Bannarsidass, 1970). However, this book refers primarily to the *bodhisattva* ideal as viewed in the *Mahāyāna sūtras*, and not in the works of Buddhist thinkers such as Vasubandhu.

Those who recognise Vasubandhu’s texts as exhibiting a process of the deconstruction of concepts, do not characterise this process as pedagogical. On the other hand, those who talk about the significance of pedagogy in Indian philosophical traditions have yet to do so in the context of Vasubandhu’s deconstruction of conceptuality. It is for this reason – in addition to those already mentioned – that the present study can offer something new. In what follows, we shall see how Vasubandhu’s view of the relationship between conceptuality and experience is revealed through a series of pedagogical techniques. It is important to understand that Vasubandhu himself does not identify these techniques. Furthermore – as we shall see – all of the techniques which we identify below overlap in a number of ways. However, each of these techniques emphasise different aspects of Vasubandhu’s writings. It is thus important to explore them individually, as well as to see how they culminate to form the processual character of Vasubandhu’s works.

**Vasubandhu’s pedagogical techniques**

Having explored the way in which our study builds upon existing scholarship on pedagogy, we shall now turn to the more specific task of identifying the pedagogical techniques which Vasubandhu employs. Given that each of the four works we are exploring is to some extent unique – both in terms of style and content – the task of extracting general pedagogical techniques from these works might initially appear somewhat challenging. Yet viewed in another way, the disparate character of Vasubandhu’s writings may actually be symptomatic of Vasubandhu’s pedagogical endeavours. As Stefan Anacker has observed, ‘To Vasubandhu, dogmatic reliance on any one method never exists, and there may be even within one work multiple and constantly unfolding outlooks on a particular range of problems.’ Thus Anacker suggests that the diversity of methods employed both within and among Vasubandhu’s works is not incidental; it is emblematic of Vasubandhu’s predilection for undermining dogmatism in general. If we reframe Anacker’s observation in terms of the notion of pedagogy, then what initially appears to be inconsistency in

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Vasubandhu’s method becomes an essential component of his pedagogical approach. That is, this apparent inconsistency can be seen to be indicative of Vasubandhu’s eagerness to undermine convention, in an effort to encourage the Yogācārīn pupil to question his or her own presuppositions.

Aside from the disregard for convention evident in the disparate character of Vasubandhu’s works, there are certain pedagogical techniques which appear to run through each of the four works upon which this study focuses. There are, it seems, four techniques which are particularly significant in this regard: i) the gradual deconstruction of concepts through the use of diverse or even contradictory statements, ii) the assertion that certain Buddhist teachings are preliminary and that their ostensible meanings do not necessarily correspond with the purposes for which they were employed by the Buddha, iii) repudiation of any rival views which might impinge upon the particular position which Vasubandhu is attempting to establish and iv) the use of examples as a means of locating teachings in a context familiar to the pupil. We shall now explore each of these techniques in turn.

i) Deconstruction of concepts

In order to better comprehend the technique which we have characterised as the ‘deconstruction of concepts’, it is important that we understand Vasubandhu’s view of the relationship between language and suffering. For Vasubandhu, suffering ensues from continued attachment to worldly existence, which results from a failure to embrace the idea that all is process – an idea embodied in Vasubandhu’s assertion that everything is viññāpti-mātra. Language itself precipitates this attachment, since it is responsible for what Paul Williams has called the ‘essentialist fallacy’ – that is the erroneous notion that ‘occurs when we take a single name or naming expression and assume it must refer to one unified phenomenon.’\(^{178}\) This is a ‘fallacy’ precisely because – in Vasubandhu’s view – the idea that there are ‘unified phenomenon’ outside of the process of conceptualisation is

\(^{178}\) Paul Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism*, p. 2.
unfounded. The most harmful of these fallacies is, for Vasubandhu, that of a permanent self, an inevitable consequence of which is a worldview which is characterised by dualities – such as that of perceiver and perceived – which only serve to perpetuate the cycle of attachment to worldly existence.

Interestingly, however, language also plays a positive role in that it is one of the central means through which the bodhisattva facilitates liberation from worldly existence. This apparently paradoxical view of language is, of course, a feature not only of Vasubandhu’s writings, but of the Mahāyāna tradition more generally. As Ram-Prasad has observed in an article entitled, ‘Conceptuality in Question’,

Yogācāra and Madhyamaka Buddhist accounts usually hold that the a Buddha’s enlightenment is a state free of conception but also that such enlightenment is expressed in a compassionate, subsequent teaching of the path to it...But such teaching, surely, involves the recognition of and action in the conceptualized world; most obviously, it requires the use of speech. Therefore, there must be a persistence of conceptuality if an enlightened one is to act compassionately and teach others about the way to freedom from suffering.179

We need to understand this paradox through the Mahāyāna notion of upayakausāalya or ‘skill in means’.180 Broadly speaking, upayakausāalya denotes a method by which language is employed for a particular purpose. We know that Vasubandhu adheres to the notion of upāya from his discussions of it in the MVBh, and particularly in chapter three of this text.181

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180 The idea of upayakausāalya is discussed, for example, in the Lotus sūtra, the Upayakausāalya sūtra and the Laṅkāvatāra sūtra. The earliest parts of the Lotus Sūtra are thought to have been composed from the first century BCE to the first century CE. The majority of the text seems to have been composed before the close of the second century CE. See Williams, Mahāyāna Buddhism, p. 142.
The Upayakausāalya sūtra is likely to have been composed in the first century CE. See Mark Tatz, The Skill in Means (upāyakausāalya) Sūtra (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1994), p. 1.
The precise dating of the Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra is uncertain, although it is thought to have been composed between the third and fifth centuries CE. See Edward Hamlin, ‘Discourse in the Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra’, Journal of Indian Philosophy 11 (1983), pp. 311-312 n. In view of this, it is possible that Vasubandhu was not familiar with the work.
181 This chapter identifies upāyakausāalya as one of the ten ‘realities’ (tattva).
Thus far from being disadvantageous to our study, the paradox of language – when understood in the context of upāya - actually serves to support our conviction that pedagogy is central to Vasubandhu’s works. Aside from the fact that the use of paradoxes is part of Vasubandhu’s pedagogical approach, the fact that Vasubandhu uses language in order to liberate the pupil from the constraints of language itself is surely evidence that his work must be viewed as a kind of pedagogical process. To view it otherwise would be to render ourselves subject to the very reification of language that Vasubandhu wishes to dissolve. Such reification is, for Vasubandhu, at the very heart of worldly existence, and thus at the root of suffering itself.

This notion of upāya is thus the backdrop against which we can understand the deconstruction of concepts as a pedagogical technique in Vasubandhu. For Vasubandhu, language is not simply a means of expressing our experience of the world; it plays a central role in constructing that very experience. Thus, for Vasubandhu, there is a two-way relationship between language and experience. On the one hand we articulate our experience through linguistic concepts; yet on the other hand it is these very concepts which are responsible for the reification of our experience. Vasubandhu attempts to undermine this tendency to reify experience through the deconstruction of concepts – the first of the pedagogical techniques which we have identified. Vasubandhu will frequently introduce a concept, only to indicate subsequently that the pupil must relinquish attachment to that very concept. As we shall see in the next chapter, even attachment to the concept of vijñapti-mātra - which itself plays a crucial role in helping the pupil to abandon attachment to linguistic concepts – must, according to Vasubandhu, eventually be abandoned.

It is significant that it is attachment to concepts that is to be relinquished, rather than the concepts themselves. For the Yogācārin pupil will, of course, need to utilise these concepts in order to teach others once he becomes a bodhisattva. As Gadjin M. Nagao has observed,

…Bodhisattvas, refusing the bliss of nirvāṇa, come down to this world because of their ‘compassion’. For a Bodhisattva, the ascent of wisdom terminates at the point of nirvāṇa
from whence the descent of compassion begins. The Bodhisattva is, therefore, characterised by two activities: ‘going up’ or ‘ascending’ and the other ‘coming down’ or ‘descending.’

The ‘ascent’ and ‘descent’ of the bodhisattva – to use Nagao’s terms - is thus contingent upon ‘the persistence of conceptuality’ - a phrase used by Ram-Prasad in the passage cited earlier. Although the relinquishment of concepts is fundamental to the process of ‘ascent’, these concepts themselves must also be utilised in the process of ‘descent.’ The difference with the latter is that the bodhisattva remains detached from these concepts. Indeed, it is precisely because of this detachment that the bodhisattva is able to employ these concepts in his pedagogical endeavours. We can see, then, that the deconstruction of concepts is fundamental to Vasubandhu’s overall objective, in that it assists the Yogācārin pupil’s attainment of the bodhisattva ideal. Furthermore, it is a technique which can then be taken up by the pupil himself, subsequent to his attainment of the bodhisattva ideal.

ii) Teachings as preliminary

The second pedagogical technique through which Vasubandhu facilitates the Yogācārin pupil’s attainment of the bodhisattva ideal is the frequent assertion that certain Buddhist teachings are preliminary. As we shall see throughout the coming chapters, Vasubandhu employs this technique in order to downplay the significance of those Abhidharma and Mahāyāna teachings which appear to threaten his notion of vijñāpti-mātra. A notable example is his assertion of the preliminary character of the Buddha’s teachings concerning the sense-fields (āyatana), as put forward by the Abhidharma school. We shall explore this in further detail in Chapter Five.

The idea that certain Buddhist teachings are preliminary is not, of course, unique to Vasubandhu’s works. As is well-known, Buddhist traditions have always classified the Buddha’s teachings as either nītārtha or ‘expressed in terms whose meaning is to be determined’ and neyārtha or

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‘expressed in terms whose meaning is already determined’. This distinction between \textit{nītārtha} and \textit{neyārtha} is present as far back as the Pali \textit{Nikāyas}. Buddhist traditions have always employed this distinction as a means of subordinating those teachings which appear to be at odds with their own.

What is interesting in the context of Vasubandhu, however, is that he also applies this technique to his own teachings. He frequently warns the \textit{Yogācārin} pupil not to take his teachings at face-value. A pertinent example of this is the end of the \textit{Viṃś}, where Vasubandhu informs the reader of the limitations of the text itself. This serves as a reminder to the reader not to become attached to the teachings of the texts. Thus this second pedagogical technique bears similarity – albeit on a broader level – to the first pedagogical technique which we identified. Both are aimed at undermining attachment to linguistic constructs which encourage the reification of experience.

iii) Repudiation of rival views

As we noted in Chapter One, Vasubandhu’s critique of rival philosophical positions is symptomatic of the importance of dialogue in his works. As we have seen, Vasubandhu engages with both Buddhist and non-Buddhist opponents in this regard. We noted that key among the non-Buddhist opponents with whom Vasubandhu engages are the \textit{Vaiśeṣikas}, whose view on the ontological status of atoms threatens to undermine Vasubandhu’s system. We have also seen noted that Vasubandhu – despite being heavily influenced by the \textit{Abhidharma} and \textit{Madhyamaka} Buddhist traditions – seeks to critique those aspects of these traditions which pose a threat to his understanding of \textit{vijñapti-mātra}. We have also seen, however, that the repudiation of rival views was customary in the intellectual climate in which Vasubandhu was writing; that is, it was expected of those who were involved in philosophical debates which were characterised by \textit{tarka}. In what sense, then, can Vasubandhu’s repudiation of rival views be considered pedagogical?

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[184] The \textit{Nikāyas} were ‘collections’ of the Buddha’s discourses. See Gethin, \textit{The Foundations of Buddhism}, pp. 42-43. In the \textit{Samyutta Nikāya}, for example, the Buddha himself is recorded as having said that his teachings function on different levels. See Nathan Katz, ‘Prasāṅga and Deconstruction: Tibetan Hermeneutics and the yāna controversy’, \textit{Philosophy East and West} 34.2 (1984), 185-204, pp. 192-193.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
In order to understand this, we need to take into account the way in which Vasubandhu understands the relationship between language and experience. As we noted above, Vasubandhu adheres to the idea that language is not only a product of experience, but also shapes experience itself. As we have seen, Vasubandhu’s deconstruction of linguistic concepts emanates from this view. But in what way does this view help us to understand the pedagogical character of the way in which Vasubandhu engages with rival views? For this, we need to consider carefully the subtleties which characterise Vasubandhu’s dialogue with his opponents. If we look closely at the way in which he attempts to refute non-Buddhist rivals, we can see that he is doing something more subtle than simply conforming to the conventions of *tarka*. All of Vasubandhu’s dialogues with these opponents are, it seems, broadly concerned with the issue of the reification of concepts. At the heart of Vasubandhu’s dialogue with the *Vaiśeṣikas*, for example, is an attempt to show that our having the *concept* of an external object is *not* indicative of the independent ontological status of that object. Such dialogue, of course, will not persuade the *Vaiśeṣika*—with his realist worldview—to relinquish attachment to conceptuality. It must surely, then, be a way of deconstructing the assumptions of the *Yogācārin* pupil, who will—of course—be aware of the *Vaiśeṣika* viewpoint. Thus in this sense Vasubandhu’s repudiation of non-Buddhist schools arguably serves as a means of alleviating the doubts of the *Yogācārin* pupil, and it is in this way that such repudiation is pedagogical.

This also applies to Vasubandhu’s critique of other Buddhist schools. As we shall see over the coming chapters, although Vasubandhu’s discussions of self, perception and objects rely heavily upon *Abhidharma* terminology, he subtly reinterprets those *Abhidharma* concepts which threaten to undermine his conviction in the need to deconstruct conceptuality. Thus similarly to Vasubandhu’s repudiation of non-Buddhist rivals, his critique of *Abhidharma* is also directed towards deconstructing the notion that we can have access to anything which might be ontologically independent of our process of conceptualisation.
Vasubandhu’s treatment of Mahāyāna, on the other hand, exhibits something of the opposite. In this context, Vasubandhu’s aim, it seems, is to restate some degree of actuality. That is, Vasubandhu seems to want to defend his position against possible charges of nihilism, charges which had been — and to some extent still are — directed towards the Mādhyamikas. We ought to note that Vasubandhu’s apparent interpretation of the Mādhyamikas is somewhat questionable, for it is not necessarily the case that Nāgārjuna denies the possibility of asserting anything — a point which has been noted by a few contemporary scholars. Mark Siderits, for example, has — and quite justifiably it seems - argued that ‘epistemic humility for Nāgārjuna is not nihilistic despair over the impossibility of ever attaining human knowledge’; it is just recognition of the radical contingency of any of our claims to knowledge. Vasubandhu, however, appears to lean towards the view that Madhyamaka — and particularly the Madhyamaka interpretation of ‘emptiness’ — does signify a kind of nihilism. If this is the case, then Vasubandhu cannot be seen to embrace the Madhyamaka standpoint, since doing so would potentially undermine Vasubandhu’s contention that the process of vijñāpti is real. As we mentioned in Chapter One, Vasubandhu is particularly concerned with reinterpreting the Madhyamaka view of śūnyatā (‘emptiness’) in this regard. We shall look at precisely how he does this later in the thesis.

We can see, then, that Vasubandhu’s critiques of other Buddhist traditions are about obtaining a balance between the need to deconstruct conceptuality and the need to retain some degree of actuality. It is not that Vasubandhu is concealing this aim in his critique of rival traditions, but rather that he is directing the focus of such critiques, so that they might also deconstruct the assumptions of the Yogācārin pupil, something which is necessary on the bodhisattva path. Thus in addition to fulfilling the requirements of tarka, Vasubandhu’s repudiation of rival views serves, on

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185 This is not to say that we are treating Abhidharma and Madhyamaka as separate traditions. As we argued in Chapter One, Mahāyāna is in many ways a continuation of Abhidharma. Madhyamaka, as part of the broader Mahāyāna tradition is also thus a continuation of Abhidharma. Our purpose in distinguishing the two traditions here is to emphasise the specifically Madhyamaka notion of ‘emptiness’.

a more subtle level, to facilitate attainment of the bodhisattva ideal. It is in this sense that Vasubandhu’s engagement with rival positions is inextricably linked with his pedagogical method.

iv) Use of examples

Like Śaṅkara and Kumārila, Vasubandhu also frequently uses examples in his writings. Once again, the use of examples – being a convention of pramāṇa-vāda – is not in itself a sign that Vasubandhu’s writings are pedagogical in character. However, the particular examples which Vasubandhu chooses are by no means arbitrary, and it is in this regard that they can be said to reveal his pedagogical approach.

In some cases Vasubandhu uses examples from what can essentially be termed Buddhist cosmology and mythology. The Viṁś in particular makes use of such examples. In this text Vasubandhu uses the example of the pretas or ‘hungry ghosts’ of Abhidharma cosmology, in order to demonstrate that constructed objects can appear to have spatio-temporal locations. In addition, he also uses the example of narakapāla (‘hell-guardians’) in order to show that constructed objects can appear to have independent existence. We shall discuss Vasubandhu’s use of these examples in further detail in Chapter Six. In the Viṁś, Vasubandhu also uses a mythological reference as an example, citing the story of King Vemacittra from the Saṁyutta-Nikāya in order to illustrate his point that dying is caused by the modification of one perception by another. The fact that Vasubandhu alludes to cosmological and mythological examples such as these, without explaining them in any detail, indicates that they are clearly directed towards the Buddhist pupil who will already be

187 According to traditional Buddhist cosmology, the pretas inhabit the apāya (‘deserts’) of kāma dhātu (‘realm of the five senses’). See Rupert Gethin’s table illustrating the ‘thirty-one realms of existence’ in Gethin, The Foundations of Buddhism, pp. 116-117.

In Abhidharma it is held that the pretas are subjected to particular punishments due to past actions. See Stefan Anacker, Seven Works of Vasubandhu, p. 175 n. Among these is the seeing of rivers made of pus. The idea that the pretas all see the same ‘pus-rivers’ is used by Vasubandhu to illustrate the idea that numerous people can experience objects as existing in a particular time and place.

188 In traditional Buddhist cosmology, the narakapāla also inhabit the ‘deserts’ of kāma dhātu.

189 This story is found in the Saṁyutta-Nikāya (I, XI) and is told in more detail in Buddhaghoṣa’s Sārathappakāsini (Comment on I, XI). See Anacker, Seven Works of Vasubandhu, pp. 178-179n.
familiar with Buddhist cosmology. Such examples are thus clearly employed as a means by which to guide the Yogācārin pupil on the path towards the attainment of the bodhisattva ideal.

This is also the case with other examples that Vasubandhu uses, namely, those which draw upon human experience more generally. The example of dreaming is a case in point. Now on one level, these examples are clearly meant resonate with Vasubandhu’s non-Buddhist opponents. Through employing such examples, then, Vasubandhu can be seen to be engaging in what Chakravarthi Ram-Prasad identifies as a method of ‘descriptive metaphysics’, which is, according to Ram-Prasad, ‘basically the project of exploring the various connections between the features of experience such that an account of the world emerges which may be held to be coherently related to these features.’190 Such an enterprise is particularly useful for Vasubandhu, since it ensures that his argument is rendered applicable to those outside of Buddhist traditions. This set of examples, then, allows Vasubandhu to repudiate his non-Buddhist opponents.

However, it is important to note that all of Vasubandhu’s examples which allude to human experience are taken from a set of possible examples which are generally considered to be acceptable in Buddhist philosophical discourse. As Masaaki Hattori has noted, there are ten such examples, among which is the example of dreaming, along with māyā (illusion), maricī (mirage), udakacandra (the moon in the water) and chāyā (shadow).191 Thus although they clearly function as a means through which Vasubandhu can converse with his non-Buddhist rivals, they are clearly grounded within Buddhist philosophical discourse. Thus such examples are employed as a means of ensuring that the Yogācārin pupil remains firmly fixed upon the Buddhist path – and more specifically, for Vasubandhu, the bodhisattva path.

We have thus identified four pedagogical techniques employed by Vasubandhu: the deconstruction of concepts, the treating of certain teachings as preliminary, the repudiation of rival views, and the use of examples. As we have seen, all of these techniques are embedded within Vasubandhu’s view of the way in which language constructs experience. In this context, their purpose is to undermine the ultimacy of conceptuality that prevents the attainment of the bodhisattva ideal. It is, as we have indicated, the bodhisattva ideal that perpetuates the teaching process that is evident in Vasubandhu’s works. Once the Yogācārin pupil has attained liberation, he too must employ the same pedagogical methods as a means of helping those who have yet to attain liberation.

Over the next three chapters we will see how the pedagogical techniques which we have identified manifest themselves in Vasubandhu’s discussions of the issues of self, perception and objects. We will also explore some of the ways in which Kumārila and Śaṅkara subsequently engaged with these discussions, and in so doing we shall also draw out some of their pedagogical techniques, as identified above. It is hoped that the coming chapters will thus offer not only a new perspective on Vasubandhu’s treatment of particular philosophical issues, but will serve to emphasise the benefits of taking a broader dialogical approach to Vasubandhu’s discussions.
Chapter Four
Self

This chapter will explore the way in which Vasubandhu views the issue of ‘self’, with a view to demonstrating that his approach to this issue is fundamentally pedagogical in character. We shall see how the four pedagogical techniques identified in the previous chapter manifest themselves in Vasubandhu’s discussions of ‘self’. As we noted in Chapter One, although Vasubandhu is the main focus of this thesis, it is also important to look at the ways in which later thinkers engaged with the issues of self, perception and objects. In this study, we are looking, in particular, at the way in which Kumārila and Śaṅkara responded to what they perceived to be Vasubandhu’s views. Not only does such an undertaking pertain to the dialogical approach which we are adopting, it also allows us to explore the extent to which the pedagogical character of Vasubandhu’s writings is indicative of the broader intellectual milieu in which he is working.

The issue of whether or not it makes sense to talk about a ‘self’ was particularly significant in classical India, partly because it had implications for a number of other philosophical problems. It was, for example, inextricably linked with the question of what or whom is the locus of experience. The issue of ‘self’ was also intimately connected with the subject of mokṣa (‘liberation’); the relationship between the ‘self’ – or indeed the ‘non-self’ – and liberation was frequently debated by Indian philosophical thinkers. It is thus clear to see why the subject of ‘self’ was so prominent in the philosophical dialogue of classical India.

Yet, debates about the nature of ‘self’ were not simply a matter of metaphysical speculation; they were also related to social positioning. That is, such debates were arguably emblematic of a power struggle between Buddhist and Brahmanical traditions. As Steven Collins has observed,

…the anattā doctrine’s crucial importance is to provide an intransigent symbolic opposition to the belief system of the Brahmin priesthood, and therefore to the social position of Brahmins themselves. For Buddhist specialists, considered as a general category, the
doctrine is taken literally and personally, and thus anattā represents a determinate pattern of self-perception and psychological analysis, which is at once the true description of reality – in Buddhist terms it ‘sees things as they really are’ – and the instrument by which the aspirant to nirvāṇa progresses towards, and achieves, his goal.\textsuperscript{192}

Anattā is, of course, the Pali term for ‘no self’, used by Buddhist thinkers of the Theravāda tradition. Collins’ observation, however, is also applicable to Buddhists traditions more generally. The important point is that we need to be aware of the social context of debates on the issue of ‘self’ in classical India. That is to say, aside from its philosophical significance, the Buddhist theory of ‘no-self’ represented a more general opposition to Brahmanical power. The importance of cross-traditional dialogue in discussions on the issue of ‘self’ is thus clear to see, and serves as an additional impetus for exploring the way in which Kumārila and Śaṅkara subsequently responded to Vasubandhu’s discussions of ‘self’.

In the following section of this Chapter, we shall examine the ways in which Vasubandhu approaches the issue of ‘self’. Before this, however, we ought to remind ourselves of one particular point relating to our own use of the term ‘self’ in this study. As we noted in Chapter One, in terms of our own methodological approach in this study we are treating ‘self’, ‘perception’ and ‘objects’ as heuristic categories. That is to say, we are using these categories simply as signposts which enable us to direct our enquiry. It is particularly important that we bear this in mind when exploring the issue of ‘self’, and there are two reasons as to why this is the case. Firstly, as we are about to see, to say that Vasubandhu adopts a particular view of ‘self’ is somewhat problematic, since ultimately he seeks to dissolve the very concept of ‘self’. Secondly, Vasubandhu, Kumārila and Śaṅkara all understand the concept of ‘self’ in different ways. Since we also intend to look at the way in which Kumārila and Śaṅkara engage with Vasubandhu on the issue of ‘self’, it thus essential that we view ‘self’ only as a heuristic concepts.

\textsuperscript{192} Steven Collins, \textit{Selfless Persons: Imagery and thought in Theravāda Buddhism} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 12,
Vasubandhu

In this section we shall explore the pedagogical character of Vasubandhu’s discussions on the issue of ‘self’. As we noted in our introductory chapter, the conceptual framework underpinning Vasubandhu’s works is – to a significant degree – contingent upon Abhidharma terminology. This is particularly evident in those parts of his texts which address the issue of self. It is thus imperative that we have a basic understanding of the framework within which the Abhidharma tradition discussed the issue of ‘self’ if we are to make sense of Vasubandhu’s discussions of this issue. For this reason, we shall begin by outlining some of the basic claims which Abhidharma makes about ‘self’. After this, we shall move on to an exploration of ‘self’ in Vasubandhu, paying particular attention to his view of ‘self’ and dharmas and the ways in which his theory of vijñapti-mātra shapes his discussions.

i) ‘self’ in Abhidharma

The name Abhidharma literally means ‘higher teaching’. The term is used to refer to both a set of texts and a school.\(^{193}\) In the context of this discussion, we shall use be using Abhidharma in the latter sense. Dating back to approximately the third century BCE, the Abhidharma school was the earliest Buddhist school to provide a comprehensive and systematic account of the teachings of the Buddha.\(^{194}\) The following observation made by Rupert Gethin gives us a sense of the general endeavour of Abhidharma:

Abhidharma represents the theoretical counterpart to what the meditator actually experiences in meditation. It can be summed up as the attempt to give a systematic and exhaustive account of the world in terms of its constituent physical and mental events. This enterprise has two aspects: first, to categorise all possible types of event; secondly to

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consider all possible ways in which those mental events can interact and so categorize the various kinds of causal relationships.¹⁹⁵

Abhidharma, then, was concerned with offering a comprehensive account of the relationship between all of those things which constitute existence. This gives us an indication as to the depth and complexities of this system. A detailed explanation of Abhidharma is thus well beyond both the scope and aim of the present study. In this section, therefore, we shall simply outline some of the key Abhidharma concepts which arguably helped to shape Vasubandhu’s attitude towards ‘self’.

Before we proceed, it is important to note that Abhidharma can further be divided into two groups: Theravāda and Sarvāstivāda.¹⁹⁶ Although these two groups diverge on a number of issues, the original issue which is thought to have caused this segregation is related to the idea of dharmas, which we shall discuss shortly. Briefly stated, the point of contention was whether or not dharmas of the past, present and future can be said to exist.¹⁹⁷ The Theravādins held that only dharmas occurring in the present exist. Regarding the past, only those dharmas which have yet to bear fruit can be said to exist. Future dharmas, the Theravādins claimed, did not exist. The Sarvāstivādins, on the other hand, held that past present and future dharmas all exist.¹⁹⁸

Evidence suggests, however, that it was Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma, which had the most notable influence on Vasubandhu’s ideas. As Paul Williams has observed,

In India as a whole in classical times the Sarvāstivāda appears to have been by far the most important and influential of the Abhidharma traditions. One way or another it is the Sarvāstivāda that appears to have had most influence on the Mahāyāna approaches to both Buddhist philosophy and practice.¹⁹⁹

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¹⁹⁶ As we noted in Chapter Two, the Sanskrit term Sarvāstivāda means literally ‘teaching that all exists’. Theravāda is a Pali term which literally translates as ‘teaching of the elders’.
¹⁹⁸ See Williams, Buddhist Thought, p. 123.
¹⁹⁹ Williams, Buddhist Thought, p. 92.
In view of this, the following discussion will be concerned with Abhidharmas as propounded by the Sarvāstivādins.

Central to Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma – and to the Abhidharma system more generally – is the theory that only dharmas exist. The term dharma, ought not to be conflated with Dharma. Dharma, in Buddhist traditions, refers to the Buddha’s teaching, or more broadly, as Gethin states, ‘the way things ultimately are.’\(^{200}\) The term dharma means ‘event’, and refers to the basic elements of which reality consists; both Rupert Gethin and Paul Williams thus refer to dharmas as ‘building blocks’.\(^ {201}\) Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma holds that that there are seventy-five dharmas, seventy-two of which are conditioned (saṁkhata), which means that they come into existence only temporarily.\(^ {202}\) The unconditioned dharmas, according to Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma, are space (ākāśa) and two categories of nirvāṇa.\(^ {203}\) Crucially, dharmas are held to have svabhāva, ‘own-being’, meaning that each one is really and independently existent. As we will see subsequently, this is something which Vasubandhu disputes.

Conditioned dharmas, according to Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma, can be divided into three categories: citta, cetasika and rūpa. Citta, broadly speaking, can be said to mean something akin to ‘consciousness’. Only one dharma corresponds to citta. Citta, according to Abhidharma, is always intentional; that is, it is always consciousness of something.\(^ {204}\) Cetasika refers to something like ‘mentality’, and rūpa, which literally means ‘form’, refers to all things physical.\(^ {205}\) Conditioned dharmas arise and cease in various combinations. This arising and ceasing is only momentary, but it


\(^{204}\) See Gethin, p. 211. Gethin himself does not use the term ‘intentional’, but this is implied in his assertion that citta ‘is the phenomenon of being conscious of something.’ (p. 211).

is the succession of these ‘moments’ which, broadly speaking, accounts for our experience of the world.

We ought to briefly mention a further point about the term citta, which is that in Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma it is also closely linked with two other terms: manas and vijñāna. The AK actually states that citta, manas and vijñāna ‘designate the same thing.’ The commentary following this verse highlights a subtle difference between these terms. It reads,

The mind is termed citta because it accumulates (cinoītā); it is termed manas because it knows (manute) and it is termed vijñāna because it distinguishes an object. It is not the case that the terms citta, manas and vijñāna each denote a different kind of consciousness. Rather, as the passage indicates, citta, manas and vijñāna simply indicate the various functions of consciousness. It is important to bear this passage in mind, since – as we shall see subsequently – it has implications for the way in which understand Vasubandhu’s view of ‘self’.

A further Abhidharma term which will be relevant in our discussion of Vasubandhu is vijñapti. In order to understand this term, we need to briefly explore the Abhidharma view of karma. The term karma is commonly translated as ‘action’. In Abhidharma, however, it is used to denote both action and the intention behind action. There are, according to Abhidharma, three types of karma: mental, bodily and vocal, each of which can be either good or bad. Mental karma is called cetanā (‘will’ or ‘volition’). Vocal and bodily karma is of two types. The first type is vijñapti – which in a technical sense means ‘intimation’ or ‘information.’ Vijñapti is the manifestation of vocal or bodily karma. The second type is avijñapti, which means something like ‘non-information’ or ‘non-

206 Louis de La Vallée Poussin, (tr.), The Abhidharmakosā of Vasubandhu, 4 vols, tr. by Leo M. Pruden (Berkeley, California.: Asian Humanities Press, 1988-1990), vol. 1, 34a-b, p. 205.
207 La Vallée Poussin, (tr.), The Abhidharmakosā of Vasubandhu, vol. 1, 34a-b, p. 205.
208 Bad bodily action includes taking a life, stealing and sexual misconduct. Bad vocal action includes lying, divisive speech, hurtful speech and frivolous speech. Bad mental action includes jealousy, ill-will and wrong view. Good action includes refraining from the aforementioned bad types of vocal and bodily action, and having the mental actions of desirelessness, kindness and right view.
See Gethin, The Foundations of Buddhism, p. 120.
indication’. This refers to non-manifest vocal or bodily karma. It is the former of these terms—vijñapti—which is particularly important in the context of the present discussion, and the sense of activity which it implies. As we shall see subsequently, this has significant implications for the way in which we can interpret Vasubandhu’s view of vijñapti-mātra.

The final issue that we ought to address in the context of our discussion of Abhidharma is the way in which the school understands what we might term the ‘individual’ or ‘person’. Abhidharma contends that an ‘individual’ is simply a combination of various constituents. There are three models which are used in order to explain this idea. The first is the well-known model of the five skandhas or ‘aggregates’: the physical body with the five senses, feelings, ideas and concepts, desires and volitions, and self-consciousness. The second model is that of the twelve āyatana (‘spheres’): the six senses (which include the manas as well as the physical senses) and the six classes of object corresponding to these. The third model which Abhidharma employs in order to explain the various constituents of the ‘individual’ is that of the eighteen dhātu (‘elements’). These are the six senses, the six classes of object of belonging to these senses, and six types of vijñāna corresponding to the six senses. Precisely how these three models relate to each other is somewhat unclear. At best, it seems, we can note Gethin’s observation that the three models ‘constitute a triad...in that they represent three different methods of classifying the totality of dharmas that make up continued existence.’ This issue aside, the important point to note in terms of the present discussion is that Abhidharma holds that an ‘individual’ is simply the sum of a number of arising factors; it is not charcterised by any enduring and unchanging substratum, such as we might term ‘self’.

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212 Gethin, The Foundations of Buddhism, p. 140.
Thus, as is common among Buddhist traditions, *Abhidharma* adheres to the notion of *anātman* (‘no-self’ or ‘non-self’). *Abhidharma* frequently expresses this notion through the doctrine *pudgalanairāmya*, the ‘person being without a self’, which was formulated in direct response to the *Vātsīputrīyas*.\(^{215}\) The *Vātsīputrīyas*, or *Pudgalavādins* as they were otherwise known, propounded the existence of the *pudgala* (‘person’). The *Sarvāstivādin Ābhidharmikas* were among those who accused the *Vātsīputrīyas* of equating the ‘person’ with a permanent self equivalent to that posited by Brahmanical traditions.\(^{216}\) The theory of ‘no-self’, as propounded by the *Abhidharma* school, was not simply a product of metaphysical speculation. It had tangible implications in terms of the very possibility of liberation.\(^{217}\)

We have thus briefly explored some of the key ideas which make up the conceptual framework of the *Abhidharma* tradition. As we observed earlier, Vasubandhu’s discussions of the issue of ‘self’ are, to a certain extent, contingent upon this framework. This is particularly evident in Vasubandhu’s view of ‘self’ and *dharmas*. It is to an exploration of this view that we now turn.

ii) *Vasubandhu on the ‘self’ and dharmas*

Vasubandhu accepts, at least at a conventional level, the *Abhidharma* theory of *dharmas*. He also adheres, unsurprisingly, to to the theory of ‘no-self’. Yet the way in which he employs these ideas differs – in some important respects – from the way in which they are used in *Abhidharma*. That is to say, Vasubandhu’s discussions of these ideas are symptomatic of his broader concern with deconstructing the constraints imposed by conceptuality. In this context, the concepts of *anātman* and *dharmas* can be seen to function as pedagogical devices.


\(^{216}\) Whether this was a misinterpretation of the *Vātsīputrīyas* is subject to debate. As Gethin has argued, while other schools accused them of having smuggled in an *ātman* or ‘self’, they vigorously denied that their person was a ‘self’. See Gethin, *The Foundations of Buddhism*, p. 223.

\(^{217}\) As is stated in the *AKBh*, attachment to the idea of ‘self’ impedes the attainment of liberation. See La Vallée Poussin, (tr.), *The Abhidharmakośa of Vasubandhu*, vol. IV, ch. 9, 24b-c, p. 1313.
Although Vasubandhu accepts the Abhidharma theory of dharmas, he disputes the idea that dharmas have svabhāva. This is explicitly evident in the Viṃś. In the passage of autocommentary which precedes Viṃś 9, the question is raised as to why the Buddha spoke of ‘the existence of the āyatana of form, etc.’ Vasubandhu’s answer to this is that the Buddha’s teachings on the āyatana were intended to introduce the notion of pudhalanairātmya. In Viṃś 10, he states,

Thus this introduces the teaching of the person being without a self (pudgalanairātmya).

Alternatively it introduces the teaching of the dharmas being without a self, through the constructed self.

We can see clearly, then, that Vasubandhu wishes to deny the idea that dharmas have svabhāva, an idea which he sees as being too close to the notion of a ‘self’. The above passage is also a notable example of the second of Vasubandhu’s pedagogical techniques which we identified in Chapter Three – the assertion that certain teachings of the Buddha are to be viewed as preliminary. In this case it is the teaching of the āyatana which is deemed to be so.

Further evidence of Vasubandhu’s pedagogical approach can be found in Vasubandhu’s assertion that ‘self’ and dharmas are both metaphors. As he writes at the start of the TK:

The metaphors of ‘self’ and ‘dharmas’ which develop in many different ways

Take place in the transformation of consciousness: and this transformation is threefold.

Vasubandhu goes on to identify the three stages of vijñānapariṇāma (the ‘transformation of consciousness’). These are ālayavijñāna (store-consciousness), manovijñāna (thought consciousness) and consciousness of the six sense-objects. It is, however, Vasubandhu’s view of the metaphorical character of ‘self’ and dharmas which is significant in terms of the present discussion. Such a view is indicative of Vasubandhu’s broader understanding of the relationship between language and experience. That is to say, because ‘self’ and dharmas are linguistic constructs, they cannot pertain to actual existents. Vasubandhu thus has no option but to view these concepts as metaphors.

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218 rūpādyāyatanāstivoc
219 Viṃś 10: tathā pudgalanairātmyapraśeṣo hi anyathā punaḥ | deśanā dharmanairātmyapraśeṣo kalpitātmanā ||
220 TK 1: ātmadharmopacāro hi vividho yaḥ pravartate | vijñānapariṇāme ’stau pariṇāmaḥ sa ca tridhā ||
It is not only the idea of ‘self’ that Vasubandhu seeks to undermine. Crucially, he also contends that the idea of ‘no-self’ – insofar as it is a conceptual construct – must be relinquished. As he states in MV Bh 26,

“There is a self” is the extreme of superimposing a fixed person, and the extreme of denial is to say that “Everything is without a self”. In order to avoid these extremes, there is the middle path which is knowledge without conceptualisations standing midway between maintaining self and maintaining non-self.\(^{221}\)

Vasubandhu’s understanding of ‘no-self’ is thus more subtle than it first appeared to be. That is, it is not the case that Vasubandhu wishes simply to deny the existence of the self; he wishes to undermine the very assumptions which underpin the distinction between ‘self’ and ‘non-self’.

Thus the way in which Vasubandhu deals with the issue of ‘self’ – and, indeed, of ‘non-self’ – is indicative of his broader endeavour to deconstruct conceptuality more generally. Although the distinction between ‘self’ and ‘non-self’ is useful at the conventional level, such a distinction must be relinquished if one is to attain liberation. After all, liberation is freedom from the very constraints of conceptual language, and thus from any theory whatsoever. As Stefan Anacker has observed, ‘in the highest knowledge there are no theories at all, and certainly no statements regarding something’s being or non-being.\(^{222}\)

iii) The ‘self’ in the context of vijñapti-mātra

Vasubandhu explains our everyday experience as being constructed by vijñapti-mātra.

Contemporary scholars have suggested various ways in which this phrase ought to be translated into

\(^{221}\) MV Bh 5.26: अतंति पुढगलामारपांतो नैरात्मकियम्यापवादांतां प्रज्ञापितसतो अप्यापवादाः \| तत्परिवर्जितं मद्यमं प्रपातं यदात्मानैरत्मकियम्यापवादां निर्विकालपञ्च ज्ञानम् \|

English; ‘mind-only’ and ‘consciousness-only’ are perhaps the most common. In the present discussion, we shall refrain from translating the phrase at all. Our reasons for this ought to become clear in what follows. At present we will simply note that the way in which Vasubandhu understands viññāpi-mātra renders the very possibility of translating the term problematic.

Vasubandhu’s notion of viññāpi-mātra has a notable impact not only on his understanding of particular philosophical issues, but on the way he treats philosophical discussion more generally. Of particular interest are the implications which viññāpi-mātra has for Vasubandhu’s discussions of objects, something which we will examine in Chapter Six. Vasubandhu’s understanding of viññāpi-mātra also shapes – to a significant extent – the way in which he treats the concept of ‘self’, and it is this that we shall explore at present. Firstly, we shall look more closely at Vasubandhu’s use of the phrase viññāpi-mātra, and in particular at the ways in which the Abhidharma understanding of viññāpi has influenced this. We shall then go on to explore how Vasubandhu’s notion of viññāpi-mātra shapes his view of ‘self’.

Although the phrase viññāpi-mātra occurs on a few occasions in Vasubandhu’s writings, its most well-known occurrence is in the first verse of the Viṃś, which reads as follows:

All this is viññāpi-mātra, because of the manifestation of non-existent objects, in the same way as a net of hair may be perceived by someone afflicted with an optical disorder.

As we noted previously, the phrase viññāpi-mātra has been translated in a number of different ways. The meaning of the term mātra is relatively unambiguous; in Buddhist philosophical discourse it is a technical term meaning ‘only’. It is the meaning of the term viññāpi which has, in this context, been subject to dispute. As we said before, we shall refrain from translating the term at all.

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223 Thomas Wood, for example, is one of a number of scholars who translates viññāpi-mātra as ‘mind only’. See Thomas Wood, Mind Only. Tola and Dragonetti are among those who translate the phrase as ‘consciousness-only’. See Fernando Tola and Carmen Dragonetti, Being as Consciousness: Yogācāra Philosophy of Buddhism (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2004).

224 Viṃśatikā 1: viññāpi-mātramevedamadasarthaśvabhāsanāt | yadvat taimirikasyāsateṣaṃśūkāśidārśanaḥ ||
In order to try and ascertain what Vasubandhu means when he declares, ‘All this is viññapti-mātra’, we need to look at the passage of auto-commentary which precedes Viṃś 1. In this passage, Vasubandhu cites a quotation from the Daśa-bhūmika-sūtra or (“Śūtra on the ten Stages”). The quotation reads, cittamātram bho jina-pūrā yaduta traidhātukamiti sūrāti, ‘From the śūtra: the three worlds are (that is to say), oh sons of Jina, citta-mātra.’ Vasubandhu’s assertion that ‘All this is viññapti-mātra’ is clearly a paraphrase of this quotation. Interestingly, however, in Viṃś 1 itself, Vasubandhu substitutes the citta-mātra with viññapti-mātra. The close proximity of Viṃś 1 to the actual śūtra passage as quoted in the auto-commentary indicates that Vasubandhu makes no effort to conceal this subtle change, which in turn suggests that the use of viññapti rather than citta must be a deliberate move on Vasubandhu’s part.

Now in view our earlier observation concerning the terms citta, manas and viññāna, we might assume that Vasubandhu is simply adding viññapti to the list of terms which all ‘designate the same thing.’ Viññapti, of course, preserves the metre of the śloka in a way that citta would not. However, viññāna would fit just as well in this sense. It would also be more in keeping with the AKBh, which - as we have seen - explicitly associates viññāna with citta and manas. The question as to why Vasubandhu has chosen to use viññapti over viññāna is thus something that we need to examine more closely.

As we saw previously, in the Abhidharma tradition viññapti had a specific meaning referring to vocal and bodily action. Thus, by choosing to use viññapti rather than viññapti, Vasubandhu is, it seems, trying to say something about the nature of the process which constructs our experience of the world; that is, he arguably attempting to convey the idea that this process actively constructs our

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225 Although Vasubandhu does not give the name of the sūtra from which he is quoting, Stefan Anacker identifies the quote as belonging to the Daśa-bhūmika-sūtra in his translation of the Viṃśatikā. See Stefan Anacker, Seven Works of Vasubandhu, p. 161.

226 La Vallée Poussin, (tr.), The Abhidharmakośa of Vasubandhu, vol. 1, 34a-b, p. 205.
experience. This line of argument is adopted by Bruce Cameron Hall, who has noted the legacy of *Abhidharm* in Vasubandhu’s use of *vijñāpti*.  

So how does the idea of *vijñāpti* as an *active* process help us to understand Vasubandhu’s view of ‘self’? *Vijñāpti-mātra*, for Vasubandhu, is not only an active process in the sense that it *constructs* our experience of the world; it also actively *deconstructs* those misconceptions which shape this very experience. The most perilous of these misconceptions, for Vasubandhu, is the idea that we are characterised by an enduring ‘self’. It is only upon realising that everything is *vijñāpti-mātra* that we can relinquish attachment to this misconception, and indeed to the very distinction between ‘self’ and ‘no-self’. However, Vasubandhu also uses *vijñāpti-mātra* as a pedagogical device through which to to facilitate this realisation in the *Yogācārin* pupil. In this context, *vijñāpti-mātra* plays a vital role in the process of deconstruction which is so central to Vasubandhu’s works.

Significantly, however, even the notion of *vijñāpti-mātra* itself is not free from this process of deconstruction. Indeed, Vasubandhu warns the *Yogācārin* pupil of the perils of becoming attached to *vijñāpti-mātra* as a linguistic construct. In *Triṃśikā* 26-27, he writes:

> So long as *vijñāna* does not remain in the state of *vijñāpti-mātra*

> Attachment to the twofold grasping will not cease.

> Even with regards the recognition ‘this alone is *vijñāpti-mātra*’

> Something is caused to remain in front, and [one] does not remain in this alone [the state of *vijñāpti-mātra*].

Vasubandhu’s point in this passage is that a true understanding of *vijñāpti-mātra* is only possible when one has relinquished the ‘twofold grasping’ (*grāha-dvaya*) which characterises our experience

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227 Bruce Cameron Hall, ‘The Meaning of Vījñāpti in Vasubandhu’s concept of Mind’. *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, 9.1 (1986), 7-23. Hall also notes that the original meaning of *mātra* is ‘measure’ or ‘extent’ (p. 13). He uses this to support his claim that for Vasubandhu, *vijñāpti* is ‘a “manifestation” to consciousness’ (p. 14).

228 *Triṃśikā* 26-27:  yāvadvijñāptimātratre vijñānaṁ nāvatiṣṭhati । grāhadvayasyaṇusayastāvanna vinivartate ||

* vijñāptimātramvedamityapi hyupalambhataḥ । sthāpayannagratāḥ kincit tannātre nāvatiṣṭhate ||

(The second part of the first line of the Sanskrit text actually reads *ha yupalambhataḥ*. This appears to be a misprint).
of the world. Yet as we have already seen, vijnapti-mātra is instrumental in bringing about this relinquishment. What, then, are we to make of this seemingly paradoxical predicament?

Vasubandhu’s apparently contradictory approach towards vijnapti-mātra serves to reinforce the central contention of our study – that is, that Vasubandhu’s discussions comprise a pedagogical process. Viewed in this context, vijnapti-mātra can be seen to function as a pedagogical device, through which the Yogācārin pupil is encouraged to relinquish his attachment to the world. Whilst the pupil is conditioned by lokasaṃvṛtisatya (‘truth according to worldly convention’), he will continue to reify all linguistic constructs, including, that is, vijnapti-mātra. It is only when he realises paramārthasatya (‘ultimate truth’) that he will cease to become attached to these constructs, even vijnapti-mātra itself.

Thus vijnapti-mātra in Vasubandhu’s has – we might say – a heuristic function. It is employed to steer the Yogācārin pupil away from the constraints which language impose. Yet as a linguistic construct itself, it is only ‘true’ in the sense of lokasaṃvṛtisatya. Thus if one is to relinquish attachment to worldly existence, then one must also relinquish the notion of vijnapti-mātra. This does not imply, however, the process which is denoted by the phrase vijnapti-mātra ceases to exist. On the contrary, liberation, for Vasubandhu, is realisation that this process is all that there is.

Vasubandhu’s treatment of vijnapti-mātra is only paradoxical if we assume a particular view of the relationship between language and the ways things are. That is, if we assume that vijnapti-mātra as a linguistic construct is concomitant with the process which the actual process which vijnapti-mātra denotes, then an inevitable contradiction will ensue. Vasubandhu, however, contends that language cannot give us a true indication of the way things are; it can only serve to point towards particular ideas. It is for this reason that Vasubandhu readily acknowledges the limitations of his own discussions of vijnapti-mātra, insofar as they are contingent upon conceptual language. In Viṃś 22, for example, he writes,
This demonstration of vijñāpti-mātra done by me [is] according to my own capacity. But done in its entirety, it is not to be thought. It is the scope of the Buddha.\textsuperscript{229}

Thus Vasubandhu admits that even his own deliberations on vijñāpti-mātra are inadequate. The fact that Vasubandhu acknowledges this serves to further support our contention that the phrase vijñāpti-mātra functions as part of a pedagogical process. That is, since Vasubandhu relies upon language to facilitate a goal that is itself beyond language, he has no option but to treat linguistic concepts simply as pedagogical devices. Once the Yogācārin pupil has attained liberation, he no longer has any need for such concepts; until that is, he returns to the world as a bodhisattva. It is then that he takes up these linguistic concepts in order to facilitate the attainment of the bodhisattva ideal in others. In this context, however, he is not himself constrained by these concepts.

In the above discussion, we have explored Vasubandhu’s understanding of ‘self’. As we have seen, Vasubandhu denies not only the notion of ‘self’, but the very distinction between ‘self’ and ‘no self’. We have seen Vasubandhu brings about an awareness of this idea through the notions of vijñānapariṇāma (‘transformation of consciousness’) and vijñāpti-mātra. In so doing, we have drawn out some of the ways in which Vasubandhu’s discussion of ‘self’ are pedagogical. As we noted earlier, Vasubandhu’s discussions of ‘self’ can be seen as part of a broader dialogue between Vedic and Buddhist traditions about the self. To get a sense of this, it is important to look at the ways in which subsequent thinkers viewed treated the issue of ‘self’. In view of this, we shall now look briefly at Kumārila and Śaṅkara’s respective attitudes towards ‘self’.

**Kumārila on the ‘self’**

In what follows, we shall offer a brief interpretation of Kumārila’s view of ‘self’. Kumārila does not appear to engage explicitly with Buddhist theories about ‘self’, perhaps because he sees the idea of ‘no-self’ as being so palpably opposed to idea of an enduring ‘self’ which is embodied in the Vedic texts that it is not worthy even of philosophical critique. However, his opposition to the ‘no-self’

\textsuperscript{229}Vipś 22: vijñaptimātrātāsiddhiḥ svāśaktisadṛśo mayāḥ kṛtteṣu sarvathā sā tu na cintyāḥ
theory can be found on a more subtle level. That is, it can be seen as an implicit part of his repudiation of what he conceives to be a Buddhist denial of the external world. On this issue, he seems to engage directly with the work of Vasubandhu. Since Kumārila’s critique of Vasubandhu centres largely on the issue of the external world, we shall leave an exploration of the way Kumārila engages with Vasubandhu until Chapter Six. It is, however, still important for us to look at Kumārila’s view of ‘self’, since it gives us a sense of the broader intellectual milieu of which Vasubandhu’s discussions of self were a part. This, then, will be the aim of the present section.

In order to give some context to Kumārila’s discussions of ‘self’, we need first to give a brief outline of the role of the ‘self’ in Kumārila’s system. Kumārila’s view of ‘self’ is shaped by the Mīmāṃsā notion of codanā, which is introduced in MS 1.1.2. Numerous different English translations of codanā appear in contemporary writings on Mīmāṃsā, including among others ‘mandate’, ‘direction’ and ‘injunction’.230 It is important to note, however, that although these are all viable translations, the term codanā has a sense beyond that which is implied by our everyday use of these terms. In the Mīmāṃsā tradition, codanā is the eternal potency of Vedic language which drives human beings to act. Or put in another way, as Clooney observes, it is ‘the verbal force expressive of purpose and leading to action.’231 Broadly speaking, then, codanā is that which impels human beings to act.

We ought to note that there is a subtle distinction between codanā and what the Mīmāṃsā school terms vidhi. Clooney usefully identifies this distinction as one of ‘force’ and ‘content’.232 Whereas

231 Francis X. Clooney, Thinking Ritually: Rediscovering the Pūraṇa Mīmāṃsā of Jaimini (Vienna: Institut für Indologie der Universität Wien, 1990), p. 139
232 Francis X. Clooney, Thinking Ritually, pp. 138-139
vidhi as ‘the particular content of any given injunction: it is what is enjoined in a certain arrangement for this rite,’ codanā is ‘the injunctive force behind the arrangement, the “power” present in the vidhi, this certain way of performing the ritual.’233 Thus, Clooney observes, ‘It is the codanā which impinges on the hearer and makes him begin action; the vidhi constitutes the particulars of what he does when he acts.’234 Codanā is thus that injunctive force which brings about a specific action.

The important point in terms of the present discussion is that in the centrality of codanā in Mīmāṃsā is indicative of the broader significance of Vedic language. As we argued in Chapter Three, this was indeed the overall concern of the Mīmāṃsā tradition. So what are the implications for Kumārila’s understanding of ‘self’? As we saw in Chapter Three, Kumārila’s central concern is with establishing the absolute authority of Vedic language. All of his philosophical discussions can be seen as ultimately being directed towards this aim. Consequently, Kumārila’s discussions of ‘self’ are taken in a rather different direction to those of Vasubandhu and – as we shall see subsequently – those of Śaṅkara. Kumārila’s primary concern in his discussions of ‘self’ is to clarify the role of the self in relation to the injunctive character of Vedic language. Thus most of his discussions focus on the issue of the ‘self’ as agent. Kumārila’s discussions of this issue are intricately complex, and a comprehensive account of these discussions is well beyond the scope of the present discussion. Moreover, such an account would divert us from the dialogical focus of the present study. In what follows, then, we shall look two important questions which Kumārila addresses in relation to the issue of ‘self’: i) What is an agent? Or more precisely, what kind of relationship between self and body does agency entail? and ii) How can the self be a doer if it is eternal?

233 Francis X. Clooney, *Thinking Ritual*, p. 138
234 Francis X. Clooney, *Thinking Ritual*, p. 138
i) *The body and the ‘self’*

Kumārila is basically in agreement with the Sāṃkhya view that the body is the same as any other physical matter, and he states this quite clearly in AV 111-112. The body, he says, has been proven by the Sāṃkhya school to be devoid of caitanya (‘consciousness’), ‘because of being impure, a collection of aggregates, having a form, being existent (like being exterior) and being like a dead body.’

Kumārila also agrees with the Sāṃkhya view that physical entities are devoid of any inherent purpose – they exist for the sake of something other than themselves. Kumārila voices this idea in AV 114:

> A collection of aggregates and a shape could not exist without (having a) purpose for another. And if something exists as a conscious enjoyer, (this is) consistent here.

G. P Bhatt explains the Sāṃkhya view as follows:

> Matter is inert and non-purposive. The existence of material aggregates (saṅghāta) is for the sake of another (parārtha). They are the objects of enjoyment and the enjoyer is different from them. A bed is not meant to itself, because it has no purpose of its own. It is made for the enjoyment of the sleeper. Similarly, the body and sense-organs too, being material aggregates, are inert and non-purposive, and they presuppose a purposive entity other than themselves.

If the body has no innate purpose, then it cannot be the cause of action. Kumārila draws from this his notion that it is the self that acts through the body.

If the self, then, is the cause of actions in the body, the two – the self and body – must be related in some way. So what is the nature of this relationship according to Kumārila? Kumārila does not actually specify the precise nature of the relationship between the self and the body. Instead he is more concerned to distance the self from the change which is incurred through ritual action. In the

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235 *aśuddhatvāt saṅghātāt sannivesataḥ mṛtava cā śārkṛatvād bhūktvād bāhyabhūkatvāt* ||

236 *saṅghātasannivesāv ca na stāḥ pārārthāvarjītau bhūkī ca cetanaḥ kaścidastāḥyatātaviruddhatāt* ||

very first verse of the ātmavāda section, the self has an ‘indirect relationship’ (lakṣanāvṛttyā) to the ‘instruments of sacrifice’ (yajña-sādhanah), a relationship which is occasioned by the body:

Even though the self evidently has no connection with the instruments of sacrifice, even so, it [the self] potentially (has) an indirect relationship occasioned by the body.238

As we can see, then, although Kumārila identifies the ‘body’ as a kind of mediator (if something without a purpose can be said to have such a function) between the self and body, he does not specify how the self relates to the body – merely that it does. In a sense, then, Kumārila avoids the issue. Although he identifies an ‘indirect connection’ between self and body, he does not specify the precise nature of this connection, nor even what type of connection it might be. Perhaps the connection between something material and metaphysical is something Kumārila wishes to avoid.

Such an ambiguous relationship is perhaps Kumārila’s intention. As Ram-Prasad has suggested:

The idea of indirect connection…allows Kumārila to preserve the eternality of the self while meeting both the metaphysical requirement that the self can be conscious only through embodiment and the moral-ritual requirement that it be the recipient of the fruits of those actions of which it is the agent.239

Thus, according to Ram-Prasad, this notion of ‘indirect connection’ allows that the eternal self is both conscious through embodiment and the cause of ritual action. Thus Kumārila attempts to maintain the central role of the self in ritual action, whilst distancing the self from the changefulness which such action might entail. Kumārila does not offer a philosophically sound explanation of the precise nature of this ‘indirect connection’, and we cannot exonerate him in his regard. Yet this lack of explanation is perhaps indicative of his overriding objective to preserve the force of the codanā. Kumārila’s discussions of the self are thus used heuristically as a means for preserving the significance of ritual action.

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238 ŚV, 18.1: sāksād yadyapi sambandho nātmano yajñasādhanah \ tathāpi lakṣanāvṛttyā śaradvārako bhavet ||
ii) *How can the self be a ‘doer’?*

Characteristically, Kumārila is acutely aware of the predicament which arises from his contention that the self is involved in ritual action, so much so that he voices this predicament through his Buddhist opponent:

If the selves of yours are without action, because being all-pervading and eternal, unchanged by happiness and suffering, what kind of doer and enjoyer (would those selves be)?

Now, at the time of the state of being a doer, and the generation of suffering, etc., the original form is the opposite, the state of being eternal would be contradicted.

This objection is based upon two premises. Verse 20 relies for its force on the *eternity* of the self, assuming that this eternity implies that the self is ‘without action.’ If this is the case, the opponent objects, then the self could not be subject to the happiness and suffering that agency necessarily entails. Verse 21 depends upon the idea of the *agency* of the self, and argues that the idea of the self as agent precludes any notion that the self is eternal.

As we can see, the above objection relies upon the assumption that eternity and agency are mutually exclusive – eternity connotes . In order to refute the objection, Kumārila needs to demonstrate that this is not the case. To do this, he plays upon the meaning of *nitya* (‘eternal’):

(We do) not give up the word ‘non-eternal’ being stated of the self, just as long as it is expressing ‘modification’, not ‘destruction.’

Kumārila thus attempts to weaken the Buddhist challenge to the notion of self as agent by arguing that the term ‘non-eternal’ (a-*nitya*) implies ‘modification’ (*vikriyāḥ*) and not ‘destruction’ (*ucchedaḥ*). As Chakravarthi Ram-Prasad explains,

This move is to soften what he might be thought to mean by the eternity of the self. He softens the meaning of eternal to ‘indestructible’ rather than ‘unchangeable’; the latter is the

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240 ŚV 18.20: *tava nityavibhutvābhhyātmāno niṣkriyā yadi sukhyadūhkhyāvīkārvāsca kāṭyaḥ kartṛbhoktrāḥ*

241 ŚV 18.21: *atha kārtrvavālayaṁ duḥkkeścaci jātmani prāgrōpādanyathātvam syāṃnityatāsyā viruddhyate*

242 ŚV 18.22: *nānityaśabdavācyatvamātmano vinivāyate vikriyāmātravācitve na hyucchedo ‘arya tāvata’*
most common gloss on ‘eternal’. He can thus allow the self to be a subject of experience, acting in the ritual sphere and located through embodiment in this world.\textsuperscript{243}

It is certainly the case that this is Kumārila’s intention. Yet whether or not the move is convincing is subject to debate. Although Kumārila’s response addresses the first objection – the one based upon the premise of eternality – it does not entirely address the second objection based upon the notion of the self as \textit{doer}. The objection consists in the idea that the self as \textit{doer} would entail the state of suffering, a state which is not possible for something that is eternal. Kumārila’s redefinition of non-eternality as ‘modification’ does not solve the issue of the suffering self. On the contrary, it appears to precipitate it further. Moreover, it seems that even the term ‘modification’ compromises the notion of the ‘eternity’ of the self as put forward in the Vedas, albeit to a lesser degree. Thus Kumārila’s response to the Buddhist objection is not entirely philosophically sound.

Nonetheless, his response demonstrates the lengths to which he will go to assimilate the ritual concerns of \textit{Mīmāṃsā} within the philosophical agenda of his non-\textit{Mīmāṃsaka} rivals, and in this respect it is significant for the present discussion. As we saw earlier, the \textit{cōdanā} – the force behind Vedic injunctions to act – is the very foundation of the \textit{Mīmāṃsā} system, and thus must be preserved. So too, however, must the eternity of the Self, since this is also put forward in the Vedic texts. Yet Kumārila is not simply writing for his \textit{Mīmāṃsaka} predecessors. With Kumārila, the \textit{Mīmāṃsā} tradition becomes part of a broader philosophical enterprise, in which it is necessary to defend one’s views against those of rival schools. In this respect, Kumārila’s work represents a partial reinvention of the \textit{Mīmāṃsā} school. As Alexei Pimenov has observed,

\begin{quote}
Mīmāṃsā is...transformed from a science of ritual into a philosophical system. It is not only a shift from ritual rules to a philosophical system. It is in fact a change of status: a subsidiary science (\textit{aṅga}) coexistent with the other \textit{aṅgas} of the brahmanic complex turns into an individual philosophical trend which is opposed to and which criticises other schools. This helps comprehend medieval Mīmāṃsā as represented by Kumārila and Prabhakāra who had
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{243} Chakravarthi Ram-Prasad, \textit{Knowledge and Liberation in Classical Indian Thought} (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), p. 40.
disputes with both Buddhists and adherents of the orthodox schools of Vedānta and Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika.²⁴⁴

Yet to say that Mīmāṃsā ‘is…transformed from a science of ritual into a philosophical system is perhaps too extreme. Although we certainly see a shift in Kumārila’s system towards the epistemological and metaphysical concerns of his rivals, these concerns do not replace the older ritual concerns of the Mīmāṃsā school. On the contrary, as we have seen, Kumārila appears determined to demonstrate that these ritual concerns can be defended in philosophical discussions such as those instigated by his intellectual rivals. It is perhaps not incidental, then, that the medium through which Kumārila chooses to express his ideas is the vārttika – a type of commentary that permits – to a certain degree – the reshaping of the original text.²⁴⁵

The seriousness of the paradox of self is perhaps lessened if we examine what Kumārila understands by ‘action.’ Kumārila does not understand action merely in the sense of movement. For Kumārila, in fact, everything which has a verbal root is an action. Kumārila articulates this idea in ŚV 18.74-75, which reads as follows:

From the state of possessing action, the self is also arrived at as performer of sacrifice. (It is) not maintained that doing is the only one (form of action) like the “atom-eaters” (the Vaiśeṣikas).²⁴⁶

And the action which is self-inherent is not performed by the performers alone. An action is merely a verb, (and we) also reply that the action may be different from the performer.²⁴⁷

This is significant for the present discussion because it highlights the importance of the codanā. Action, for Kumārila, is not simply the physical manifestation of action, or movement. Action inheres in the Vedic word itself, in the injunctive force behind any possible movement. Action in

²⁴⁵ See Chapter Two. As Dan Arnold has noted, the meaning of a vārttika in grammatical discourse is a rule clarifying ‘the meaning of what was said, what was left unsaid, and or what was inadequately said’ – utkāṇuktađarukārtārhatāṁcintākāri tu vārttikam, See Arnold, Buddhists, Brāhmins and Beliefs, p. 221n.
²⁴⁶ ŚV 18.74: yajanāntavatamaryāmā sakriyatvā prapadyate ‘na parispanda evaikah kriyāh naḥ kāṇabhojīvāt’
²⁴⁷ ŚV 18.75: na ca svasamavetaiva kartṛbhīḥ kriyate kriyāḥ kriyāḥ dhāivarthamātra syādanyādharo ‘pi kartṛtāḥ
this broad sense may or may not lead to action in the sense of movement. As we saw earlier in D’Sa’s observation, codanā is only a vidhi if it leads to action, but it can still be a codanā without being a vidhi.248

For Kumārila, it is not only the case that the self causes ritual action. Injunctions to action in the Vedic texts demonstrate that the self exists. As Kumārila writes in AV 140-141:

   Indeed, the existence of the self which is obtained from the Veda alone (will result in) contradiction about the self. Or the words of the Bhāraṇaṇas wish to say with regard to that.249

These two verses provide one of the most pertinent examples of Kumārila’s endeavour to render the Mīmāṃsā notion of codanā compatible with the philosophical concerns of his non-Mīmāṃsaka rivals. The primacy of ritual injunction is emphasised in Kumārila’s mention of the Bhāraṇaṇa – those texts which clarify the rituals mentioned in the Vedas. Clearly, however, in these texts the self is not a metaphysical issue. Jaimini thus never uses the term ātman. Thus Kumārila’s reference to the ontological status of the self in this verse seems to be an attempt to reconcile the Mīmāṃsā ritual concerns with later non-Mīmāṃsā philosophical concerns. The codanā is thus preserved, and used as evidence for the existence of the self.

We have seen, then, how the Mīmāṃsā notion of the codanā provides the conceptual framework upon which Kumārila’s attitude towards Self is based. Kumārila’s discussions of self allow him to maintain these roots, whilst simultaneously engaging with the epistemological concerns of his intellectual rivals. The concept of self thus functions as a heuristic category through which Kumārila is able to repudiate his adversaries.

248 Francis X. D’Sa, Ṣabdaprāṃyam in Śabarā and Kumārila, p. 48
249 AV 140: vedādevatmanastitvam yo nāma pratipadyate | virodhaṃ vātmanā brāyati taṃ prati brāhmaṇābhidhā ||
   AV 141: anyathānupapattesi ca viddhinātmanyakapeśite | lastitvādyotanādairarthākṣiptasamarthanam ||
Śaṅkara

As is well-known, Śaṅkara holds that self and consciousness are identical. His philosophical deliberations on issues such as the self, nature of perception and the status of external objects, are all directed towards establishing this. Yet as we shall see in what follows, Śaṅkara’s discussions of self have an additional function. It was vital for Śaṅkara to demonstrate that it was Advaita Vedānta which provided the only correct path to liberation. It was thus necessary, for Śaṅkara to repudiate those rival schools which offered alternative paths to liberation. Śaṅkara’s discussions of self thus provide a heuristic framework through which he is able to repudiate those rival views, and thus maintain that his system provides the only correct path to liberation. The Yogācāra and Pūrva Mīmāṃsā present arguably the greatest threat to Śaṅkara’s in this regard, largely because there are features of their view of the path which are incompatible with Śaṅkara’s. It is the way in which Śaṅkara’s discussions of self serve to repudiate these two schools that we shall discuss in this section. In so doing, we shall see the significance of the concept of dialogue, which as we said in Chapter One is at the heart of our approach.

Before we begin to look at Śaṅkara’s discussions of Vasubandhu, we need first to point out that Śaṅkara uses a number of terms for ‘consciousness’, among which are cit, caītanya, cetanā and vijnāna. As we mentioned in the context of Vasubandhu, philosophical Sanskrit contains an abundance of synonyms, and it certainly seems that in most cases Śaṅkara uses these terms synonymously. However, as we shall see subsequently, Śaṅkara does appear to choose specific terms when arguing against the Buddhists. This in itself provides an interesting insight into his use of dialogue.

So how does Śaṅkara repudiate the Yogācārins through dialogue with the Advaitin pupil? The way in which he does so is through his discussions of the Self as sākṣin, or ‘witness’, a term which has
its origins in the *Upaniṣads*. The idea of the self as *sāksin* witness is crucial for showing that a permanent self is needed for experience. As Śaṅkara states in *Upad* P 18.94:

> Everything including the ‘I-notion’ located in the intellect is always (śadā) [a viśeṣaṇa] of the sāksin. Therefore, the knower, manifesting everything, is never in contact with anything.  

The important point to note here is that Śaṅkara maintains that the Self as sakṣin cannot be subject to change. It is essential, of course, for Śaṅkara to preserve the changelessness of the self.

When criticising the Buddhist view of external objects in the *BS Bh*, Śaṅkara frequently uses the term *sāksin*. These arguments will be discussed in detail in Chapter Six. At present it will suffice to note Śaṅkara’s main line of argument in this passage, namely, that our experience of an external world proves the existence of a permanent self in its capacity as sāksin. In this sense, as we shall see in Chapter Six, Śaṅkara’s critique of the Buddhist denial of external objects is actually peripheral to his affirmation of a permanent self.

So how does Śaṅkara use teacher-pupil dialogue concerning the idea of *sāksin* to refute his Buddhist opponents? The central idea behind asserting the notion of sāksin is to show that the Buddhist theory of no-self is absurd. That is, experience is only possible if there is a witness of experience. In the second chapter of the prose section of the *Upad*, the teacher and pupil discuss the nature of Consciousness. In *Upad* G 2.89, the teacher tells the pupil that Consciousness persists, even in deep sleep. In 2.93, the pupil responds,

> Never, Sir, in deep sleep is consciousness seen by me or anything else whatsoever.

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250 The term sāksin comes from aksa, ‘eye’ with the suffix sa, ‘with’ or ‘together with.’ Sāksin is most commonly translated as ‘witness.’ Another possible translation is ‘observer.’ It is important to note that both translations are only heuristic, since the self, according to Śaṅkara, is free from the notion of agency which the terms ‘witness’ and ‘observer’ connote. Tara Chatterjee has noted that the earliest reference to a ‘passive conscious spectator’ occurs in *Māṇḍaya Upaniṣad* 3.1.1. See Tara Chatterjee, ‘The Concept of Sāksin’, *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, 10 (1982), p. 339.

251 *Upad* 1.18.94: buddhyārūḍhaṁ sadā sarvaṁ śāṁkaraṁ ca sāksināḥ | tasmāt sarvāvabhasa jñāḥ kiṃcid api asprśan sadā ||

252 *Upad* G 2.93: na hi kadācid bhagavan, suṣupte mayā caityanyam anyad vā kiṃcid drṣṭam ||
It is the teacher’s response to this that is indicative of Śaṅkara’s repudiation of the Yogācāra position. The teacher replies,

The seeing exists through which you deny that nothing has been seen, and that is consciousness.253

Śaṅkara’s point here is that it is the sāksin through which one becomes aware of the ‘non-seeing’ in deep sleep. This is clearly aimed at repudiating the Buddhist doctrine of ‘no-self’.

As we mentioned previously, Śaṅkara appears to be careful in the choice of terms which he uses when repudiating his Buddhist opponents. If we look closely at Śaṅkara’s arguments against the Vijnānavādin Buddhists, we see that he repeatedly uses the term vijnāna, but not vijnapti. In BS Bh 2.2.28-32, one of Śaṅkara’s most detailed refutations of the Vijnānavādins, the term vijnāna occurs on twenty-three occasions. In only five of these is Śaṅkara referring to the school itself, which means that there are still eighteen occasions in which Śaṅkara could have easily used the term vijnapti, but instead used the term vijnāna. In addition to this, the term vijnāna does not appear in the BS verses themselves, and so it is not the case that Śaṅkara is simply following these.

In Br Up Bh 4.3.7, the other key passage in which Śaṅkara attempts to refute the Vijnānavādins, we find the term vijnāna occurring no less than one hundred and twenty-four times, but, again, never the term vijnapti. Now in this case, we do find the term vijnāna in the Upaniṣadic verse itself, a fact which could explain why Śaṅkara refers to the term so often in his commentary on the verse. Yet in spite of this, there is evidence to suggest that again Śaṅkara is deliberately refraining from using vijnapti. Firstly, in this passage Śaṅkara uses the phrase vijnāna-mātra on six occasions. Now as we saw earlier, Vasubandhu rarely uses the phrase vijnāna-mātra, but frequently uses vijnapti-mātra. Now it seems highly likely that Śaṅkara is refuting Vasubandhu in this passage. So why does he not use vijnapti-mātra instead of vijnāna-mātra, which would be more in keeping with Vasubandhu’s works? One possible reason is that he has borrowed a version of Vasubandhu’s text from someone such as Dharmakīrti. Yet given that Śaṅkara is very careful with the terminology he

253 Upad G 2.93: yayā tvaṁ vidyamānayā na kimcid drṣṭam iti pratiṣedhasi, sā drṣṭis tac ca itanyam
uses against the Buddhists, it seems highly likely that his use of *vijñāna* instead of *vijñāpti* here is deliberate.

Secondly, Śaṅkara only uses *vijñāna* as a quotation from the *Upaniṣad* verse on one occasion in this passage. For the rest of the time, he is free to use any number of synonyms. Elsewhere in his commentaries, Śaṅkara does not appear to be concerned to use only the specific terms found in the *Upaniṣadic* verses themselves. Moreover, as we saw in the introduction to this section, Śaṅkara treats most of the Sanskrit terms for ‘consciousness’ synonymously. In view of these things, and our exploration of the *BS Bh* passage above, it does seem, therefore, that we have sufficient evidence to suggest that in *Br Up Bh 4.3.7*, Śaṅkara deliberately refrains from using the term *vijñāpti*.

It seems then that Śaṅkara deliberately uses the term *vijñāna* instead of *vijñāpti* in his arguments against the Buddhists. Yet why is this the case? It relates, I suggest to the *active* sense of *vijñāpti* which we discussed earlier in relation to Vasubandhu. As we saw earlier, *vijñāpti* has its roots in the notion of action. Śaṅkara clearly wants to maintain that the Self is devoid of action. Thus in using the term *vijñāna* as opposed to *vijñāpti*, Śaṅkara is – it would appear – attempting to preserve the non-duality of the self.

We have seen, then, how Śaṅkara’s discussions of the non-duality of the self serve as a framework through which he can repudiate his *Yogācāra* opponents. The reason behind Śaṅkara’s determination to undermine the *Yogācāra* position is clear; it relates to the theory of no-self. However, as we have seen in the previous section, the *Mīmāṃsakas* – sharing Śaṅkara’s concerns with Vedic exegesis – *do* hold that there is a permanent self. So what is the threat of the *Mīmāṃsaka* system to Śaṅkara? As is well-known, the threat lies in the notion of self as agent. As we saw in the previous section, Kumārila’s notion of the self as agent is an integral part of his system; it is the means through which he can preserve the importance of ritual action laid down in the Vedic texts, and consequently maintain the authority of Vedic language. Of course, Śaṅkara
also adheres to the authority of Vedic language. His problem is with Kumārila’s view of self as agent. As Forsthoefel has observed,

The Mīmāṃsā, initially concerned with dharma and by extension, proper exegesis of scripture, streamlined the salvific force of śruti to injunctions (vidhi), thus valorizing a performative hermeneutic over a cognitivist. Such an approach is anathema to Śaṅkara, for it involves agents, ends and acts at every level; in a word, it involves plurality.254

It is this thus this notion of self as agent which goes against Śaṅkara’s system. Liberation, for Śaṅkara, is cognitive – it cannot be dependent upon human action.

For Śaṅkara, action belongs to the physical body, and not to the self. It is, according to Śaṅkara, superimposition (adhyāsa) which causes one to think that the physical body is the self. As he states in Upad 18.25:

That agency etc., which is superimposed (nyastam) on the self, i.e. consciousness, by the I-notion is that along with the I-notion which is denied (niṣidhyate) by “Not thus, not thus”.255

So how do Śaṅkara’s discussions on self serve as a means for repudiating the Pūrva Mīmāṃsakas? In order to understand this, we need to look at Śaṅkara’s method for facilitating liberation in the Advaitin pupil. The way in which Śaṅkara teaches the pupil about the identity of self and consciousness is to deconstruct the pupil’s presuppositions about concerning who he is. Yet the presuppositions always involve the mistake that action belongs to the self, which is of course, in a broad sense, the Pūrva Mīmāṃsaka view. Thus Śaṅkara’s pedagogical attitude towards the pupil also works on a more subtle level to repudiate the Pūrva Mīmāṃsakas. This is demonstrated most clearly in the first Prose passage of the Upad, so we shall now look at this in some detail.

The dialogue between the teacher and pupil concerning the nature of self begins in section 9 of the prose part of the Upad, which reads as follows:

255 Upad P 18.25: ahamkartrātmani nyastaḥ caityande karṣṛtādi yate neti neti tatsarvam sāhaṃkartrā niṣidhyate
In order to help him cross the ocean of existence, let the teacher ask the pupil, who is charcaterised by having grasped the Supreme self through the śrūtis and śmrītis, “Who are you, my dear?”

In the next two passages, Śaṅkara states,

If he [the pupil] should say, “I was the son of a Brahmin of such a kind, I was a student or householder, now I am a renouncer who wants to cross the ocean of rebirth because of the great sharks of birth and death”, the teacher should say, “Here, indeed, my dear, the body of death is eaten by birds or will turn into earth. How, then, do you wish to cross the ocean of rebirth? For if you turn into ashes on the bank of the river, you cannot cross to the other shore of the river.”

Here, Śaṅkara begins to deconstruct the notion that the body is identical with the body, by showing that the body is imperishable.

It is, however, from section 17 that we see in which the pupil’s conception of the Self is representative of the Mīmāṃsaka tradition. Śaṅkara writes,

Let the teacher say, ‘Listen my dear. In this way the body is different from you. It has the divisions of birth, lineage and life-cycle rituals, and you are different from birth, lineage and life-cycle rituals.”

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256 Upad G: 1.9: evan śrūtīṃśṛtiḥbhīr gṛhitaparamātmālaṃkāṇaḥ śīṣyaṃ saṃsārasāgarād uttitīrṣuḥ precchet – kas tvaṃ asi sonyet∥

257 Upad G: 1.10: sa yadi brāyāt – brāhmaṇaputro ’donvayo brahmaçāry āsāṃ gṛhaṣto vedānīṃ asmi paramahāṃsaparivṛt saṃsārasāgarāḥ janamamṛtyumahāṛgāhād uttitīrṣuḥ it∥

258 A similar idea is expressed in BS Bh 1.1: tadyathā putrabhāryādyuṃ vikalesu sakalesu vā ahameva vikālaḥ sakalo vṛti bāhyadharmanātmamanyadhyasyati tathā dehadharman – sthālo ’haṃ, krśo ’haṃ, gauro ’haṃ, tiṣṭhāmi, gacchāmi, langhayaṃi ceti tathbhriyadharmanā sukāḥ kāpāḥ klībāḥ, badhirāḥ andho ’hamitī tathā ’ntāhkarāṇadharmanāṃkānaḥ kalpavicikitsādhyavasāyādīn∥

259 Upad G: 1.17: ācāryo brāyāt – śṛṇu sonya yathedaṃ śārīraṃ tvaṭto bhinnat bhinnajāyamvasaṃskāraṇī tvaṃ ca jātyavayaśaṃskāravaṃjita
Here, we see that Śaṅkara’s dialogue with the pupil is also – on a more subtle level – dialogue with the *Pūrva Mīmāṁsakas*. This is evident in his reference to ‘life-cycle rituals.’ Thus Śaṅkara’s assertion that the body is different from the self does not only have a pedagogical function in regard to the *Advaitin* pupil; it also serves to repudiate his *Mīmāṁsaka* opponents.

We have thus seen the way in which Śaṅkara uses teacher-pupil dialogue concerning the issue of self in order to repudiate the *Mīmāṁsaka* view of self as agent. There is, however, an important element of Śaṅkara’s system which might initially appear to undermine Śaṅkara’s contention that the *Mīmāṁsakas* are mistaken in positing the self as agent. This is Śaṅkara’s view that it is possible to attain liberation before the body perishes, an idea expressed in the notion of *jīvanmukti* – ‘liberation in life.’\(^\text{260}\) How can Śaṅkara convincingly maintain that the liberated self is devoid of agency whilst simultaneously conceding to the possibility of liberation in life? If the liberated self can be embodied, would this not bring Śaṅkara too close to the *Mīmāṁsaka* view of self as agent?

It seems, however, that rather than posing a contradiction, Śaṅkara’s adherence to the notion of *jīvanmukti* actually serves to reinforce the disparity between his understanding of self and that of the *Mīmāṁsakas*. The difference lies in the ways in which these respective schools understand the notion of ‘embodiment.’ That is, for Śaṅkara it is possible to become ‘dismembered’ whilst still appearing to have a physical body, as is the case with the *jīvanmukta*. Fort’s comments on *BSBh* 1.1.4 emphasise this point nicely. He observes,

‘...bodilessness does not mean being without a physical body; being liberated/bodiless means being utterly detached, untouched by dharmic activity or likes and dislikes. One now knows one is the naturally and eternally bodiless self which does not perform actions and is different from the fruits of action (including the body). Since the self is not connected with

\(^{260}\) As Andrew O. Fort has observed, Śaṅkara actually only uses the term *jīvanmukti* on one occasion, and this is in his commentary on *Bhagavad Gītā* 6.27. See Andrew O. Fort, ‘Knowing Brahman while still embodied: Śaṅkara on *jīvanmukti*’, *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 19 (1991), p. 369. Yet as Roger Marcarelle has observed, there are other passages in the *Bhagavad Gītā Bhāṣya* which allude to the notion of *jīvanmukti*, without using the term itself, such as 2.44-72. See Roger Marcarelle *Freedom Through Inner Renunciation: Śaṅkara’s Philosophy in a New Light* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), p. 183. Aside from Śaṅkara’s commentary on the *Gītā* Śaṅkara also refers to the person who has realised Brahman whilst still living. See, for example, *Br Up Bh* 4.4.6.
the body, one does not become bodiless merely by the fall of the body. Thus, you are “bodiless” while embodied when you know the self is not the body.\footnote{Andrew O. Fort, ‘Knowing Brahman while still embodied: Śaṅkara on jīvanmukti’, p. 374.} Such a notion is of ‘bodilessness’ is, of course, not possible for Kumārila. As we saw earlier, Kumārila holds that liberation is the cessation of all action. Since the body is the abode of action, it would, for Kumārila, be impossible to become liberated whilst still having a physical body.\footnote{See Ram-Prasad, Knowledge and Liberation in Classical Indian Thought (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 44-48.}

Śaṅkara does not face the same predicament, since liberation, for him, is purely cognitive. For one who is liberated, not only can the physical body remain, it can also continue to act. This is because the liberated self is unattached to the idea that action belongs to the self. Action in itself is not an obstacle to liberation, for Śaṅkara. The obstacle is thinking that action belongs to the self. As he writes in \textit{Br Up Bh} 2.4.14,

\begin{quote}
Therefore, only when there is ignorance are actions, factors and results a reality, not for the knower of Brahman, because it is the self of all alone. Neither a factor nor an action or result exists in distinction from the self. And being the non-Self, all (this) is not the Self of anything. Therefore what is non-self is the construction of ignorance alone, but the highest reality is that nothing exists in distinction from the self.\footnote{\textit{Br Up Bh} 2.4.14: tasmāt avidyāyāmeva satyāṃ kriyākāraṅkaphalavayāvahāro na brahmavidaḥ ātmatvādeva sarvasya ātmavyatirekṣa kāraṅkṛṣṭaḥ kṛṣṭaḥ vā sā nātmā sansarvamātmāvaih bhavati kasyaḥcit tasmādavidyaśva anātmavatāṃ parikalpiṇāṃ, na tu paramārthata ātmavyatirekṣāṇām iṁśācit i.}
\end{quote}

Thus the physical body can continue to act when the Self has become liberated. Furthermore, the concept of jīvanmukti allows for the possibility of teaching. As D. Chatterjee has observed,

\begin{quote}
...the denial of the possibility of jīvanmukti would have cut at the very foundation of the Advaita system. It would have implied, among other things that the śruti texts were not revealed to the seers of Truth, and that there were no self-realised teachers of Vedānta who could initiate a seeker in the path of Self realisation.\footnote{D. Chatterjee, ‘Karma and Liberation in Śaṅkara’s Advaita Vedānta’, in S. S. Rama Rao Pappu (ed.), \textit{Perspectives on Vedānta} (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1988), pp. 167-168.}
\end{quote}
The *jīvanmukta*, having already attained liberation, can thus facilitate the attainment of liberation in others. We see, then, that Śaṅkara’s adherence to the idea of the *jīvanmukta* reinforces the importance of pedagogy. This is not dissimilar to the *bodhisattva* of the *Yogācāra* school.

We begun this chapter by looking at the way in which Vasubandhu treats the issue of ‘self’. We looked at his use of specific *Abhidharma* terms, and demonstrated how he incorporates these terms into his own system. We saw how Vasubandhu uses the concepts of *anātman* and *dharmas* as part of his broader endeavour to deconstruct conceptuality in general. We also looked in some detail a Vasubandhu’s use of the phrase *vijñāpti-mātra*. As we have seen, the *Abhidharma* sense of *vijñāpti* is retained – at least to an extent – in Vasubandhu’s system. In Vasubandhu, however, *vijñāpti* takes on a much broader meaning. Indeed, it is considered to be the very process by which our experience of the world is constructed. As we have seen, however, *vijñāpti-mātra* is not simply an explanatory phrase. It is also a pedagogical device which employed in order that the *Yogācārin* pupil might be released from the constraints of conceptual language.
Chapter Five
Perception

Perception is, perhaps, one of the most complex issues addressed in Sanskritic philosophical traditions. Indeed, the problematic nature of the issue is precipitated by the sheer abundance of terms relating to perception and cognition in philosophical Sanskrit. Whilst some of these terms are synonymous, others convey subtle differences in meaning. The task of discerning whether the latter or the former is the case in particular instances only serves to complicate the issue further.

It is important that we bear this complexity in mind throughout the discussion that ensues. We must remember, however, that the aim of this chapter is to demonstrate the pedagogical character of Vasubandhu’s discussions on the issue of perception, and to look at some of the ways in which Kumārila and Śaṅkara subsequently engaged with these discussions. As we shall see in what follows, Vasubandhu, Kumārila and Śaṅkara each had their own concerns in relation to the issue of perception. However, their respective discussions of these issues can be seen as forming part of a broader dialogue about perception, which was characteristic of the intellectual milieu which they shared.

Thus the issue of ‘perception’, like the issue of ‘self’ was very much a concern across the various classical Indian schools. We shall begin by exploring Vasubandhu’s view of ‘perception’, and will demonstrate how this view further supports our contention that his works are pedagogical in character.

Vasubandhu

As is apparent from the previous chapter, Vasubandhu’s works exhibit a deep-seated concern with the process through which we construct a world of subject-object dualities. It is perhaps somewhat surprising, then, that contemporary literature on Vasubandhu seems to contain very little on his
approach to the issue of ‘perception’, an issue which would appear to be intimately connected with such a process. Indeed, we find discussions of perception throughout Vasubandhu’s works, and although his treatment of these discussions is often unsystematic, it is nonetheless fundamental to Vasubandhu’s scheme.

So why is it that contemporary studies of Vasubandhu have so little to say on the issue of perception? Clearly we can only conjecture as to the reasons for this. Nonetheless, it seems that there are two key factors which may account for contemporary scholarship’s lack of interest in this issue. Firstly, modern writers have – for the most part – preoccupied themselves with Vasubandhu’s understanding of vijñapti-mātra. One of the consequences of this approach has been that vijñapti-mātra is often treated as a kind of philosophical statement, at the expense of its role as a pedagogical device employed for the purpose of facilitating liberation. A further consequence has been that issues other than the meaning of vijñapti-mātra have been more frequently than not pushed aside, however crucial they may be to understanding Vasubandhu’s system. The issue of ‘perception’ appears to be among these.

The second possible reason as to the disregard for perception in Vasubandhu’s works has to do with the later Buddhist thinkers Diṅnāga (c. 480-540 CE) and Dharmakīrti (c. 600-660 CE). In terms of their thought-content, Diṅnāga and Dharmakīrti are – for the most part – treated as one. There are, it seems, a number of reasons for this. The first is that none of Diṅnāga’s works is currently thought to survive in the original Sanskrit. Thus we only have access to his works in Tibetan translations, some of which are in themselves obscure. The second reason for the conflation of the two thinkers is that Dharmakīrti’s commentaries on Diṅnāga were, it seems, pivotal to the dissemination of Diṅnāga’s theories among later Sanskritic philosophical traditions. As Dan Arnold has observed, Diṅnāga’s decisive influence on Indian philosophy can scarcely be apprehended without some reference to Dharmakīrti, through whose commentarial reconstructions the basic


points of Dignāga were transmitted to the broader tradition of Sanskritic philosophy (to such an extent that Dharmakīrti is the chief focus of later Indian philosophers).267

The third reason as to why Diṁnāga and Dharmakīrti are frequently treated as one has to do with the influential scholar of Buddhist thought, Theodore Stcherbatsky. In 1930 Stcherbatsky published a detailed study of Diṁnāga and Dharmakīrti, entitled Buddhist Logic.268 As Dan Arnold has observed, Stcherbatsky’s work seems to follow the Indo-Tibetan view of Diṁnāga and Dharmakīrti as emblematic of the “discipline of reasons.”269 There are, then, a number of factors which have led to the conflation of these two thinkers. In the present discussion, for the purpose of simplicity, I will refer only to Diṁnāga. Yet it is essential to keep in mind the fact that our view of Diṁnāga’s position will inevitably have been shaped by Dharmakīrti.

This issue aside, the important point in terms of the present chapter is that it is not until Diṁnāga that we find a thoroughly systematic approach to the issue of ‘perception’ in Buddhist thought. As we shall see when we come to discuss Kumārila, Diṁnāga discusses in detail issues such as determinate and indeterminate perception, the role of sense-perception as a pramāṇa, and cases of perceptual illusion. None of these issues is discussed at length by Vasubandhu, although he may well have laid the foundation for their development. Contemporary scholarship’s neglect of Vasubandhu’s view of ‘perception’ may well be due to the fact that Vasubandhu’s works do not seem overtly concerned with the systematic treatment of the issue of ‘perception’, particularly in comparison with the works of Diṁnāga. In the cases where contemporary scholars of Yogācāra broaden their investigations of perception beyond Dharmakīrti, the approach seems to be one that looks at perception in Yogācāra in general.270 In such instances, the views of Vasubandhu and Diṁnāga – among others – tend to become conflated. Such a tendency is bolstered by the fact that

267 Arnold, Buddhists, Brahmns and Belief., p. 15.
269 Dan Arnold, Buddhists, Brahmns and Belief, p. 15.
some classical Indian opponents of *Yogācāra* seem themselves to treat the *Yogācāra* school as a unified whole. As we discussed in the introduction, this was – at least in part – the case for Kumārila.

Vasubandhu deals with a number of issues relating to perception. In this section, however, I will focus on the way in which he deals with the following two issues: the status of sense-perception and the relationship between perceiver and perceived. Clearly there are additional questions which Vasubandhu addresses in relation to the issue of perception. Yet we have, I believe, strong grounds for focusing upon these two questions in particular. As we have indicated previously, the pedagogical approach in Vasubandhu’s works is apparent in the way he treats *Abhidharma* concepts and questions. Now the two questions which we have identified above were also addressed by the Ābhidharmikas. In looking at these three questions then, we hope to find further support for our contention that Vasubandhu’s works exhibit an approach that is predominantly pedagogical in character.

i) *The status of sense-perception*

Vasubandhu, like most Indian philosophical thinkers – including Kumārila and Śaṅkara – accepts *pratyakṣa* (‘sense-perception’) as a *pramāṇa*, or valid means of knowledge. Although Vasubandhu also accepts another *pramāṇa* – *anumāna* (‘inference’), he clearly acknowledges that sense-perception is the more authoritative of the two. We can see this, for example, in *Vimśatikā* 15b, where Vasubandhu states,

> What is and what is not is ascertained through the authority of the *pramāṇas*. And the *pramāṇa* of sense-perception is the most certain of all the *pramāṇas.*

As we shall see shortly, Vasubandhu’s acceptance of sense-perception as a *pramāṇa* is highly problematic in view of his position on external objects. Before discussing this, however, we will look briefly at Vasubandhu’s understanding of what happens in an episode of sense-perception. It is

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271 *VV* 15b: *pramāṇavasādāstītaṃ nāṣṭitvaṃ vā nirdhāryate sarveśāṃ ca pramāṇānāṃ pratyakṣaṃ pramāṇāṃ gariṣṭhamityāṃ
important to note that Vasubandhu does not offer a detailed or systematic account of the process of sense-perception. The limited material which he provide on the issue, however, can be found in his Vīṃś.

As we have already discussed in the previous chapter, Vasubandhu avidly denies that there is any such entity as a permanent self. Yet in order for Vasubandhu to accept pratyakṣa on any level, there must be something which he identifies as a ‘perceiver.’ For Vasubandhu, what we understand by the perceiver – and what is often mistaken for a permanent self – is in fact only a combination of the five aggregates. Vasubandhu adheres to the Abhidharma view of the twelve āyatanas, comprising the six senses and their corresponding types of sense-objects. In an instance of sense-perception, the eye momentarily comes into contact with its corresponding sense-object. Since this contact is momentary, however, the actual sense-perception must necessarily have passed by the time we realise that what we have experienced was sense-perception. Vasubandhu explains this in VV 16b:

And when a cognition of sense-perception comes into being as ‘This is my sense-perception’, then that sense-object is not seen. Because disfunction is by the manovijñāna only, and the vijñāna of the eye has then stopped. How can the state of being sense-perception of that [cognition] be valid? But because the characteristic of the sense-object is momentary, that form or taste has indeed stopped at that time.\textsuperscript{272}

So according to Vasubandhu, it is a particular cognition that recognises sense-perception as sense-perception. Yet since an object is momentary (kṣanikā), its object must have already ceased to exist when the recognition, ‘This is my sense-perception,’ occurs. Such a recognition comes about through the manovijñāna, at which time the contact of the eye with the sense-object has already ceased. In a sense, this explanation can be seen as laying the groundwork for Diinnāga’s subsequent development of the distinction between determinate and indeterminate perception, which we will explore in the next section in relation to Kumārila.

\textsuperscript{272} VV 16b: \textit{yādi ca sā pratyakṣabuddhirbhava[tidam me pratyakṣamiti tadā na so ‘rtho drṣyate manovijñānenaiva paricchedaccakṣu[vijñānasya ca tadā niruddhatvādīti/kathāṃ tasya pratyakṣatvāṃṣtāṃ/visēṣeṇa tu kṣaṇikasya viṣayasya tadāniḥ niruddhameva tadrūpaṃ rasādikaṃ vāl}
We have thus identified Vasubandhu’s understanding of what happens in an instance of sense-perception. We cannot, however, leave this issue behind without addressing a significant difficulty which Vasubandhu faces in accepting \textit{pratyakṣa} as a \textit{pramāṇa}. As was discussed in the previous chapter, Vasubandhu denies that we can have access to any inherently existing external objects outside of the process through which these objects are constructed. How, then, can he accept something called sense-perception, if sense-objects do not exist inherently? If external objects cannot be known to exist intrinsically – as is the case for Vasubandhu – then how can such a thing as sense-perception be said to exist, let alone be a \textit{pramāṇa}? Vasubandhu recognises this problem, and brings it to light in his own introduction to \textit{Viṃśatikā} 16a, where he asks, ‘In the case of a sense-object not existing, how can there be this cognition, ‘It is a sense-perception’?’

Vasubandhu, it seems, answers the question in the context of the entire process of \textit{vijñāpti-mātra}, and in doing so utilises the third of his pedagogical techniques which we identified in Chapter Three – the use of examples. He uses here the example of dreaming, one which features strongly throughout the \textit{Viṃśatikā}. In \textit{Viṃśatikā} 16, he asserts the following:;

\begin{quote}
Cognition through sense perception (\textit{pratyakṣa}) is like in a dream. And when this is so, then the object is not seen. So how can it be thought to be a perception (\textit{pratyakṣa}) of that?\end{quote}

So waking \textit{pratyakṣa}, Vasubandhu says, is no different from dream-perception. In dreams we experience sense-objects, despite the fact that these sense-objects do not exist inherently. The waking state is similar in this regard.\footnote{Vasubandhu reframes the Nyāya understanding of \textit{pratyakṣa} in terms of his own conceptual scheme. That is, he incorporates \textit{pratyakṣa} into his view that all is \textit{process}, whilst still maintaining that it is the most authoritative of all the \textit{pramāṇas}. In a sense, Vasubandhu has no choice but to take this approach. If he were to deny sense-perception completely, then surely he would not be taken seriously by rival philosophical schools. Yet having already asserted that everything is \textit{vijñāpti-mātra}, he has to explain sense-perception within this context.}

\footnote{As we shall see below, in his autocommenntary Vasubandhu will go on to show that the issue is one of what kind of cognition is involved.}
framework, and without recourse to external objects. Clearly, from a Nyāya perspective, this approach would not be logically viable since – as we have seen – the intrinsic existence of an external object is a prerequisite for an instance of sense-perception. Yet from Vasubandhu’s perspective, his view of sense-perception is clearly in keeping with his own conceptual framework, and thus only serves to strengthen his contention that all is process.

There is, however, a further problem for which allusion to viññāpti-mātra is not an obviously viable solution. This problem relates to Vasubandhu’s acceptance of the very notion of a pramāṇa. As the following passage from Matilal indicates, this is not only a problem for Vasubandhu, but for anyone who does not adhere to a ‘realist’ conception of the world.

...a pramāṇa provides both an evidential base for a knowledge claim and a causal base for the generation of such a knowledge episode. Besides, a piece of knowledge, being knowledge of something, must refer beyond itself to something else (called ‘object’). Hence there is the first relation of cause and effect (and also that of the ‘proof’ and the proven) between the pramāṇa ‘means of knowledge’ and pramā ‘knowledge’. Second, there is also the relation of the knowledge and the known. This obviously proposes a realist ontology.\[276\]

Now in a sense Vasubandhu has already dealt with the first problem which Matilal identifies here – that of the relationship between the means of knowledge and the knowledge itself.

It is the second problem identified by Matilal – that the relationship between knowledge and the known is dependent upon a ‘realist’ viewpoint – which poses the most significant threat to his system. The very notion of a pramāṇa requires both ‘knowledge’ and a ‘knowable.’ Now since for Vasubandhu external objects do not exist inherently, how can they be deemed to be ‘knowables’? In the next chapter, we will see that there are two ways of reading Vasubandhu’s position on external objects: either as a denial of the existence of external objects, or as a denial that objects can be known outside the conscious process which constructs them. In the next chapter we shall argue for the latter reading of Vasubandhu’s position. Yet whichever reading we adopt, the fact still remains

\[276\] Matilal, *Perception*, p. 43.
that for Vasubandhu objects are not ‘knowables’, at least in the sense of having inherent existence. Since Vasubandhu does not posit the intrinsic reality of external objects, then how can he accept any pramāṇa, let alone that of sense-perception?

Vasubandhu simply does not deal with this question, either because it has not come to his attention, or because he does not consider it worth dealing with. Diṇnāga, it seems, was the first Buddhist thinker who attempted to provide a systematic answer to the question. Like Vasubandhu, Diṇnāga also rejected the inherent existence of external objects.277 Yet he also had to show that this view could be consistent with pramāṇa theory. His approach in this regard was to try and prove that an act of knowledge does not require an external object. In order to do this, Diṇnāga identified ‘mental phenomena’ as objects.278 For Diṇnāga, then, the act of knowing, the instrument of knowing, and the knowledge which results are what Matilal terms ‘three different aspects of the same knowledge episode.’279 Diṇnāga holds that this ‘knowledge episode’ is comprised of the object-form, the form of awareness and ‘self-awareness’ (sva-saṃvedana).280 This explanation attempts to show that one does not need to adhere to a realist conception of the world in order to accept the pramāṇas.

It is only with Diṇnāga, then, that we find an attempt to reconcile pramāṇa theory with the rejection of the idea that external objects exist intrinsically. Returning to Vasubandhu, however, the problem still remains unsolved. Aside from the possibility that Vasubandhu has simply failed to recognise that there is an issue here, there is arguably another reason as to why Vasubandhu does not discuss the problem of accepting pramāṇa theory, and this relates to our overall contention that Vasubandhu’s attitude towards the issue of ‘perception’ is predominantly pedagogical. Vasubandhu may be reluctant to discuss in detail the technicalities of sense-perception as a pramāṇa – as well as the issue of pramāṇas more generally – precisely because such technicalities have only a kind of preliminary worth. Such issues are useful, Vasubandhu maintains, only insofar as they introduce the

277 Diṇnāga’s rejection of the inherent existence of external objects was based upon his view that atomist theories were fundamentally flawed. Interestingly, Dan Arnold has argued that Diṇnāga’s rejection of atomism was based, at least in part, upon Vasubandhu’s rejection of atomism in the Viñśatikā. See Arnold, Buddhists, Brahmins and Belief, p. 23.
278 See Arnold, Buddhists, Brahmins and Belief, p. 22.
279 Matilal, Perception, p. 44.
280 See Matilal, Perception, p. 44.
Yogācārin pupil to the truth that there is no permanent Self. He explicitly states that this is the case in Viṃś 8:

The existence of the sense-objects, form, etc., has been proclaimed because of the wish and intention concerning people to be instructed in that, just as [in the case of] self-produced beings. ²⁸¹

Although Vasubandhu does not use the phrase pudgalanairātmya in this verse, he explains in the subsequent passage of autocommentary that it is this doctrine that he is referring to when he says ‘to be instructed in that’:

As when the Lord said self-produced beings exist. The wish was the aim of intending the discontinuity of the succession of citta in the future. From the teaching, “Here there is no self-produced being or self, but dharmaś with causes.” ²⁸² So the existence of sense-objects, form etc., was spoken by the Lord with the intention, “The teaching of that is for people who are to be instructed.” ²⁸³

We see here, then, a clear example of the third pedagogical technique which we identified in the previous chapter – that is, the assertion that certain Buddhist teachings are preliminary and that their ostensible meanings do not necessarily correspond with the purposes for which they were employed by the Buddha. In this case it is the teaching of the sense-objects that is asserted to be preliminary, serving the purpose of introducing the fundamental teaching of pudgalanairātmya. It is indeed telling that, in the above passage of autocommentary, Vasubandhu states that the ‘teaching of the sense-objects’ is only for those who are to be instructed on the Buddhist path. This suggests that Vasubandhu attributes a certain malleability to the issue of sense-perception, a malleability which makes possible the kind of pedagogical method that would not be achievable under the constraints imposed by a more dogmatic approach.

²⁸¹ Viṃś 8: rūpādyāyatanāśītvam tadvineyajanaṃ pratil abhiprāyavasāduktamupapādukasatvavat
²⁸³ VV 8: yathāstī satva upapāduka ityuktaṃ bhagavatā abhiprāyavasaścittasaṃtataṃ sacchedamāyatyāṃ abhipretya nastiḥa satva atmaṇa vā dharmastvete sahetukāḥ iti vacanātā evaṃ rūpādyāyatanāśītvamapayuktaṃ bhagavatā taddeśanāvineyajanaṃ mādhukṛtyābhiprāyikam tadvacanaṃ
This understanding of the sense-fields as preliminary is emblematic of a more general Mahāyāna attitude towards Abhidharma cosmology, and one which is grounded in the ideal of the bodhisattva. As the following passage from Kamalaśīla’s Bhāvanākrama reveals, the āyatanas – along with the skandhas and dhātus – are viewed by the bodhisattva as ultimately unsubstantial, but are not entirely rejected:

And he who hopes for the welfare of the world thinks to himself: Let me undertake religious practice, that I may bring welfare and happiness to all beings. And he sees the aggregates (skandha) as like a magic show, but he does not wish to disown the aggregates; he sees the senses (dhātu) as like a poisonous serpent, but he does not wish to disown the senses; he sees sensory awareness (āyatana) as like an empty village, but he does not wish to disown sensory awareness.284

Although Kamalaśīla was writing approximately three centuries after Vasubandhu, the above passage exemplifies how the teachings of the sense-fields and sense-objects are treated in Vasubandhu, and in the Mahāyāna tradition more generally. That is, the usefulness of such teachings is not denied, but at the same time they must be acknowledged as empty.

This view is inextricably linked to the Mahāyāna ideal of the bodhisattva. In Buddhist traditions it is held that even those who have attained enlightenment – that is, those who have become buddhas – continue to consist of the five skandhas whilst they remain in the world. As Gethin has observed, Any being might be considered as consisting in the accumulation of just these five ‘heaps’ or ‘aggregates’ (skandha/khanda) of physical and psychological conditions. And in this respect a buddha is no different. Yet a buddha has transformed these five into an expression and embodiment of Dharma. Thus rather than, or as well as, consisting in the accumulation of these five aggregates, the psychological make-up of the Buddha might be considered as consisting in the accumulation of another set of ‘five aggregates’, namely, the various qualities of perfect conduct (śīla/sīla), meditation (samādhi), wisdom (prajña/pañña),

freedom (vimukti/vimutti), and knowledge and understanding (vimukti-jñāna-
darśana/vimutti-ñāṇa-dassana). The five skandhas, then, are still present even for those who have become buddhas. Although Gethin is referring to the śrāvaka and pratyeka buddhas of the Abhidharma tradition here, the bodhisattva of the Mahāyāna tradition also consists of the five skandhas. As we mentioned in Chapter Four, these include the physical body with the five senses, which is necessary for the practice of teaching unliberated beings. Yet the very state of being a bodhisattva also requires that one is detached from the misconception that sense-fields and sense-objects are ultimately existent. Thus Kamalaśīla alludes to sense-perception through the use of examples: the skandhas like a magic show; the dhātus a poisonous serpent; the āyatanas like an empty village. As we saw in Chapter Three, the use of analogies and examples is one of the pedagogical techniques employed by Vasubandhu. As we will see when we come to look at the issue of continuity between perceptions, the analogy of a magic show is also employed by Vasubandhu in the TSN. Thus it is not only the case that the sense-fields are treated as part of a pedagogical process. In the context of the bodhisattva ideal, they are necessary for the practice of pedagogy itself.

Thus far, then, we have seen how Vasubandhu’s view of sense-perception serves to support our broader claim that pedagogy serves a vital role in his works. We have seen that Vasubandhu clearly employs the third pedagogical technique identified in Chapter Three to account for the Abhidharma teachings on the sense-objects and sense-fields. That is, he explains that these teachings are not ultimate, but have the purpose of introducing the practitioner to the doctrine of pudgalanairātmya. Ultimately, teachings on sense-perception are to be disregarded. Of course, the bodhisattva must make use of sensory awareness in order to teach. The difference, however, is that he does so on the understanding that sense-objects and sense-fields do not exist intrinsically, and that they have no worth other than as vehicles for pedagogy. In a sense, then, we can see that Vasubandhu’s notion of vijñāpto-mātra, which we discussed in Chapter Four, does not simply serve to explain our construction of an external world. The idea of process which vijñāpto-mātra embodies actually

seems to shape Vasubandhu’s works themselves. We have seen that this certainly seems to be case in regard to Vasubandhu’s treatment of the issue of sense-perception. As we are about to see, this notion of process is also apparent in his attitude towards the perceiver-perceived distinction.

ii) The distinction between perceiver and perceived

As we saw in Chapter Three, one of Vasubandhu’s pedagogical techniques is the gradual deconstruction of concepts. Nowhere is this seen more clearly than in Vasubandhu’s deconstruction of the distinction between perceiver and perceived. It is, of course, of vital importance that Vasubandhu deconstructs this distinction, since it relies upon the notion of a permanent self, the denial of which is a central part of Vasbandhu’s endeavour. In what follows, we shall see how Vasubanhu uses the Yogācāra notion of the three aspects as a means of deconstructing the perceiver-perceived distinction. We shall refer mainly to the TSN and MV Bh, since it is in these texts that we find Vasubandhu’s most explicit references to the trīsvabhāva (‘three aspects’) theory.

Vasubandhu is quite clear in his assertion that the perceiver-perceived distinction belongs to the constructed aspect. It is only in the dependent aspect that the falsity of the perceiver-perceived distinction is realised. As he writes in MV Bh 3.4:

The seeing of superimposition and denial in ‘dharma’ and ‘person’, from knowledge of which that is not produced, is the characteristic of reality in the constructed aspect (parikalpita-svabhāva). The seeing of superimposition and denial in ‘grasper’ and ‘grasped’, from knowledge of which that is not produced, is the characteristic of reality in the dependent aspect (paratantra-svabhāva). The seeing of superimposition and denial in ‘being’ and ‘non-being’, from knowledge of which that is not produced, is the characteristic of reality in the perfected aspect (parinispanna-svabhāva). This characteristic in basic reality is said to be the “non-inverted characteristic of reality.”

286 MV Bh 3.4: pudgaladharmayoḥ samāropāśvabhāvaḥ tattvalaksanam। grāhyagrāhakayoḥ samāropāśvabhāvaḥ tattvalaksanam। rasayānān pravartate tatparikalpitasvabhāvam

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Here we can see how Vasubandhu gradually deconstructs the distinction between ‘perceiver’ and ‘perceived’ with reference to the three aspects. First, Vasubandhu points out, we superimpose such distinctions as ‘perceiver’ and ‘perceived’. This is the ‘constructed aspect’. At the second stage, the dependent aspect, we recognise the ‘non-being’ of these distinctions. Finally, we realise the falsity of the very distinction between ‘being’ and ‘non-being’. This is the ‘dependent aspect’.

In the TSN, Vasubandhu illustrates these three aspects using the example of magical illusion, which – as we noted in Chapter Three – is one of the accepted examples in Buddhist philosophical discourse. He introduces the example in TSN 27, where he states,

Just like when the appearance of an illusory elephant is created from oneself by the power of a mantra. The elephant there is simply a form. It does not exist in any way.\textsuperscript{287}

In the subsequent verse, Vasubandhu links this example to the three aspects theory. He writes,

The constructed aspect is the elephant. The dependent is that form. The perfected is that which falsifies. There is the non-being of the elephant.\textsuperscript{288}

These two verses provide a pertinent example of at least two of Vasubandhu’s pedagogical techniques – the use of examples and the deconstruction of concepts. Thus the way in which Vasubandhu locates the perceiver-perceived distinction in the three aspects theory provides a pertinent illustration of his pedagogical approach.

We have seen, then, how Vasubandhu’s discussions of pratyakṣa – along with his discussions of the perceiver-perceived distinction – clearly exhibit his pedagogical approach. We shall now turn to Kumārila’s discussions on sense-perception, drawing out some of the ways in which these discussions might be viewed as pedagogical.

\textsuperscript{287} TSN 27: māyākarāṇa mantravasākhyāti hastyātmanā yathā \äkāramāraṇa tatrāsti hasti nāsti tu sarvathā

\textsuperscript{288} TSN 27: svabhāvaḥ kalpito hasti paratantrastadākṛtīḥ | yastatra hastyadāhavo ’sa parinispanna duṣyate
Kumārila
does not engage specifically with Vasubandhu’s discussions of perception, probably
because – as we mentioned earlier – Vasubandhu does not address those particular issues
surrounding perception which subsequently came to be of interest to classical Indian thinkers such
as Kumārila. The majority of Kumārila’s arguments on perception are found in the Pratyakṣa-
Paricchedha or ‘The Determination of Perception’ chapter of the Ślokavārttika (hereafter PP). The
whole Chapter is based upon MS 1.1.4, which appears to discuss pratyakṣa (sense-perception). The
dialogical character of the PP is evident on two levels. On one level, Kumārila’s dialogue in the PP
is with his own tradition; he rejects Bhavādāsa and Śabara’s respective interpretations of MS 1.1.4
on the basis that both of these authors read the sūtra as a definition (lakṣaṇa) of perception. Kumārila argues that 1.1.4 is not a definition of perception, but rather a statement that it is only the
Veda – as opposed to the other pramāṇas – which can give knowledge of dharma.

On another level, however, Kumārila’s discussions of perception are based upon dialogue with his
Buddhist opponents, and as we noted in Chapter One, Kumārila’s main Buddhist opponent in the
PP is Diññāga. As John Taber has demonstrated, in the PP Kumārila engages with Diññāga’s
Pratyakṣa-Samuccaya (hereafter PS). In PS 1.6 in particular, Diññāga rejects MS 1.1.4 as a
definition of perception, and his arguments focus upon the meaning of the term samprayoga in MS

289 This translation is taken from John Taber, Hindu Critique of Buddhist Epistemology: Kumārila on Perception. The
290 MS 1.1.4 reads as follows: satsamprayoge puruṣasyendriyāṇāṁ buddhijānma tatpratyakṣam animittam
vidyamānopalambhānāt vād
Bhavādāsa interprets this verse as a definition of perception involving contact (samprayoga) between sense organ and
object.
Śabara reverses the order of the terms tat and sat, so that the text reads as follows: tatsamprayoge puruṣasyendriyāṇāṁ
buddhijānma satpratyakṣam. This translates as ‘True (sat) perception is the arising of a cognition when there is the
contact of a person with that (tat).’ Thus for Śabara it is perception which is the cognition of that object, in which case
perceptual illusion cannot be considered to be perception.
For a more detailed discussion of Śabara’s treatment of MS 1.1.4 see John Taber A Hindu Critique of Buddhist
Epistemology, p. 49 and John Taber, ‘Kumārila’s Refutation of the Dreaming Argument: The Nirālambanavāda-
adhikaraṇa’, in R.C. Dwivedi,[ed.], Studies in Mimāṃsā: Dr. Mandan Mishra Felicitation Volume (Delhi: Motilal
Banarsidass, 1994), p.40
291 Kumārila subsequently accepts Śabara’s interpretation when he interprets the MS as discussing the definition of
perception.
292 Taber, A Hindu Critique of Buddhist Epistemology p. 10 et passim.
1.1.4. Kumārila initially rejects Diṅnāga’s interpretation of MS 1.1.4 on the same basis that he rejects Bhavadāsa and Śabara’s interpretations; that is, on the basis that – as Kumārila sees it – MS 1.1.4 does not constitute a definition of pratyakṣa.

Kumārila then goes on to repudiate Diṅnāga’s view whilst developing his own position on perception. It is this position which we shall examine in the present section. A detailed study of Kumārila’s views of perception as outlined in the PP has already been carried out by John Taber.\textsuperscript{293} What has yet to be shown, however, is the extent to which Kumārila’s discussions on perception are pedagogical. In what follows, then, we shall focus specifically on the ways in which Kumārila’s arguments in the PP support our notion of philosophy as pedagogy. In order to do this, we shall focus upon three particular ideas which shape Kumārila’s understanding of perception: the idea of pratyakṣa as a pramāṇa, the idea of pratyakṣa as existing contact (satsamprayoga) and the distinction between nirvikalpaka (‘non-conceptualised’) and savikalpaka (‘conceptualised’) pratyakṣa.

Before we proceed, however, it is important to note that Kumārila makes a conscious distinction between the notions of ‘perception’ – for which he uses the term pratyakṣa – and ‘cognition’, for which he uses terms such as dhī, buddhi and jñāna synonymously.\textsuperscript{294} The key difference between ‘perception’ and ‘cognition’ for Kumārila is as follows. ‘Perception’ (pratyakṣa) is a pramāṇa, or means of valid knowledge. It requires an existing contact (satsamprayoga) with an object. ‘Cognition’, on the other hand, is a mental event. A cognition does not constitute knowledge as such, precisely because, according to Kumārila, it can be true or false. Kumārila’s contention that ‘cognition’ can be false is evident in his use of the term svapnajñāna or ‘dream cognition.’\textsuperscript{295} A cognition is only true when it is the result of – or an example of – pratyakṣa. For the purpose of clarity we shall focus mainly on Kumārila’s understanding of pratyakṣa, although this will

\textsuperscript{293} Taber, A Hindu Critique of Buddhist Epistemology.

\textsuperscript{294} It is quite possible, of course, that precisely which of these terms Kumārila uses is dependent upon the metre of the verse.

\textsuperscript{295} He uses this term, for example, in PP 10.
necessarily include references to ‘cognition.’ We shall now address the first issue identified above – the idea of \textit{pratyakṣa} as a \textit{pramāṇa}.

i) \textit{Pratyakṣa as a pramāṇa}

As we have noted, Kumārila holds that \textit{pratyakṣa} is a \textit{pramāṇa}. He argues that Inference (\textit{anumāna}), Comparison (\textit{upamāna}) and Presumption (arthāpatti) – which are also \textit{pramāṇas} for Kumārila – are dependent, to some extent, upon \textit{pratyakṣa}. Inference, as in Nyāya, is based upon an ‘invariable concomitance’ (\textit{vyāpti}) between the subject of the thesis to be established (\textit{pratijñā}) and the subject of the supporting reason (\textit{hetu}). This ‘invariable concomitance’ can only be known through \textit{pratyakṣa}.\footnote{For example, in the inference, ‘There is fire, because there is smoke’, the universal concomitance of fire and smoke justifies the inference. It is this that is potentially observable in each case.} Comparison is comparison of that which is perceived, and for this reason clearly relies upon \textit{pratyakṣa}. Presumption also relies partially on \textit{pratyakṣa}, since the presumption itself is a result of something which has been perceived through the senses. Kumārila, of course, also accepts \textit{śabda}, that is, the Veda, as a \textit{pramāṇa}. Yet for Kumārila, \textit{śabda} is to be distinguished from \textit{pratyakṣa} because it alone can give rise to knowledge of \textit{dharma} as a future result, and as we have seen, Kumārila starts by arguing that \textit{pratyakṣa} is always of something which is \textit{present}.\footnote{Kumārila modifies this as his discussion proceeds, focusing on the \textit{connection} between the object and the sense which perceives that object. Finally, he claims that cognition can only qualify as a perception if it is a perception of the object.}

There are, it seems, two ways in which Kumārila’s view of \textit{pratyakṣa} as a \textit{pramāṇa} supports our notion of philosophy as pedagogy. The first is that Kumārila’s view of \textit{pratyakṣa} as a \textit{pramāṇa} serves to support the \textit{Pūrva Mīmāṁsaka} view of action. As a \textit{pramāṇa}, \textit{pratyakṣa} functions as both the \textit{instrument} of knowing and the \textit{result} of knowledge. \textit{Pūrva Mīmāṁsā} holds that \textit{instrument} and \textit{result} are two of the five necessary factors of action in \textit{Mīmāṁsā}, the other three being \textit{agent}, \textit{object} and \textit{action} (the meaning of the relevant verbal root). Kumārila analyses perceiving in the same way that he analyses other actions. Thus by rooting his analysis of \textit{pratyakṣa} in the \textit{Mīmāṁsaka} theory...
of action, Kumārila is able to ground this concept within the Mīmāṃsā conceptual framework, which acts as a reminder to the pupil of the truth of the Mīmāṃsā system.

The second way in which Kumārila’s view of pratyakṣa as pramāṇa is pedagogical has to do with Kumārila’s contention that pratyakṣa is also a kind of buddhi (‘momentary cognition’). This particular view serves as a counter-argument to Diṅnāga’s criticism of the Mīmāṃsā understanding of what is meant by ‘the arising of a cognition.’ It thus serves as a means by which Kumārila can repudiate a Buddhist tradition which poses a real threat to his own system, in terms of its denial of self. Furthermore, although Kumārila’s argument here is directed specifically towards Diṅnāga, it also resonates across numerous Sanskritic philosophical traditions. As Taber has argued, this issue of the momentariness of cognition was generally accepted as significant by most Indian philosophical traditions. In view of this, we can see that Kumārila’s discussion of pratyakṣa as a pramāṇa serves as a means by which he can establish his own view in the intellectual milieu in which he is writing.

ii) Pratyakṣa as existing contact

As we noted previously, Kumārila contends that pratyakṣa requires existing contact (satsamprayoga) with an object. In PP 26, for example, Kumārila identifies the view that Yogic perception is sense-perception. Kumārila rejects this view on the basis that Yogic perception is not of a presently existing object. As Taber has observed, the idea of Yogic perception was accepted by the Buddhists and Jains as a means of demonstrating the authority of their respective teachers. Taber’s point is a pertinent one, which we can further develop in the context of pedagogy. Kumārila’s rejection of Yogic perception as pratyakṣa partly illustrates the way in which he uses dialogue with other schools – in this case the Buddhists and Jains – to establish his own view of perception. This, in turn, however, reinforces his view that it is only śabda – Vedic word – which

298 See Taber, A Hindu Critique of Buddhist Epistemology, p. 66.
299 Taber, A Hindu Critique of Buddhist Epistemology, p. 66.
300 PP 26: dūttānāgate ‘pyarthe sūkṣme vyavahite’ pi caḥ pratyakṣam yoginām iṣṭan kaiścin muktāmanām api
301 Taber, A Hindu Critique of Buddhist Epistemology, p. 52.
can bring about knowledge of *dharma* as a future result. Moreover, Kumārila’s rejection of *Yogic* perception as sense-perception allows him to preserve the authority of Vedic teachings. Since the Buddhists and Jains used the example of *Yogic* perception to demonstrate the authoritatively of their own teachers, in undermining their view of *Yogic* perception, Kumārila is also able to undermine the authoritatively of Jain and Buddhist teachings to uphold the authoritatively of teachings contained in the Vedic texts.

Kumārila’s view that *pratyakṣa* must involve existing contact is contingent upon a realist vision of the world. That is, if perception involves existing contact with an object, that object must necessarily exist externally. We shall discuss Kumārila’s view of external objects in further detail in the next chapter. For now, however, it will simply suffice to note that Kumārila’s realist vision of the world serves to support his adherence to the absolute authority of Vedic language.

iii) *Conceptualised and non-conceptualised perception*

The final issue which we shall explore in this section is that of Kumārila’s distinction between conceptualised and non-conceptualised perception, which we mentioned previously. This issue has already been discussed in detail by a number of contemporary scholars.\(^\text{302}\) For this reason, we shall simply offer here a brief summary of Kumārila’s view.

Kumārila holds that perception is of two types: *nirvikalpaka* (‘non-conceptualised’) and *savikalpaka* (‘conceptualised’). Both types of perception are essential for forming a perceptual cognition. The distinction between these two types of perception has to do with whether or not they entail the use of language and judgement. Kumārila argues that *nirvikalpaka* perception is non-linguistic; that is, its occurrence does not require the use of language. At this stage, only the ‘manifestation’ (vyaktī) of the object is perceived. *Nirvikalpaka pratyakṣa* is, for Kumārila, ‘without

\(^{302}\) See, for example, Taber, *A Hindu Critique of Buddhist Epistemology*; Srikanta Samanta, “The Concept of *Nirvikalpaka Pratyakṣa* in Mīmāṃsā System”, *Journal of Indian Council of Philosophical Research* 15.3 (May-Aug. 1998), 79-85.
characteristic’ (*nirviśeṣa*). In addition, it does not involve judgement or reflection on what is perceived. In the *nirvikalpaka* stage, perception functions as an *instrument* of perceiving.

*Savikalpaka* perception, on the other hand, is linguistic. It also involves reflective awareness. It is in *savikalpaka pratyakṣa* that the name and genus of the object are perceived. Thus it is at the *savikalpaka* stage of perception that one is able to have the awareness ‘This is X.’ At this point, perception functions as the *result* of perceiving. The important point to note in terms of the present discussion is that because Kumārila distinguishes between two types of action in perception, as discussed previously, he can view both stages – *nirvikalpaka* and *savikalpaka* – as *pratyakṣa*. How does this then support the idea that Kumārila’s attitude towards perception is pedagogical?

It illustrates once more the third pedagogical technique of Kumārila’s which we identified – the repudiation of rival views. In particular, in defending his position that there are two types of perception, Kumārila is repudiating Diṅnāga’s claim that there is only *nirvikalpaka pratyakṣa*. At the beginning of the *PS*, Diṅnāga states the following:

> Perception and inference are reliable warrants. There are only two, since there are only two kinds of warrantable objects; there is nothing other than *svalakṣaṇas* and abstractions. It is perception that has *svalakṣaṇas* as its objects, and inference that has abstractions as its objects.\(^{303}\)

Thus, according to Diṅnāga, it is only the *svalakṣaṇa* that can be perceived. However, because the *svalakṣaṇa* is momentary and without characteristics, it has ceased by the time the cognition has begun to make it an object which can be identified.\(^{304}\) It is not then that Diṅnāga denies that there is a *savikalpaka* stage involved in cognition. What he does deny, however, is that the *savikalpaka*

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\(^{304}\) As we saw previously, the beginnings of this view can be detected in Vasubandhu’s autocommentary on *Viṃś* 16.
stage is *pratyakṣa*. *Pratyakṣa*, for Diṅnāga, is ‘free from conceptual elaboration’ (*kalpana-podha*).\(^{305}\) As he writes in the *PS*,

*Perception is free from conceptual elaboration*; that cognition which is without conceptual elaboration is perception. And what is this which is called ‘conceptual elaboration’?

*Association with name, genus, etc.*\(^{306}\)

Kumārila repudiates this view, arguing instead that this association with characteristics such as name and genus is also perception – it is *savikalpaka* perception. As Kumārila explains in *PP* 120,

That cognition by which the thing is subsequently ascertained through its characteristics, including genus, etc., is considered to be the same as perception.\(^{307}\)

Thus we can see that when Kumārila distinguishes between *nirvikalpaka pratyakṣa* and *savikalpaka pratyakṣa*, he is clearly involved in dialogue with Diṅnāga.

So why is Kumārila so keen to refute Diṅnāga’s position in this context? The reason has to do with Diṅnāga’s adherence to the Buddhist notion of ‘no-self.’ Diṅnāga’s view that perception is only the non-conceptual awareness of the *svalaksana* is used as a means to reinforce his position that there is only momentariness, and that the self does not exist outside of our own conceptualisation. As Dan Arnold has observed,

The most basic point of this specifically epistemological project therefore is to finally ensure that a “self” – and anything that does similar conceptual work – cannot be an object of knowledge, but must, instead, be a misguided projection. Conversely, the point is to ensure that all that *can* be a proper object of knowledge is those evanescent sensory events that we habitually misidentify as constituting our “selves.” Diṅnāga advances this cause by identifying a particular epistemic faculty (viz. perception) that can, by the very fact of its occurring... guarantee the ultimate reality of its object. And given the episodic character of perceptions, only momentary events can thus count as “real.”\(^{308}\)

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\(^{305}\) Arnold, *Buddhists, Brahmins and Belief*, p. 25.

\(^{306}\) *PS* 1.3. This is Dan Arnold’s translation from the Tibetan translation of the *PS* with *vṛtti*. See Arnold, *Buddhists, Brahmins and Beliefs*, p. 25.

\(^{307}\) *PP* 120: *tataḥ paraṁ punar vastu dharmaṁ jātyādibhir yayāḥ buddhyāvasiyate sāpi pratyakṣatvena sammatā
t\n
Arnold’s point is a pertinent one, which we can develop in the context of our own dialogical approach. In this context, we can see how underpinning Kumārila’s dialogue with Diṇṇāga is a more subtle – and arguably more important – dialogue, relating to the issue of ‘self’. Diṇṇāga’s contention that there is only nirvikaḥpaktu perception enables him to claim that the self cannot be an object of perception, and as a consequence cannot be a really existing entity. Such a view, of course, is a direct threat to Kumārila’s system, in which the permanent self has a crucial function. As we saw in Chapter Four, Kumarila holds that the self – through indirect connection with the body – is, in a broad sense, the agent of ritual action. The notion of a permanent self is thus essential for preserving Vedic injunctions concerning ritual action and their results, including liberation, and consequently for reinforcing the eternity of Vedic word.

This dialogue between Kumārila and Diṇṇāga regarding the issue of nirvikaḥpaktu and savikaḥpaktu perception thus serves as a platform upon which more subtle arguments concerning the nature of self are played out. The underlying grammatical analysis of verbal roots applied to issues of cognising thus functions as a means through which a “deep grammar” – to use Arnold’s words – is established.309 It is, of course, crucial for Kumārila that the Mimāṃsaka pupil is unwavering in his conviction of the existence of a permanent self. Kumārila’s dialogue with Diṇṇāga regarding nirvikaḥpaktu and savikaḥpaktu perception is one means of ensuring this.

In this section, we have demonstrated the pedagogical character of Kumārila’s discussions on perception. We have explored three particular issues which shape Kumārila’s theory of perception. Clearly, there are numerous other issues which Kumārila addresses in his discussions on perception. Yet the issues discussed above nicely illustrate the pedagogical function of Kumārila’s discussions on perception.

309 Arnold, Buddhists, Brahmins and Beliefs, p. 25.
Śaṅkara

In exploring Śaṅkara’s attitude towards the issue of perception, it is vital that we take into account one fundamental point – namely, that all discussions of perception are inevitably imbued with the language of agency. That is, they always refer to the duality of the perceiver and the perceived, whether or not such duality is viewed as having substantial existence (as in the case of Kumārila), or as being ultimately non-existent (as in the case of Vasubandhu). As we saw in the previous chapter, however, Śaṅkara holds the self to be free of duality – a notion embodied in the very name of the school to which he belongs. It must be the case, then, that for Śaṅkara any discussions of subject and object take place in the unliberated condition, the world of sansāra from which liberation has yet to be attained. It is against this backdrop that we must understand Śaṅkara’s view of perception.

Śaṅkara’s understanding of perception is immensely complex, and there are a number of reasons as to why this is the case. Among these is the notable lack of any single definition of ‘perception’ in Śaṅkara’s works. As Mayeda observes, ‘Śaṅkara does not make any attempt to define perception.’ The complexity is further intensified by the issue of the abundance of synonyms in philosophical Sanskrit, which was discussed in the introduction to this chapter. Yet we must not forget that the overall concern of the present discussion is to see how far our theory of an intimate connection between philosophy and pedagogy finds support in Śaṅkara’s discussions of perception.

Śaṅkara’s view of perception has been widely discussed by contemporary scholars. For this reason, we shall limit our discussion here to the role of mental events (pratyaya) in the perceptual process. We shall demonstrate how Śaṅkara’s discussion of this issue forms a vital part of the pedagogical process through which the Advaitin pupil attains liberation.

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Contemporary writers on Śaṅkara have translated the term *pratyaya* in various ways. In their respective translations of Śaṅkara’s ‘Thousand Teachings’, Mayeda and Jagadananda offer different translations of the term. Whereas Mayeda translates *pratyaya* as ‘notion’, Jagadananda prefers the English phrase, ‘mental modification.’\(^{311}\) In his recent work, *Consciousness in Indian Philosophy*, Sthaneshwar Timalsina translates *pratyaya* as ‘concept.’\(^{312}\) In what follows, however, I will use Suthren Hirst’s translation of *pratyaya* as ‘mental events.’\(^{313}\) As we shall see, this translation seems to be the most fitting in view of the way Śaṅkara employs the term. It ought to be noted that Śaṅkara uses another term which appears to be similar to *pratyaya*, and that is *vṛtti*, a term which Suthren Hirst translates as ‘mental modifications.’\(^{314}\) As Mayeda has observed, however, Śaṅkara’s works exhibit a predilection for the term *pratyaya* over and above the term *vṛtti*.\(^{315}\) In what follows, then, I will focus on Śaṅkara’s use of the term *pratyaya*.

Before looking at the possible pedagogical role of the *pratyaya* in Śaṅkara, it is essential that we first try to establish Śaṅkara’s understanding of the precise nature and function of these ‘mental events.’ The *pratyayas* are the ‘mental states’ of the *antahkaraṇa*, and as such they play a pivotal role in the process of perception. The *pratyayas* take on the form of objects. Included among these are the sense-objects, as well as objects which are not self-established (svatāhśiddhyasamānabhava) such as colour and sound.\(^{316}\) Mayeda calls these two types of objects, objects of ‘external perception.’\(^{317}\) In addition to these, the *pratyayas* also take on the form of objects in what Mayeda terms ‘internal perception.’ In instances of ‘internal perception’ the *pratyayas* take on the form of

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\(^{312}\) See Sthaneshwar Timalsina, *Consciousness in Indian Philosophy: The Advaita doctrine of ‘awareness only’* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009).


\(^{314}\) Suthren Hirst, Jacqueline, ‘Strategies of Interpretation: Śaṅkara’s Commentary on *Brhadāraṇyakopaniṣad*’, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 116.1 (1996), p. 65. Mayeda notes that the idea of *vṛtti* as ‘modification’ by Śaṅkara and later Advaitins is likely to be based upon the notion of *cittavṛtti* found in the Yogasūtra. See Mayeda, *A Thousand Teachings*, p. 35.

\(^{315}\) Mayeda, *A Thousand Teachings*, p. 35.

\(^{316}\) Mayeda, *A Thousand Teachings*, p. 35.

objects such as fear, passion and desire, possibly the equivalent of what we might term ‘emotions’ in English. We should perhaps note that the antahkarana and its pratayayas are themselves objects of perception. Being, as they are, unconscious and material, they must be perceived by something other than themselves. In this case the perceiver is atman. As Mayeda observes, this notion of atman as the perceiver of the antahkarana and its pratayayas could potentially compromise Shankara’s understanding of atman as eternal and changeless. As we are about to see, however, the severity of this problem is lessened when we understand Shankara’s discussions of the pratayayas in the context of his pedagogical method.

Shankara’s works provide numerous examples which support our contention that his treatment of the pratayayas is pedagogical. However, it is nowhere more apparent than in chapter two of the prose section of the Upad, and in particular verses 108-111. It is by no means insignificant that these verses form the end of the chapter, and this is an idea to which we shall return subsequently. The passage draws to a close a long dialogue between the Advaitin teacher and pupil.

In Upad G. 2.107, the teacher has stated that avagati (a term which I have translated as ‘awareness’) is the result of the pramanas, but is also changeless and eternal. In 2.108, the Advaitin pupil raises an objection to this, remarking that ‘awareness as the fruit of the pramanas is contradicted by the nature (of being) the changeless and eternal light of the self’ (avagatiḥ pramanānāṃ phalaṃ kutasthamityātmajotihsvarūpeti ca vipratiṣiddham). The teacher answers that it is ‘not contradicted’ (na vipratiṣiddham), and his reasons are as follows:

> Even though it avagati] is changeless and eternal, it is pointed out (lakṣyate) to be the culmination of mental events such as perception, because that is their purpose. In the state of being non-eternal of mental events, sense-perception, etc., it appears as non-eternal. By that, it [avagati] is said to be “the fruit of the pramanas”, figuratively.
Already, this idea of *avagati* being only ‘figuratively’ (*upacaryate*) termed ‘the fruit of the *pramāṇas*’ is indicative of the potentially pedagogical sense in which Śaṅkara treats the *pratyayas*. Yet it is in the next two verses that Śaṅkara’s pedagogical treatment of the *pratyayas* becomes truly apparent. In 2.209 it is the turn of the *Advaitin* pupil to respond to the above assertion of the teacher. The following passage occurs roughly halfway through the verse. The pupil says,

The different *pratyayas* must be other than awareness. As in a dream, the *pratyayas* whose nature is to have different forms such as blue, yellow, etc., being other than that awareness, are said, from the highest standpoint, to be non-existent, so too in waking, it is possible for the different *pratyayas* such as blue, yellow, etc., [which] are other than this very awareness, to have an unreal nature. And there is no agent of awareness different from that awareness. By itself, by its own nature and because of the non-existence of the other, it [awareness] cannot be laid down or rejected.\(^{321}\)

Thus the pupil understands the folly of his previous objection in *Upad G* 107. Yet at the same time this objection and the ensuing discussion is a necessary part of the pedagogical process by which he comes to realise how things are ‘from the highest standpoint’. In so doing, the pupil understands that that from the standpoint of awareness, the *pratyayas* are ultimately unreal. This must be the case since ultimately there exists nothing other than awareness itself.

The above verse is emblematic of the following observation made by Timalsina about Śaṅkara’s use of the term *pratyaya*:

Śaṅkara more or less consistently applies the term *pratyaya* (concept) or *vrtti* (mental modification) when describing instances of consciousness which are manifested by the self that is the nature of eternal awareness...he advocates consciousness-in-itself as self-manifest, and *pratyayas* (concepts) as ‘appearance’ and the product of ignorance.\(^{322}\)

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\(^{321}\) *Upad G* 2.109: *pratyayabhedastv avagatiṃ vyabhicarantī yathā svapne niłapīḍyākārabhedarūpaḥ pratyayās tadavagatiṃ vyabhicarantaḥ paramārthato na santītyucyante evam jāgratvapi niłapīḍipratyayabhedās tam evāvagatiṃ vyabhicarantō ’satyārūpā bhavitum arhati 1 tasyāś cāvagater anyo ’vagantā nāsti na svena svarūpeṇa svayam upādātum hātum vā śakyate, anyasya cābhāvāt II

Śaṅkara’s use of the phrase *upādātum hātum* vare refers to both the *process* of superimposition and the *removal* of superimposition, both of which allow the pupil to realise the self.

\(^{322}\) Timalsina, *Consciousness in Indian Philosophy*, p. 21.
As was mentioned earlier, Suthren Hirst’s translation of *pratyaya* as mental events seems more appropriate than other translations by contemporary writers, including Timalsina’s use of the term ‘concept.’ Nonetheless, Timalsina’s observation is useful, in that it further supports our claim that Śaṅkara’s pedagogical method is visibly apparent in the way he discusses the *pratyayas*.

In the next verse, the teacher acknowledges that the pupil has indeed attained liberation:

> Just so. It is this ignorance, which is the cause of worldly existence, the characteristic (of which) is waking and dreaming. The remover of that ignorance is knowledge. Thus you have attained fearlessness. From now you will not experience the suffering of waking and dreaming. You are freed from the suffering of worldly existence.  

This verse is extremely significant, since it puts Śaṅkara’s treatment of the *pratyayas* in line with his pedagogical treatment of other ‘worldly’ issues. To clarify, we observed earlier that Śaṅkara understands the *pratyayas* to take on the form of objects. Among these objects, as we discussed, are fear and pain. Now in the above verse, it is acknowledged that the pupil has attained ‘fearlessness’ and is ‘freed from the suffering of worldly existence.’ In a sense, then, Śaṅkara uses his discussions of the *pratyayas* in order to release the pupil from the states — such as fear and pain — that those very *pratyayas*, in a sense, cause. This method of utilising worldly existence in the process of becoming liberated from worldly existence itself is common in Śaṅkara, and is an integral part of his pedagogical approach.

In the foregoing discussion we have explored Vasubandhu’s attitude towards perception, and have drawn out some of the ways in which this exemplifies the broader pedagogical character of his works. We then looked at some aspects of Kumārila’s discussion of perception, showing how his pedagogical approach is evident in the way he incorporates repudiation of rival views. We then saw how Śaṅkara’s respective discussions of perception can be seen to demonstrate our notion of philosophy as pedagogy. As we have seen, Vasubandhu, Kumārila and Śaṅkara are each interested in different issues relating to perception. Vasubandhu’s main concern is to embed sense-objects —

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323 *Upad G* 2.110: *tathāveta eṣa avidyā, yannimittah saṃsāro jāgratsvapnalakṣaṇaḥ | taṣyā avidāyāḥ vidyā nivartikā ityevaṃ tvaṃ abhayaṃ prāpnoṣiḥ | nātaḥparaṃ jāgratsvapnadvākhmanubhaviṣyasi, saṃsāradhākṣāṃ mukto "sīti"*
and indeed our perception of these objects – within the notion of process that is central to his system. Kumārila’s discussions of perception form part of a dialogue – in this case with Diṇṇāga – which is aimed at establishing the permanent self, necessary for accruing the results of ritual action laid down in the Vedic texts. Śaṅkara’s concern – at least in relation to his discussion of prayayas – is to demonstrate the non-duality of the self.

Yet although Vasubandhu, Kumārila and Śaṅkara explore different issues relating to perception, they all use dialogue in their discussions on perception. In Vasubandhu this dialogue is more subtle, but he is in some sense in dialogue with the Abhidharmikas. He clearly wants to maintain the Abhidharma notion that prayākṣa is authoritative. Yet he reinterprets this in the context of his notion that all is process. The dialogical approach is most explicitly apparent in Kumārila. As we have seen, Kumārila’s discussions of perception clearly function in dialogue with Diṇṇāga. Śaṅkara’s dialogue here concerning the prayayas is clearly as teacher with the Advaitin pupil.324

As we have demonstrated, Śaṅkara’s dialogue with the pupil on the issue of prayayas clearly functions as a process by which the pupil can realise the non-duality of the self.

The issue of perception is, of course, inextricably linked with the issue of objects. We have already alluded to some aspects of our three thinkers’ respective views of objects. In the next chapter we shall explore these views in further detail.

Chapter Six
Objects

The question of whether or not it makes sense to talk about the independent existence of objects was widely debated by Indian thinkers of the classical era. Not only was this question inextricably linked with debates about the nature of ‘self’ and ‘perception’; it also had implications for the very possibility of philosophical debate itself.\(^{325}\) In what follows, we shall look at the way in which Vasubandhu deals with this question. In so doing, we shall challenge the commonly-held assumption that Vasubandhu denies the existence of external objects, arguing instead that his discussions of objects can be seen as part of his broader pedagogical endeavour. We shall then explore the broader dialogical context of these discussions, looking in particular at the respective ways in which Kumārila and Śaṅkara responded to Vasubandhu on the issue of objects.

In the following section we shall see that – similarly to his discussions of ‘self’ and ‘perception’ – Vasubandhu’s discussions of the status of objects are arguably part of a broader endeavour to deconstruct conceptuality, thus facilitating the Yogācārin pupil’s attainment of the bodhisattva ideal. Significantly, as we shall see, Vasubandhu does not deny our experience of external objects. Indeed, such experience forms an integral part of the pedagogical process which underpins his discussions.

**Vasubandhu**

Vasubandhu’s view of objects is a point of contention among contemporary scholars. Numerous scholars have argued that Vasubandhu denies the existence of external objects. Bina Gupta, for example, has argued that ‘the goal of Vīśṇūtikā is to repudiate the view that there is an external

\(^{325}\) As we shall see subsequently, both Kumārila and Śaṅkara argued that the denial of an external world rendered the very possibility of debate untenable.
world corresponding to the images of objects.’ In a similar vein, Tola and Dragonetti have interpreted Vasubandhu’s position as follows:

All is only mind, consciousness; there exist only representations, mental representations, ideas to which no external object corresponds. This is the idealistic position proper of the school.

This interpretation of Vasubandhu’s view of objects – which seems to be held by the majority of Vasubandhu scholars – appears primarily to be based upon Vasubandhu’s use of the phrase, ‘because of the appearance of non-existent objects’ (asadarthāvabhāsanā) in Viṃś 1.

There is, however, an alternative position, which is propounded by scholars such as Ian Harris, Richard King, and William Waldron. According to this position, Vasubandhu does not deny the existence of external objects, but simply asserts that we cannot have access to anything outside of the process which constructs these objects. Such a position is emblematic of a broader phenomenological approach to Yogācāra, an approach which is evident in the following observation by Waldron:

Analysis of phenomenal experience and the practical techniques to transform it were central features of nearly all Indian Buddhist traditions, which focused on understanding and eventually transforming our habitual dispositions and embedded cognitive structures, and

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Saam Trivedi also puts forward a similar view. He argues that the phrase avabhāsanāt (‘because of the appearance’) in Viṃś 1, ‘should not be taken literally out of context to mean that objects themselves are non-existent’, but that ‘instead, it means only that objects do not exist as they appear to us, as given to us by our representations.’ Saam Trivedi, ‘Idealism and Yogācāra Buddhism’, Asian Philosophy, 15.3 (Nov. 2005), p. 236. Trivedi’s interpretation is somewhat useful in that it steers us away from the emphasis on external objects which is characteristic of many interpretations of Vasubandhu. Yet it still assumes to some extent that Vasubandhu is making a claim about objects, rather than the process which constructs these objects.
thereby forestalling actions they may instigate. To this end, Buddhist thought both articulated and critiqued the processes whereby we construe reality.\footnote{Waldron, The Buddhist Unconscious, p. 161.} According to Waldron, then, Indian Buddhist theories of experience were not—on the whole—concerned with denying the independent reality of that experience. Such theories do not, he contends, deny ‘the ultimate reality of anything independent of the shifting contents of mind’.\footnote{Waldron, The Buddhist Unconscious, p. 161.} As we are about to see, this seems to be the case with Vasubandhu’s discussions of objects.

In what follows, then, we shall argue for this phenomenological interpretation of Vasubandhu. We shall argue that Vasubandhu does not deny the existence of external objects, but simply asserts the process which constructs objects. Given that—for Vasubandhu—all of our experiences are internal to this process, we cannot know of anything external to the process itself. This is different from saying that external objects do not exist. It is certainly true that in taking such a view, Vasubandhu inevitably calls into question the inherent existence of objects. Yet since we do not have access to anything beyond the constructive process itself, the question of whether or not such objects actually exist becomes superfluous. Furthermore, we shall show this view pertains to the pedagogical process underpinning Vasubandhu’s works.

So why should we adopt this interpretation? The answer, I suggest, lies in the passage of autocommentary that precedes \textit{Vin\=s\=ī} 1. The passage reads as follows:

\begin{quote}
In the Great Vehicle, the three realms are determined as \textit{vijñ\=apti-mātra}. From the \textit{sūtra: the three worlds are (that is to say), oh sons of Jina, citta-mātra}.
\end{quote}

\footnote{\textit{VV} 11: \textit{cittamātraṃ bho jināpūrṇā yaduta traidhātukamiti sūtrā}}

As we noted in Chapter Four, the second line of this passage is an exact quotation from the \textit{Daśabhūmika-sūtra}, or ‘\textit{Sūtra on the Ten Stages.}’ It is the phrase \textit{traitdhātukam} that is of particular significance for the present discussion. The compound \textit{traitdhātu} literally means ‘the realm that is threefold’, and clearly refers to the three realms (\textit{dhātu}) of Abhidharma cosmology.\footnote{These were \textit{Kāma dhātu} (the realm of the five senses), \textit{rūpa-dhātu} (the realm of pure form) and \textit{araṇā-pa-dhātu} (the formless realm). According to Abhidharma thought, human beings belong to the realm of the five senses, along with} Yet it is the
grammatical construction of the phrase *traīdhātukam* which is open to interpretation, and which can be used to support our view that Vasubandhu does not necessarily deny the existence of objects.

Grammatically, *traīdhātuka* is adjectival, and means something like ‘belonging to the realm that is threefold’ or ‘of the realm that is threefold.’ As Thomas A. Kochumuttom has observed, this adjectival sense means that the compound *traīdhātuka* must qualify a noun outside of itself. Since there is no such noun present in this passage of text, it is up to the reader to decide what Vasubandhu is referring to here. Kochumuttom believes that the noun to which Vasubandhu is referring is *citta* or *caitta*. Using the *TK* and *MVBh* to contextualise the phrase, he interprets it ‘as meaning that the *cittas* and *caittas* belonging to the three worlds are all mere representations of consciousness.’ This leads Kochumuttom to the somewhat perplexing conclusion that Vasubandhu’s system can be classed as one of “realistic pluralism”.

Bruce Cameron Hall has argued, however, that ‘Kochumuttom confuses etymology with meaning and forgets the grammar of the sentence.’ Although Hall agrees that *traīdhātuka* is an adjective, he disagrees with Kochumuttom’s ultimate interpretation of the phrase, as well as his subsequent assertion that it points towards a kind of “realistic pluralism.” Hall observes that *traīdhātuka* is a secondary derivative in –*ka*. He points out that in the Sanskrit language secondary derivatives are often employed as substantives. Thus he argues that the phrase should be read as ‘*[idam]* or *[sarvaṁ]* *traīdhātukam* – all this [universe] that pertains to the three realms.’ On the basis of this interpretation, Hall makes the following observation:

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other beings such as *pretas* (‘hungry ghosts’), animals and the ‘lower gods.’ The realm of pure form is occupied by higher gods, or *Brahmās*. The formless world is occupied by further *Brahmās*, but only the type that consist solely of consciousness. See Rupert Gethin, *The Foundations of Buddhism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 118.

334 Kochumuttom translates *citta* as ‘mind’ and *caitta* as ‘mental faculties’ (p. 35).
338 Bruce Cameron Hall, ‘The Meaning of *Vijñāpī*’, p. 22 n.
Vasubandhu’s statement means that the whole universe is nothing but the contents of consciousness (that is, all the contents of everyone’s consciousness)...the intention of the *vijñapti-mātra* doctrine is not to draw boundaries around reality, but rather to point at the nature of specific experiences.*

If we accept Hall’s position – and I suggest that we do – then we can see that Vasubandhu’s intention in the above passage is not to deny the reality of external objects, but to dismantle the conceptual distinction between ‘external’ and ‘internal’ which characterises our experience of the world. Such a reading serves to support our contention that Vasubandhu’s treatment of the issue of external objects is *pedagogical*. In particular, the passage reflects the first of Vasubandhu’s pedagogical techniques which we identified in Chapter Three – the deconstruction of concepts. His reference to ‘non-existent objects’ signifies the beginning of a process through which the *Yogācārin* pupil’s assumptions are gradually deconstructed. It is no coincidence, then, that the passage occurs at the beginning of the text.

Thus far, then, we have outlined Vasubandhu’s view of objects. Contrary to the common assumption that Vasubandhu denies the existence of external objects, we have argued that what he actually denies is that our experience can give us knowledge of objects external to that experience itself. We have already begun to see how the way in which Vasubandhu establishes this view incorporates the first of his pedagogical techniques – the deconstruction of concepts. In what other ways, then, does Vasubandhu’s approach to the issue of objects incorporate his pedagogical techniques?

Central to Vasubandhu’s discussion of external objects is the third pedagogical technique which we identified – the use of examples. In particular, in this context, Vasubandhu uses the example of dreaming. In the passage of autocommentary prior to *Viṃś* 3a, Vasubandhu’s opponent objects that if an object were constructed by *vijñapti*, its location in time and space would be ‘illogical’. In *Viṃś* 3a itself, Vasubandhu responds to this objection by pointing out that *desādiniyamah siddhiḥ*

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340 Bruce Cameron Hall, ‘The Meaning of *Vijñapti*’, p. 16.
svapnavat – ‘restriction as to place, etc., is demonstrated, as in a dream.’

When the opponent replies, ‘How is it so much like a dream?’ Vasubandhu responds with the following explanation:

In a dream, without an object of the senses, something – a bee, a garden, a woman, a man, etc. – is seen only in certain places, and not everywhere. And even there, in that place, it is not seen all the time. In this way, even without an object of the senses, restriction as to place and time is demonstrated.

Vasubandhu’s point here is that objects which are constructed in dreams can appear to exist in a particular time and place. Similarly, he argues, it is possible that other constructed objects – such as those which are created through the process of vijñapti – can appear to have spatio-temporal locations. In the above passage, then, Vasubandhu is employing the first of the pedagogical techniques which we identified in Chapter Three.

In addition to this, however, I suggest that Vasubandhu’s use of the analogy from dreaming also contributes on a more subtle level to the pedagogical process that is occurring in the Viṃśatīkā as a whole. On closer examination, the analogy from dreaming not only serves to support Vasubandhu’s view that external objects are constructed. It also reinforces the idea that the process which constructs these objects is real, a point which we discussed in chapter four. As Masaaki Hattori has observed in a paper entitled ‘The Dream Simile in Vijnānavāda treatises’:

These objects vanish as soon as a man awakes from sleep, but the fact that there was during the dream a consciousness which produced the objects to be apprehended remains true. The objects seen in a dream are unreal, and the pleasure and the pain experienced in a dream are untrue, but the consciousness in a dream is undeniably real. Likewise, according to the Vijnānavādins, the external objects are unreal, but the consciousness which produces external objects and grasps them really exists.

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341 Viṃś 3a: deśādiniyamaḥ siddhīḥ svapnavat.
342 VV 3a: svapna iva svapnavat katham tāvat.
343 VV 3a: svapna vināpyarthena kvacideva deṣe kiṃcid bhrāmarārāmastrīpuruṣādikam drśyate na sarvatra tatraiva ca deṣe kadāciddrśyate na sarvakālamiti siddho vināpyarthena deśākālaniyamaḥ.
Due to the dynamicity of *vijñapti* as a process, it would – I suggest – be more fitting to say that the conscious process *occurs*, rather than ‘the consciousness…really exists.’ Nonetheless, Hattori’s point is a particularly pertinent one. The dream analogy, in Vasubandhu’s *Viṃśatikā* has a more subtle function in addition to demonstrating that external objects are constructed. It also reinforces that the process through which they are constructed is *real*.

Furthermore, Vasubandhu’s use of the analogy from dreaming can also be seen to support the active sense of *vijñapti* which I argued for in Chapter Four. As Edward Hamlin has observed, ‘The elements of a dream do not come and go of their own accord, whatever their appearance to the contrary; they come and go because we make them do so.’345 Thus Vasubandhu’s use of the analogy from dreaming reinforces the idea that *vijñapti* indicates a conscious process responsible for constructing the world as it appears to us.

In terms of logical coherence there is a problem with Vasubandhu’s use of the analogy from dreaming, which Joel Feldman has noted in his article, ‘Vasubandhu’s illusionism and the Parasitism of Illusion upon veridical experience.’346 Feldman argues that knowledge of ‘illusionism’ – as he terms Vasubandhu’s position – requires access to some kind of veridical experience outside of the illusion itself. In the case of Vasubandhu, Feldman argues, one would need to access *nirvāṇa* in order to know that there are two orders of illusion – the dreaming and waking states. Yet if a person could access *nirvāṇa* then the knowledge that there are two orders of illusion would become superfluous, since one would have already attained liberation. On this basis Feldman argues that there is an inherent circularity in Vasubandhu’s use of the dream analogy.347 As we shall see subsequently, Kumārila uses a similar argument in an attempt to refute Vasubandhu’s position.

Although for the realist such an argument is no doubt persuasive, this would not necessarily be the case for Vasubandhu himself. For such a view presupposes that there is a distinction between

‘illusion’ and ‘reality’, a distinction which – as we have already observed – Vasubandhu attempts to undermine. For Vasubandhu, the purpose of the dream analogy is to assuage the tendency to cling to dualities such as that of ‘illusion’ and ‘reality.’ His use of the dream analogy is surely intended to raise questions rather than to establish metaphysical truths, and as such is deeply embedded within his pedagogical method.

As we have seen, Vasubandhu’s position on external objects is – to some extent – open to interpretation. No such difficulty arises in the context of Kumārila, whose system is heavily contingent upon the idea that objects exist independently of perception. It is to Kumārila’s position that we now turn.

Kumārila

Kumārila’s unquestionably realist ontology plays an essential role in maintaining the eternality of Vedic language. As is evident the start of the Nīralambanavāda (hereafter NV) section of the ŚV, Kumārila is quite candid in his view that the eternality of the Vedas necessitates the independent existence of objects.348 Kumārila discusses the issue of external objects in various contexts throughout the ŚV. In what follows we shall focus first on Kumārila’s dialogue with the Yogācāra Buddhists, and then on his discussions of the issue of śabdārthasamābandhana – the connection between a word and its referent. As we are about to see, in both of these contexts Kumārila uses his discussions of external objects as a means for reaffirming what he conceives to be the absolute authority of Vedic language.

In NV 14-16, Kumārila identifies two Buddhist traditions which he conceives to deny the existence of external objects: the Yogācārin and the Mādhyamikas. As Taber has observed, however, Kumārila does not actually repudiate the Mādhyamikas.349 Instead he focuses upon repudiating two

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348 See ŚV Nīralambanavāda 1-3.
349 Taber has observed that the Śūnyavāda section of the Ślokavārttika is so-called simply because of the passage from the Śabara Bhāṣya upon which it is based which begins with śūnyas tu. Taber argues, however, that neither this passage
different Yogācāra positions, which broadly seem to correspond with those of Vasubandhu and Diṇnāga.\(^{350}\) Kumārila’s repudiation of the former takes place in the NV section of the ŚV, whereas his repudiation of the latter occurs in the Śūnyavāda section.\(^{351}\) It is his arguments in the NV section upon which we shall focus here.

At the start of the NV, Kumārila makes the following statement concerning what he regards to be the Yogācāra position:

[There is] a position saying that a state of experience is like experience in a dream, etc. An object beyond is here put forward for the sake of refuting that view.\(^{352}\)

Whether or not the position Kumārila outlines is actually drawn from Vasubandhu’s Viṃś is uncertain.\(^{353}\) Yet as Taber has argued, Kumārila focuses upon the dreaming argument as a way of attacking what he conceives to be the general Yogācāra position on objects.\(^{354}\)

The central criticism which Kumārila directs towards the dreaming argument, as he interprets it, is that it does not posit a distinction between subject and predicate. As Kumārila writes in NV 35,

And because there is non-apprehension of the distinction between subject and predicate, either one or the other, or both, are not established.\(^{355}\)

To say that a subject and predicate must be ‘established’ (siddha) is to say that they must be real.\(^{356}\) Yet according to the Yogācāra position there is no real predicate to be discerned.

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\(^{350}\) The issue of whether Kumārila’s interpretation is based directly on Vasubandhu will be discussed below.


\(^{352}\) See John A Taber, ‘Kumārila’s Refutation of the Dreaming Argument’, p. 47 n.

\(^{353}\) See John A Taber, ‘Kumārila’s Refutation of the Dreaming Argument’, p. 29.

\(^{354}\) See Taber, Kumārila’s Refutation of the Dreaming Argument, p. 28.

\(^{355}\) See Taber, Kumārila’s Refutation of the Dreaming Argument, p. 28.

\(^{356}\) See John A. Taber, ‘Kumārila’s Refutation of the Dreaming Argument’, p. 32.
An interesting point in terms of the present study is that Kumārila then applies this idea to the notion of the ‘speaker’ and ‘hearer’. In NV36-37, he argues that according to the Yogācāra position,

‘The speaker or hearer’s cognition of subject and predicate would also be without an object. So your own statement would deny both [subject and predicate]...Thus there is no appropriate way of stating your thesis.’

Notwithstanding the issue that the Buddhist undermines his own thesis, there are two additional consequences of this argument which are significant in terms of our study. The first is that the lack of distinction between subject and predicate would render debate itself impossible; that is, there would be no object by virtue of which both parties in a debate could distinguish between subject and predicate. Furthermore, this lack of object would undermine the possibility of teaching. Indeed, Kumārila uses this argument later in the NV, where he states that the Vijñānavādin position renders the very possibility of teacher and pupil untenable. Thus Kumārila reworks his argument in terms of dialogue; that is, dialogue between opponents and dialogue between teacher and pupil. The latter indicates the seriousness with which he takes the pedagogical process.

In addition to this, Kumārila argues that knowledge of the illusory nature of dreaming state is contingent upon veridical experience. As Kumārila states in Nīralambanavāda 88-89:

If [you say], This [false cognition] is indeed without contradiction, so be it. The case is not established. Since a contradiction [of the dream cognition] is seen in the waking cognition, it must be false. Our (asmākam) view of dream etc is completely different from yours. And there is no other contradiction beyond the waking cognition.

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357 NV36-37: vak trṣrostro ca yaj jīānām viṣeṣanaviṣeṣyayoh tannirālambanatvena svāgbhādho dvayor api
dsambhago na ca bhedasya viṣeṣanaviṣeṣyayoh tasmān niripaṇaṁ nāsti prajñārthasya śobhanam ||

358 NV72-73: dharmādharmādibheda ca nāsiddhe paramarthataḥ śisyāṃśo ca dharmāderupadedesā ’vakalpate ||
tadanuṣṭhānato buddhārtha bhedaḥ sphutaṁ ca tathā sūtrāntaro bhuyupatavād bhavedgamanabādhanaṁ ||

359 NV 88-89: bāḍhāvināpi taccet syādvyaavasthā na prakalpate pratiyogini drṣṭe ca jāgrajñāne mṛṣā bhavet ||

svapnādibuddhirasmākam tava bheda’pi kīṅkṛtaḥ na cānyat pratiyogyasti jāgrajñānasya śobhanam ||
If there are— to use Feldman’s phrase— ‘two orders of illusion’, then there is no veridical experience through which one could verify the illusory character of the dreaming state. As we noted previously, this criticism would not necessarily bear much weight for Vasubandhu. What is important for the present discussion, however, is that Kumārila’s criticism of the Vaiśeṣika constitutes an attempt to show that there must be a world of objects which exists independently of perception. Once this has been established, he can pursue his main concern, which is to demonstrate that this world of independently existing objects is an essential component of the eternal relationship between a word and its referent, which is in turn crucial for preserving the idea of the eternality of Vedic language itself.

In order to see how Kumārila does this, we need first to understand that he conceives there to be a threefold relationship between a word, its referent and a particular object. Central to this relationship is the notion of ākṛti. The term ākṛti has been used in various ways by Indian philosophical schools. However in Mīmāṃsā, as Julius Lipner has noted, the term is most usefully understood as ‘generic configuration’.

For the Mīmāṃsakas, Kumārila included, every word denotes an ākṛti, that is the general arrangement of attributes which designate the class of a particular thing. According to Kumārila, the relationship between a word and its ākṛti is eternal.

For Kumārila, it is the ākṛti that is first denoted by a word. We comprehend the individual object by recognising that it exemplifies the generic configuration of its akṛti. This must, for Kumārila, be the case, since individual objects, although real, are impermanent. Thus, if the individual were denoted prior to— or at the same time as— the ākṛti, the relation of the word to its referent would, by implication, be impermanent. This, of course, would undermine the entire basis of the Mīmāṃsā system. Kumārila says as much at the beginning of the Ākṛti (ĀK) section of the ŚV. He writes,

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360 In early Nyāya thought, ākṛti was a technical term used to mean the liṅga (mark) of the jāti (universal). See Wilhelm Halbfass, On Being and What there Is: Classical Vaiśeṣika and the History of Indian Ontology (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), p. 121.
If the referent were different from the ākṛti, the relationship and the eternality [of the relationship] would not be established. Knowing this, that which is designated by it [i.e. the primary referent of the word, the ākṛti] is here stated.\textsuperscript{362}

Here, Kumārila argues quite clearly that if the ākṛti were not the word’s referent, then the relationship between a word and its referent would be non-eternal. So a word must in the first instance denote the ākṛti if the eternality of the ŝabdārtha relationship is to be preserved. Thus Kumārila’s theory preserves what Lipner has called ‘the non-innateness of the relationship between word and its individual referents’, which, Lipner says,

…makes it possible for these referents to come into existence and perish, as individuals do, without affecting the pre-established and eternal nature of the relation between the word and its ākṛti in the first place.\textsuperscript{363}

Thus, by stating that a word first denotes its ākṛti, Kumārila is able to preserve the eternal word from the non-eternity of individual objects which are subsequently comprehended in relation to the ākṛti. This is a pertinent example of Kumārila’s technique of linguistic grounding, which we explored in Chapter Three.

So why does Kumārila’s view of ŝabdārthasāṁbandhana necessitate the existence of external objects? As we have seen, Kumārila’s view that there is an eternal relationship between a word and its referent is essential for preserving the eternality of Vedic language itself. Yet the very fact that a word denotes an ākṛti in turn requires that there is an independent object of cognition. As Kumārila writes in PS 182,

\begin{quote}
A description (nirdeśa) of the cognised object is possible only through the word. [Even] the description of those who think the idea of that is what is expressed is simply “the cow”. \textsuperscript{364}
\end{quote}

In this verse, Kumārila is arguing that words only make sense if their ākṛti denotes an independently existing object. Even those who think that words simply denote ideas have to use language about objects. Language itself commits them to talking about objects.

\textsuperscript{362} \text{"ĀK 1: ākṛtvyatrinkte \textasciitilde{r}the sambandho nityatasya ca | na sidhyetāmīti jñānativātad vācyatvamihocayt ||

\textsuperscript{363} Lipner, \textit{The Face of Truth}, p. 20.

\textsuperscript{364} \text{"PS 182: \text{"śabdenaiva ca nirdeśaḥ gṛhītē \textasciitilde{r}the \textasciitilde{v}akalpate \textasciitilde{g}aurityeva ca nirdeśo vācyatadbuddhivādinām ||


We have thus explored the significance of the issue of external objects in Kumārila’s system. As we have seen, Kumārila is emphatic in his assertion that objects exist independently of our perception of them. His motive behind this assertion is clearly pedagogical, in that it is a means of convincing the Mīmāṃsaka pupil of the eternity of Vedic language. This pedagogical endeavour consists of two stages. First, Kumārila has to repudiate those rival views which run contrary to his realist ontology. Attempting to refute the Vijñānavādin is, of course, his main concern in this regard. More importantly, however, he employs linguistic grounding in his discussion of objects, in order to demonstrate the eternal relationship between a word and its referent.

Śaṅkara

The task of establishing Śaṅkara’s view of objects is far from straightforward. This is not because he presents a view of objects which is ambiguous, which as we saw earlier is the case with Vasubandhu. It is rather because Śaṅkara’s view on objects appears – at least initially – to be inconsistent. In some cases, as in his arguments against the Vijñānavādin Buddhists in BSBh 2.2.28-32, Śaṅkara appears to hold the view that objects exist independently of our perception of those objects. Yet if there is a world consisting of external objects – which Śaṅkara appears to concede in BSBh 2.2.28-32 – then there are two possibilities. The first is that this world is distinct from the self, in which case the self could not be - as Śaṅkara contends - the only reality. The second is that objects are part of the self, in which case the non-duality of the self would be compromised. In either case, appears to be an awkward tension between Śaṅkara’s arguments for the existence of an external world, and his arguments for the non-duality of the self.

Śaṅkara, however, is well-aware of this tension, and accounts for this through his distinction between the vyāvahāra (‘conventional’) and paramārtha (‘ultimate’). For Śaṅkara, worldly experience – which includes our experience of external objects – belongs to the ‘conventional’. The non-duality of the self is paramārtha; that is, it is the ultimate truth which is realised upon
transcendence of the conventional. Śaṅkara does not use this distinction in his arguments against the Buddhists in *BS Bh* 2.2.28-32, possibly because of its resemblance to the *Madhyamaka* theory of conventional and ultimate truth.

Nonetheless, the *vyavahāra-paramārtha* distinction underpins Śaṅkara’s discussions of objects; that is, it explains how he is able to take experience seriously whilst maintaining the non-duality of the self. Furthermore, this distinction forms an integral part of the pedagogical process through which Śaṅkara is able to guide the *Advaitin* pupil towards realisation of the non-duality of the self. As we shall see in what follows, Śaṅkara clearly uses the pupil’s experience of external objects as a means for facilitating the transcendence of this very experience. In this section we shall see that Śaṅkara’s arguments against the *Vijñānavādins* in *BS Bh* 2.2.28-32 form a vital part of this pedagogical process.

As D. H. H. Ingalls has argued, Śaṅkara’s arguments in this passage ‘go far beyond the simple refutation of an opponent’s theory’ in that they are ultimately directed towards establishing the existence of a permanent self.\(^{365}\) It is in this sense that Śaṅkara’s arguments for the existence of external objects need to be viewed as pedagogical. That is, they are a heuristic means through which Śaṅkara is able to establish his theory of the permanence of the self. Indeed, these arguments provide a means for establishing the permanence of the self in a context where references to the Veda would have no impact.\(^{366}\)

Since Śaṅkara’s arguments against the Buddhists in *BS Bh* 2.2.28-32 have already been widely discussed by contemporary scholars, a brief outline of stages of these arguments will suffice here.\(^{367}\) Śaṅkara’s arguments in this section consist of three main stages, which are as follows. First, Śaṅkara draws upon our experience of external objects. In this context, he says that external objects

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\(^{366}\) Suthren Hirst has noted that references to the Vedic texts are notably absent from passages where Śaṅkara argues against the Buddhists. See ‘Strategies of Interpretation: Śaṅkara’s Commentary on *Bṛhadāranyakopaniṣad*’, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 116.1 (1996), p. 69.

\(^{367}\) See, for example, Shlomo Biderman, ‘Śaṅkara and the Buddhists’, *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, 6 (1978), 405-413. See also D. H. H. Ingalls, ‘Śaṅkara’s Arguments against the Buddhists’, 291-306.
are not non-existent because they are perceived (upalabdheḥ). Secondly, he repudiates the Vijnānavādin use of the dream example, and argues that perceptions in the waking state are different from perceptions in dreams. Thirdly, he focuses upon the Vijnānavādin notion of vāsanā (‘impressions’) and argues that this notion actually proves the existence of external objects. In what follows, we shall explore each of these three stages in the BSBh passage, drawing out the ways in which they demonstrate Śaṅkara’s pedagogical approach.

Śaṅkara’s first technique, then, is to draw upon our everyday experience of external objects. This is when he says that external objects are not non-existent ‘because they are perceived.’ By this Śaṅkara means that when we experience an object, we experience the object itself and not the cognising of that object. Underpinning this argument is Śaṅkara’s acceptance of pratyakṣa as a pramāṇa. Since it is pratyakṣa which gives rise to the experience of external objects, these objects must – at least at the conventional level – be existent. The force of this argument lies in the fact that the Vijnānavādins also accept pratyakṣa as a pramāṇa. Thus Śaṅkara poses the following question to his opponent:

How can a person’s words be acceptable if he says, "I do not perceive, and that object does not exist," even while that person is perceiving an external object through sense-contact?\textsuperscript{368}

The idea here is clearly to emphasise the absurdity of contradicting something which is made apparent through sense-contact (indriyasannikarṣa), in this case the existence of external objects.

Yet this argument is not in itself sufficient to refute the Vijnānavādin position. For as we saw in our discussion of Vasubandhu, the Vijnānavādin does not deny our experience of objects; rather, he wants to deconstruct this experience. Śaṅkara seems to be aware that his argument from experience is insufficient in this regard, and thus he then focuses his attention on the Vijnānavādin use of the dream example.

\textsuperscript{368} BSBh 2.2.28: tadvad indriyasannikarṣena svayam upalabhamāṇa eva bāhyam arthaṁ nāhaṁ upalabdhe na ca so 'sti iti brūvan katham upādeyavacanaḥ syat
Śaṃkara begins *BSBh* 2.2.29 by identifying a position which bears a striking similarity to that put forward by Vasubandhu in the *Viṃś.* The position which he identifies argues that in both the waking and dreaming states it is possible to perceive objects which do not exist externally. This is basically the same as Kumārila’s interpretation of the *Vijñānavādin* position. Like Kumārila, Śaṃkara is keen to repudiate this use of the dream analogy. Yet his method for doing so differs in some respect from Kumārila’s, and, as we are about to see, this difference reveals some disparity in the two thinkers’ respective views of external objects.

Śaṃkara’s technique is to adopt the *Vijñānavādin* example of dreaming, but to reject the idea that the dreaming and waking states are similar. He argues that perceptions in the waking state are different from the perceptions in a dream because they have different characteristics (*vaidharmya*). The difference, Śaṃkara contends, is that the perceptions in a dream are sublated upon waking, whereas there is no such sublation of the perceptions belonging to the waking state. The main thread of the argument thus parallels Kumārila’s argument against the *Vijñānavādin* use of the dream example. It is based upon the contention that – to use Feldman’s term – dreaming is ‘parasitic’ upon veridical experience. Yet as we have suggested, there is an interesting point of disparity between Śaṃkara and Kumārila in this regard. Whereas Kumārila’s endeavour in repudiating the dream analogy is to show that there is an ‘object beyond’, Śaṃkara seems to be concerned primarily with reinforcing the difference between the dreaming and waking states. As we shall see shortly, it is not the case that this distinction constitutes an important part of Śaṃkara’s system. Perhaps, then, Śaṃkara focuses on this distinction to avoid overstating the externality of objects, which – as we observed earlier – has the potential to undermine his conviction in the eternality of the self.

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369 Numerous scholars have noted the similarity of this passage to parts of Vasubandhu’s *Viṃś*. See, for example, Chakravarthi Ram-Prasad, ‘Dreams and Reality: The Śaṃkarite Critique of Vijñānavāda’, *Philosophy East and West* 43 (Jul. 1993), p. 418.
That Śaṅkara is not overly concerned with the distinction between the dreaming and waking states is evident in the fact that, in other instances, such as *Ait Up Bh* 1.3.2, he likens the dreaming and waking states.\(^ {370}\) In this passage Śaṅkara argues that there are two features of the waking state which render it similar to a dream. The first is that there is no consciousness of the self, and the second is that we can— in the waking state— perceive objects which are unreal. The latter, of course, bears a striking similarity to the way in which Vasubandhu uses the example of dreaming.

Furthermore, as Natalia Isayeva has observed, Śaṅkara likens the dreaming and waking states in *BSBh* 2.1.4.\(^ {371}\) Yet Isayeva makes a pertinent observation concerning the contrast between Śaṅkara’s use of the dream analogy in this passage and the *BSBh* passage which we discussed above. She writes,

Śaṅkara’s goal can be revealed only from the context of his discussion; and here [in *BSBh* 1.1.4] the comparison of dreams and ordinary practice reflects quite an auxiliary topic, being just a rebuke directed at the opponent who was bold enough to doubt the injunctions of śruti, as well as combining these injunctions with the proclaiming of an absolute identity.\(^ {372}\)

Isayeva’s point is a useful one in that it emphasises the idea that Śaṅkara uses the dream example for a variety of purposes which are dependent upon the particular opponent he is arguing against. This idea serves to support Ingalls’ observation that Śaṅkara’s overriding concern in the *BSBh* passage is to establish the permanence of the self.

Yet to say that dream example reflects ‘an auxiliary’ topic is somewhat misleading in that it downplays the idea that Śaṅkara takes dream experience seriously. It is certainly true that in the context of the *BSBh* passage the dream example provides a heuristic framework through which Śaṅkara can repudiate the *Vijñānavādins*. Yet Śaṅkara’s earlier argument—which was based clearly on experience—indicates that he clearly takes our experience is conventionally true, and is thus to be taken seriously. This includes, of course, our dream experience.

\(^{370}\) Śaṅkara also alludes to the similarity between the dreaming and waking states in the *GKBh*, in his commentary on the second *prakaraṇa* of the *GK*.

\(^{371}\) In this passage Śaṅkara likens the unliberated state to a dream.

Śaṅkara’s final move is to critique the Vijñānavāda theory of vāsanā (`impressions`). His initial intention here is to show that vāsanā must have an object. Yet he uses this in turn to demonstrate the existence of a permanent self. He writes,

For without a single permanent substrate connected with the three times [past, present and future], or an unchangeable witness of all objects, one cannot account for the ordinary experience of holding, remembering and recognising impressions that arise in different times and places.\(^{373}\)

Śaṅkara’s point is that the Vijñānavādin either has to abandon his theory of vāsanā, or admit that there is a permanent self.

Śaṅkara’s arguments against the Buddhists in Br Up Bh 4.3.7, are also, it seems, aimed at establishing the existence of a permanent self. In this passage, Śaṅkara argues that the very possibility of debate is contingent upon the existence of a permanent self. Śaṅkara argues that the point of a debate is, of course, not to refute one’s own consciousness, but to refute an opponent. Yet the only way in which one can perceive one’s opponent as being other than oneself is if there exists a permanent substrate. Thus, Śaṅkara states, "The Vijñānavādin cannot deny that there exists a light other than consciousness."\(^{374}\)

The Vijñānavādin, of course, cannot deny the concept of debate, since his very system relies – at least to an extent – upon dialogue with opposing schools. Śaṅkara is, of course, all too aware of this fact, and utilises it as a means for proving the existence of a permanent self. The Vijñānavādin is, once again, forced into a corner. Either he has to concede that there is a permanent self, or he has to admit that he is unable to engage in dialogue with others. Either way, his entire system is – according to Śaṅkara – undermined. As we saw earlier, Kumārila also argues that the Vijñānavā position renders the very possibility of debate untenable. In addition, as we observed, Kumārila also

\(^{373}\) BSBh 2.2.31: na hi kālatrayasāṃbandhiny ekasminn anvayiny asati kūjasthe vā sarvāthādārśini deśakāalānimittepeksāvasānadhānaśmrīpratisāmasthanādiyavahārāḥ saṃbhavati l

\(^{374}\) Br Up Bh 4.3.7: tasmādvijñānavāvādīnā `pi na śakyam vijñānavyatiriktaṁ jyotirantarāṁ nīrākartuṁ
applies the same argument to the teacher-pupil relationship. The impossibility of this teacher-pupil relationship is also a consequence of Śaṅkara’s argument. Thus Kumārla and Śaṅkara are clearly aware of the significance of pedagogy for the Vijñānavādin opponent. In turn, this also reinforces their respective views of the necessity of the teacher-pupil relationship.

In this chapter we have explored Vasubandhu’s discussions of ‘objects’. We have argued that it does not appear to be Vasubandhu’s intention to deny the existence of external objects. Rather, Vasubandhu is concerned with showing how vijñāpti constructs our experience. Vasubandhu’s use of the dream analogy serves to support this interpretation. As we have seen, Kumārla and Śaṅkara also employ the example of dreaming in their works. Indeed, use of the dream example is one of the ways in which they respectively engage with – and reinterpret – Vasubandhu’s position.
Chapter Seven
Conclusion: Pedagogy and Truthfulness

We began this study with the contention that Vasubandhu’s discussions of self, perception and objects are fundamentally pedagogical in character. This pedagogical approach, as we have seen, is grounded in Vasubandhu’s view of the relationship between language and experience. For Vasubandhu, language is not simply a means by which our experience is articulated; it also plays a central part in constructing experience itself. It is this idea that brings to light Vasubandhu’s role as teacher. As has been evident throughout this study, Vasubandhu’s central objective in this role is to facilitate the Yogācārin pupil’s attainment of the bodhisattva ideal. This goal, however, can only be achieved if the pupil is encouraged to abandon attachment to all of those concepts which characterise worldly existence. Each of the four pedagogical techniques which we have identified is directed towards this aim.

In the first part of this final chapter, we shall revisit these techniques, drawing out the ways in which they have been demonstrated in the previous three chapters. We shall show how the dialogical approach which we have adopted in this study has been instrumental in demonstrating the pedagogical character of Vasubandhu’s discussions. Finally, we shall explore an issue which has been implicit throughout our study, but which we have yet to articulate, and that is the issue of truthfulness. We shall explore the question of the extent to which Vasubandhu is being truthful in his discussions of self, perception and objects. As we shall see, this question emphasises the importance of recognising the pedagogical character of Vasubandhu’s writings.

Pedagogical techniques

As we discussed in Chapter Three, it is possible to identify four possible techniques at work in Vasubandhu’s discussions of the issues of self, perception and objects: i) the gradual deconstruction of concepts through the use of diverse or even contradictory statements, ii) the assertion that certain
Buddhist teachings are preliminary and that their ostensible meanings do not necessarily correspond with the purposes for which they were employed by the Buddha, iii) repudiation of any rival views which might impinge upon the particular position which Vasubandhu is attempting to establish and iv) the use of examples as a means of locating teachings in a context familiar to the pupil.

The first of these techniques – the deconstruction of concepts – has been apparent throughout our study. Indeed, as we have seen, Vasubandhu seeks to deconstruct the very concepts of self, perception and objects. For Vasubandhu, it is attachment to such concepts that brings about suffering. Given Vasubandhu’s notion that everything is \textit{vijñapti-mātra}, it is clear to see why this is the case. Suffering, according to Vasubandhu, inevitably ensues from our predisposition to reify concepts, when all that we can actually know is the process of conceptualisation itself. The only way to bring an end to suffering is thus to deconstruct those concepts which characterise our experience of the world.

In the preceding chapters, we have discussed numerous instances in which Vasubandhu attempts to deconstruct the concepts of self, perception and objects. In Chapter Four, we explored the way in which Vasubandhu deconstructs the concept of ‘self’. It is well-known, of course, that the idea of \textit{anātman} (‘no-self’) is commonly emphasised in Buddhist traditions; that Vasubandhu also discusses this idea is thus unsurprising. There is, however – as we have seen – a marked difference in the way in which Vasubandhu discusses the idea of ‘selflessness’, for he seeks to undermine the very distinction between ‘self’ and ‘no self’. There is an important difference between denying the self and denying the \textit{concept} of the self, the latter of which is, it seems Vasubandhu’s intention. Even the denial of the self is, of course, contingent upon retaining the \textit{concept} of self. Such a denial is thus not sufficient for Vasubandhu, who seeks to undermine the very distinction between ‘self” and ‘no-self’. In Chapter Four, we saw how Vasubandhu gradually deconstructs the concept of ‘self’ – which he tellingly refers to as a ‘metaphor’ (\textit{upacāra}) through alluding to the threefold ‘transformation of consciousness’ (\textit{vijñāna-parināma}).
We also saw, in Chapter Four, that Vasubandhu’s deconstruction of the concept of ‘self’ is very much grounded in his notion of \( \text{vijñapti-mātra} \). As we have seen, Vasubandhu arguably deliberately employs the term \( \text{vijñapti} \) – as opposed to \( \text{vijñāna} \) – in order to emphasise that it is an active process that constructs our experience of the world. The concept of ‘self’ is evidently incompatible with this idea. Not only does the notion of an independently existing self counter Vasubandhu’s view that our epistemic capacity is limited to the process of \( \text{vijñapti} \); the idea that such a self could be permanent and unchanging undercuts the notion of process itself. Vasubandhu’s theory of \( \text{vijñapti-mātra} \) thus plays a pivotal role in his deconstruction of the concept of ‘self’.

Yet, as we have seen, this notion of \( \text{vijñapti-mātra} \) itself becomes subject to Vasubandhu’s method of deconstruction; the \( \text{Viṃś} \), which initially sets out to highlight the importance of recognising \( \text{vijñapti-mātra} \), eventually goes on to warn the pupil of the perils of becoming attached even to this notion. Vasubandhu’s treatment of \( \text{vijñapti-mātra} \) thus epitomises his broader attitude towards conceptuality. That is to say, concepts are, for Vasubandhu, tools through which attachment to conceptuality is itself eventually relinquished. They are pedagogical devices which have their use on the initial stages of the \( \text{bodhisattva} \) path, but must ultimately be abandoned if one is to attain liberation. The concept of \( \text{vijñapti-mātra} \) is the quintessence of this idea. On the one hand it governs Vasubandhu’s view of conceptuality, drawing attention to the dangers of reifying linguistic constructs. On the other hand, as a linguistic construct itself, it must eventually be relinquished. Vasubandhu’s treatment of \( \text{vijñapti-mātra} \) is thus starkly emblematic of his endeavour to free the \( \text{Yogācārin} \) pupil from the fetters of conceptual language.

Such an endeavour can also be discerned in Vasubandhu’s discussions of the perceiver-perceived distinction, which we discussed in Chapter Five. Vasubandhu’s approach towards this distinction parallels quite overtly his approach towards the concept of ‘self’. As we have demonstrated, Vasubandhu undermines the distinction between perceiver and perceived through reference to the ‘three aspects’ (\( \text{trisvabhāva} \)). Once again, his aim is not simply to deny ontological status of ‘perceiver’ and ‘perceived’, but rather to undermine the very assumptions upon which we reify the
concepts of ‘perceiver’ and ‘perceived’. Recognising that the perceiver-perceived distinction is unfounded only gets us so far as the ‘dependent aspect’ (parikalpita-svabhāva). Ultimately, we need to realise that there is no such thing as a distinction between ‘being’ and ‘non-being’, and that in this respect it does not make sense even to talk about ‘perceiver’ and ‘perceived’ as ontological entities. This is parinispanna-svabhāva, the ‘perfected aspect’, the stage at which all conceptual distinctions are dissolved.

The second technique which we have explored – the assertion that certain teachings are preliminary – is, as we have seen, particularly palpable in Vasubandhu’s discussion of ‘sense-objects’ (āyatana). As we discussed in Chapter Five, Vasubandhu explicitly states that the existence of the sense objects was taught by the Buddha for the purpose of introducing people to the doctrine of pudgalanairātmya (‘the person being without a self’). The idea, then, is that the teaching of the sense-objects is a preliminary – albeit necessary – means of guiding the Yogācārīn pupil towards a recognition of ‘selflessness’. As we observed above, however, even ‘selflessness’, as a concept, is eventually to be relinquished.

That Vasubandhu is keen to point out the preliminary character of certain teachings of the Buddha is particularly pertinent in the context of this study, since it demonstrates that Vasubandhu is himself acutely aware of the value of pedagogy. Of course, on one level, the assertion that certain teachings are preliminary is an important tool through which Vasubandhu can give authority only to those teachings which are in keeping with his own system. However, the value which he attributes to the Buddha’s pedagogical approach is, as we have seen throughout this study, reflected in his own method. That is to say, Vasubandhu’s recognition of the need for adopting a pedagogical approach can be more broadly understood as a comment on the constraints of conceptual language, something which evident in at the end of the Viṃś, where he recognises the limitations of his own works. The technique by which Vasubandhu asserts the preliminary character of certain teachings is thus symptomatic of a more general recognition that pedagogy is a necessary tool for dissolving the boundaries brought about by conceptuality.
The repudiation of rival views, which is the third technique which we identified, is evident throughout Vasubandhu’s discussions of self, perception and objects. As we observed in Chapter Three, Vasubandhu not only repudiates the views of those non-Buddhist traditions which appear to pose a threat to his system, but also repudiates – in a more subtle sense – those aspects of Abhidharma and Madhyamaka which he deems problematic in terms of his theory of vijñapti-mātra. His repudiation of these Buddhist traditions, as we have seen, does not consist in a rejection of particular doctrines themselves, but rather in a reinterpretation of the ways in which these doctrines are presented. This was demonstrated in Chapter Four, where we explored the way in which Vasubandhu reinterprets the Abhidharma understanding of vijñapti. Rather than simply following the Abhidharma view that vijñapti designates vocal and bodily action, Vasubandhu broadens the notion of vijñapti so that it represents the entire process within which we experience the world. Importantly, however, Vasubandhu retains the original sense of vijñapti as action, something which is central to his view that the process of vijñapti-mātra is constructive.

The final pedagogical technique – the use of examples – is implemented throughout Vasubandhu’s works. In Chapter Six, we explored the way in which Vasubandhu employs the example of dreaming. We challenged the commonly held view that Vasubandhu’s use of the dream example indicates an outright denial of external objects, arguing instead that the way in which Vasubandhu implements the example is much more subtle than this. The example of dreaming is employed by Vasubandhu to demonstrate the idea that we cannot have access to anything which is ontologically independent of the process of vijñapti. Dreams, having the capacity to create the appearance of objects with specific spatio-temporal locations, provide an apposite model for explaining Vasubandhu’s theory of vijñapti-mātra. The appeal of the dream example is evident in the fact that its resonance is wide-ranging. Not only is it sanctioned as a conventional example to be employed in Buddhist philosophical discourse, it also bears weight in the broader intellectual climate in which Vasubandhu is writing. As we saw in Chapter Six, Kumārila and Śaṅkara both utilise the example of dreaming as a means of engaging with Vasubandhu’s discussions about the status of objects.
Kumārila and Śaṁkara

As we have seen, there are a number of ways in which the writings of Kumārila and Śaṁkara can be deemed pedagogical. As we observed in Chapter Three, Suthren Hirst has already carried out a detailed study of the way in which Śaṁkara’s role as teacher manifests itself in his writings. The main point to come out of our own study in relation to Śaṁkara’s pedagogical techniques is the way in which he incorporates his repudiation of Vasubandhu’s position into the process by which he brings about realisation of the self in the Advaitin pupil. Śaṁkara’s reframing of Vasubandhu’s position in terms of vijñāna – rather than vijñāpti – is a case in point. As we have seen, in substituting Vasubandhu’s term vijñāpti with vijñāna, Śaṁkara can attempt to bring about the realisation of a permanent self, the central objective of his system.

The various ways in which Śaṁkara engages with Vasubandhu’s position highlight the significance of our dialogical approach, which we outlined in Chapter One. Śaṁkara’s discussions of Vasubandhu’s position indicate the importance of dialogue in the context of Vasubandhu’s discussions of self, perception and objects. The Vijñānavādin Buddhists are not the only group of opponents whom Śaṁkara critiques in order to establish his notion of a permanent self. He also repudiates the Mīmāṁsa conception of the self – which posits the self in relation to ritual action – during the course of the teacher-pupil dialogue in the prose section of the Upad.

There is also, however, a broader sense in which dialogue forms an important part of Śaṁkara’s work. This is particularly evident in his deliberations on the issue of objects. As we observed in Chapter Four, in Br Up Bh 4.3.7. Śaṁkara argues that the Buddhist position renders the very possibility of debate unfeasible. The argument that Śaṁkara puts forward here is that dialogue itself is contingent upon the existence of a permanent self. That is, the very parameters within which dialogue takes place are dependent on there being a permanent substrate; the Vijñānavādin notion of vāsanā (‘impressions’) does not, in Śaṁkara’s view, allow for this. What Śaṁkara does in this
instance, then, is to show how the *content* of the *Vijñānavādin* position – as he understands it – is undermined by the very *context* in which this position is put forward.

It is not only Śaṅkara who implements what we might term ‘meta-dialogue’ – that is, dialogue *about* dialogue. As we also observed in Chapter Six, Kumārila also employs a similar approach in relation to Vasubandhu’s use of the dream example. Initially, Kumārila’s critique is based upon the idea that Vasubandhu’s interpretation of the dream example – as he sees it – undermines the possibility of a distinction between ‘subject’ and ‘predicate’. In one sense, this is an example of Kumārila’s technique of *linguistic grounding* – that is, it demonstrates the way in which he reframes philosophical issues in the context of the function of language. Yet Kumārila then extends this idea to the context of debate itself, in a manner comparable to Śaṅkara in *Br Up Bh* 4.4.7., arguing that Vasubandhu’s use of the dream example renders the very distinction between ‘speaker’ and ‘hearer’ untenable. In this context, Kumārila implies, the very idea of dialogue becomes nonsensical.

Whether or not Kumārila and Śaṅkara are successful in refuting Vasubandhu’s views of self, perception and objects is subject to dispute. One of the central issues in this regard – as we have shown throughout this study, is that it is frequently the case that the respective versions of Vasubandhu’s position put forward by Kumārila and Śaṅkara are at odds with what is actually found in Vasubandhu’s texts. As we noted earlier, some disparity in this regard is inevitable given that Kumārila and Śaṅkara were writing at least three centuries after Vasubandhu. However, we have also presented evidence to show that Kumārila and Śaṅkara deliberately reinterpret Vasubandhu’s position within their own conceptual frameworks. The dialogical approach which we have adopted in this study has been instrumental in showing how this is the case. In what follows we shall look more closely at this dialogical approach, drawing out specifically how it has helped us to demonstrate the pedagogical character of Vasubandhu’s discussions of self, perception and objects.
Pedagogy and the *dialogical approach*

As was discussed in Chapter One, there are three senses in which dialogue is significant in relation to Vasubandhu’s works. Firstly, Vasubandhu engages in dialogue with rival views. As we have seen, this type of dialogue does not only occur between Vasubandhu and non-Buddhists; it also occurs between Vasubandhu and other Buddhist schools. That is to say, Vasubandhu also engages with particular *Abhidharma* and *Madhyamaka* ideas, particularly in instances where these ideas – or at least the ways in which these ideas have been treated – present a threat to Vasubandhu’s notion of *vījñapti-mātra*.

The second way in which Vasubandhu’s texts can be seen to be dialogical is much more subtle. As we noted in our introductory chapter – and as has been evident throughout our study – Vasubandhu’s works are largely contingent upon a form of dialogue between Vasubandhu himself and the *Yogācārīn* pupil. As we noted at the start, the *Yogācārīn* pupil is not written into the texts themselves – except, perhaps in instances where Vasubandhu’s opponent might be read as expressing the doubts of these pupil. Yet the presence of the pupil is implicit throughout Vasubandhu’s texts.

What this demonstrates quite clearly is a distinction between *reading* Vasubadhu’s texts and *engaging* with them. To clarify, Vasubandhu’s texts are inevitably dependent upon conceptual language – how can they be otherwise? It is possible for anyone to read these texts from beginning to end. Yet this does not mean that this person has become liberated. It is only through *engaging* with the texts that one can truly embark upon the *bodhisattva* path. Reading the texts, one is presented with numerous apparent contradictions; most notably, perhaps, Vasubandhu’s assertion that all is *vījñapti-mātra* followed by his assertion that the very notion of *vījñapti-mātra* needs to be relinquished. Engaging with these texts, however, the pupil becomes part of pedagogical process in which apparent contradictions are actually symptomatic of the gradual deconstruction of concepts.
Yet why do we need to view this process as pedagogical? One could argue that this process might just as aptly be characterised as soteriological. After all, Vasubandhu’s works are clearly intended to precipitate the process by which the Yogācārīn pupil becomes liberated. There are, however, strong grounds for making the case that the process underpinning Vasubandhu’s works is pedagogical rather than soteriological. Two points are particularly important in this regard.

The first has to do with the way in which, historically, ‘philosophy’ has been pitched in opposition to ‘religion’, as we discussed in Chapter One. We have already explored some of the reasons as to why this distinction is problematic. But what are the implications in regards to the term soteriology? The answer is that this distinction arguably reverberates in the term ‘soteriology’. The danger of characterising Vasubandhu’s works as soteriological, then, is that such a label will undermine the seriousness with which he approaches philosophical discussion. As we have seen throughout this study, Vasubandhu developed some immensely sophisticated theories about selfhood, the role of perception and the status of external world, which in themselves can be considered an extremely valuable part of ‘philosophy’ as an academic discipline. In this regard, they can certainly be seen to form part of what Matilal terms ‘an important chapter in the history of global philosophy.’ The fact that Vasubandhu’s philosophical discussions are part of a broader endeavour to facilitate the attainment of liberation does not mean that such discussions play a subordinate role. Indeed, as we have seen throughout this study, Vasubandhu’s philosophical deliberations on the issues of self, perception and objects comprise a fundamental part of the bodhisattva path. Consequently, if we were to characterise Vasubandhu’s writings as soteriological, we would risk overlooking the seriousness with which he treats philosophical discussion.

Unlike ‘soteriology’, the term ‘pedagogy’ has not been viewed in contrast to ‘philosophy’. Clearly, the key difference is that pedagogy refers to method. This brings us to the second reason as to why it is more appropriate to regard Vasubandhu’s writings as pedagogical, rather than soteriological; namely that the notion of pedagogy enables us to explore Vasubandhu’s

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methodological approach. To say that Vasubandhu’s works are soteriological only tells us about these works’ objective. To say that Vasubandhu’s works are pedagogical, however, is to say something about both their objective and the method which is employed in order for this objective to be achieved. In acknowledging that Vasubandhu’s works are pedagogical, recognising that these works are directed towards a particular objective; in Vasubandhu’s case this objective consists in becoming a bodhisattva. Yet we are also, by implication, recognising that these works must employ a specific method or methods in order that this objective is attained.

It is vital that we recognise the importance of Vasubandhu’s method since, as we have seen throughout this study, it is inextricably linked with the content of his discussions. The theories which Vasubandhu puts forward are only one aspect of his writings. More important is the way in which these theories are subject to a process of deconstruction. In view of this, is vital that we understand the pedagogical process which underpins Vasubandhu’s works. We are reminded, in this context of Halbfass’s view of ‘conceptual devices’ as ‘tools’, which we discussed in Chapter One. Previously we looked at the relevance of this idea to our own methodological approach. Yet it can also be effectively applied to the way in which Vasubandhu approaches concepts. Halbfass’s contention that ‘we have to be aware that our own ontological concepts and premises are problematic’ parallels, in a sense, Vasubandhu’s attitude towards conceptuality. Halbfass contends that we must be constantly willing to problematise the concepts which we employ in the study of Indian philosophical traditions. Vasubandhu views concepts in a similar manner – as devices which can be helpful on the bodhisattva path, but which must also be challenged if the bodhisattva ideal is to be attained. Vasubandhu, of course, also takes this view much further, to a point where ‘conceptual devices’ are themselves to be abandoned.

The idea that Vasubandhu treats concepts heuristically serves to emphasise, once more, the importance of understanding his discussions of self, perception and objects as pedagogical. As we

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have seen throughout this study, the issues of self, perception and objects – as well as the concepts which frame Vasubandhu’s discussions of these issues – all undergo a process of transformation. This is precisely because such concepts serve as pedagogical devices employed to guide the Yogācārīn pupil towards the attainment of the bodhisattva idea. The notion of pedagogy itself connotes process; that is, pedagogy – by its very nature – evokes the idea of transformation. It is in this regard that it is indispensable for understanding Vasubandhu’s works.

As we have seen, then, concepts have a somewhat provisional role in Vasubandhu’s texts. They are frequently introduced only to be subsequently abandoned when their limitations are exposed. Should this then be read as an indication that Vasubandhu is being untruthful in the way he uses concepts? This is an important question, not least because it has significant implications in terms of acknowledging the pedagogical character of Vasubandhu’s writings. In the last section of this final chapter, then, we shall explore this question, demonstrating how it leads us once again to the pedagogical process underpinning Vasubandhu’s works.

Truthfulness

The very question of whether or not Vasubandhu is being truthful when he puts forward theories which he later seeks to undermine, relies upon a particular assumption about ‘truthfulness’. That is, this question is contingent upon the notion that ‘truth’ is free from any contextual constraint. Throughout this study, however, we have seen that such a notion of ‘truth’ is far from applicable to Vasubandhu. Indeed, the very process of vijñapti undermines the possibility of ‘truth’ in this sense. If our epistemic capacity is limited to the process of vijñapti, then the issue of whether there is a ‘truth’ which exists independently of this process is – to all extent and purposes - superfluous.

Thus the question of whether Vasubandhu is being truthful calls to mind Halbass’s suggestion that we ‘withhold familiar concepts and conceptual distinctions.’ That is to say, we need to abandon the notion of truth with which we are familiar. We need to see ‘truthfulness’ as a problem which

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377 Halbass, On Being and What There Is, p. 15.
ought to be explored within Vasubandhu’s own conceptual framework. To do this, we need to remind ourselves of the Madhyamaka notion of two levels of truth. As we observed in Chapter One, the Mādhyamikas argue that ‘truth’ is to be understood in two different contexts. On the one hand, there is lokasaṃvṛtisatyā, or ‘truth according to worldly convention’) and on the other there is paramārthasatyā (‘ultimate truth’). We can see clearly, then, that for the Madhyānikas ‘truth’ is very much context-dependent.

As we have already argued, the Madhyamaka distinction between lokasaṃvṛtisatyā and paramārthasatyā also permeates Vasubandhu’s writings. Indeed, the way in which Vasubandhu employs concepts is contingent upon the idea that truth is context-dependent. He does not deny, for example that we experience a world which is characterised by dualities; his point is that such dualities are only conventionally ‘true’. This is why Vasubandhu is able to talk about ‘worldly’ issues – such as those of self, perception and objects – without this meaning that he is being untruthful. Indeed, it is precisely this distinction between ‘conventional’ and ‘ultimate’ truth which shapes Vasubandhu’s pedagogical approach. That is, it is only through a pedagogical process that he is able to guide the Yogācārin pupil from the realm of conventional truth to ultimate truth. In order to do this, Vasubandhu has to begin with those concepts with which the pupil is familiar, - namely, those concepts which are conventionally true. Far from being dishonest, this technique is a means by which the pupil is freed from the suffering which ensues from remaining attached to worldly existence. It is, we must remember, compassion that motivates the bodhisattva to teach.

All of the theories which Vasubandhu puts forward embrace the idea of moving from the conventional to the ultimate. The theory of trisvabhāva which we discussed in Chapter Five is a pertinent example. The ‘constructed aspect’ is that which pertains to the conventional realm; it is so-called precisely because it is the stage at which language constructs our experience. The ‘dependent aspect’ is the realisation that conventional truth is precisely that – conventional. It is the stage at which the constraints of conceptuality are realised. The ‘perfected aspect’ is paramārthasatyā, ‘ultimate truth’, which is, for Vasubandhu, beyond the bounds of language itself.
The term *parinispanna-svabhāva*, is of course, a linguistic construct. As such it cannot describe the ‘perfected aspect’, but can only point towards it.

As we have reiterated throughout this study, Vasubandhu contends that language is not simply a means by which we describe our experiences; it plays a pivotal role in constructing those very experiences themselves. It is only through deconstructing linguistic concepts that we can, in Vasubandhu’s view, become free from suffering. It should not be assumed from this, however, that Vasubandhu is upholding a kind of ontological nihilism. For Vasubandhu, *vijñapti-mātra* clearly has an ontological status. Indeed, it cannot be otherwise, since everything to which we have access is contained within the process of *vijñapti*.

**Vasubandhu as a Teacher**

Over the course of this study we have explored the pedagogical character of Vasubandhu’s discussions of self, perception and objects. In so doing, we have presented his ideas in a way that challenges the apparent divide in contemporary studies of Vasubandhu. As we saw in Chapter One, scholars of Vasubandhu seem to take their work in one of two directions. Either they treat Vasubandhu as philosopher, or as an instructor in a kind of meditative practice. In the present study, we have shown that Vasubandhu might be more appropriately viewed as *a teacher*, an idea which is – somewhat surprisingly – rarely considered by contemporary scholars. The title of Alex Wayman’s article, ‘Vasubandhu – Teacher *extraordinary*’, suggests that Wayman is an exception.\(^{378}\) However, although he does consider Vasubandhu’s role as teacher, he does so primarily within the context of Vasubandhu’s *life*.\(^{379}\) He does not consider the extent to which this role shaped Vasubandhu’s *thought*. As we have demonstrated throughout this thesis, however, Vasubandhu’s role as teacher is integral to both the structure and content of his works.

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\(^{379}\) As we saw in Chapter One, however, there is very little accurate historical information about Vasubandhu’s life.
This is not to deny either the practical or philosophical aspects of these works. On the contrary, in emphasising Vasubandhu’s role as teacher, we can see that both of these aspects are inextricably linked. Indeed, such a link is fundamental to the pedagogical process which underpins Vasubandhu’s writings.
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