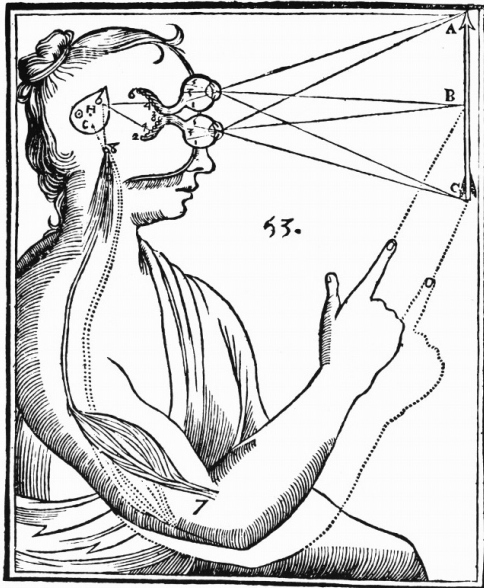


Buddhism implies dualism

Katalin Mund

History and Philosophy of Science Department, ELTE University, Budapest
East-West Research Institute of the Gate of the Dharma Buddhist Collage, Budapest

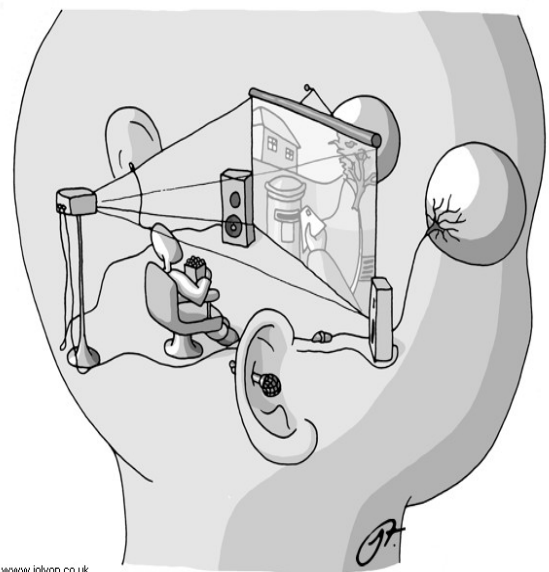
kmund@hps.elte.hu, mundka@freemail.hu



Dealing with human thinking in Cognitive Science inevitably recalls the old philosophical problem of the relationship between the mind (or soul) and the body. For the dualists the world consists of two types of substances, the mental and the physical, which are either totally separated from each other or are in some kind of interaction. In the first case it is necessary to presume the existence of an external agent (for instance God), who provides the harmony between the two spheres. In the second case the question arises, how the two fundamentally different substances are still able to interact. Many representatives of cognitive science search for a solution of or escape from this problem.

Although many scientists reject every form of the above Cartesian dualism, they still implicitly believe in something like a “Cartesian theatre”, i.e. a central spatial or temporal entity where consciousness happens or someone to whom it happens. There is always a kind of dualism lurking in such a view of consciousness.

In their seminal book “The Embodied Mind. Cognitive Science and Human Experience” Varela, Thompson and Rosch (being inspired by philosophical phenomenology and Buddhism), placed introspection as a scientific method into the focus of Cognitive Science. In their theory mind and body form a single unity. Subjective experience is the result of the complex relationship between the organism and its context, hence the self or the “I” is an emergent characteristic. Further they suggested that by using first-person Buddhist methods we can develop an evidence for embodiment, which in turn would be used to eliminate dualism between the mind and the body.



Seemingly the same metaphor: **Mind = Body** or **Body = Mind** is being turned back and forth by Buddhists and Western cognitive science. However, there is difference.

The fundamental metaphor in Cognitive Science

Mind = Body

e.g. Varela and his colleagues believe that the mind is inherently embodied. Lakoff and Johnson hold that the mind is the body, because reason arises from the nature of our brains, bodies and bodily experience and our language is full of metaphors that reflect this bodily experience.

Body = Mind

e.g. in the dynamical hypothesis (Tim van Gelder) the body is the mind, that is, the body works as a mind. The body itself “thinks”: many parts of the traditional thinking structures are placed outside of the inner, closed mind to (the previously considered peripheral) body, such as the limbs and the lower nervous centers.

In the West, unifying efforts usually start from the body, considered to be the real entity. The common final meaning of both directions of the main metaphor is: **“Only the body exists”**.

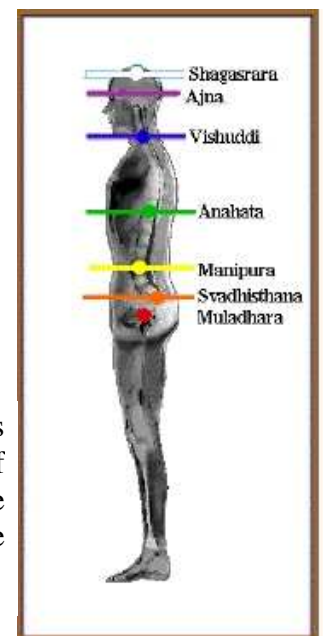
The fundamental metaphor in Buddhism

Mind = Body

At a given level of meditation, the meditator creates a “*mind made body*” (manokaya), that is, his higher state of consciousness appears again as a form of a body. From this concept a whole new theory came into being, the so-called “trikaya” or “three bodies thesis”, which holds that the three types or three levels of enlightenment as posited in classic Buddhist philosophy also appear as bodies. According to the yogacara school, the only real existing substance in the world is the mind or consciousness.

Body = Mind

e.g. the system of the chakras considers *the body as mind*. According to this approach, our consciousness in the brain is just one of our several forms of consciousness. According to the general Buddhist tradition it is the consciousness (vijñāna) that enters the mother’s womb and creates the embryo.



The unifying efforts in Buddhism usually starts form the mind, which is considered to be the absolute entity. The common final meaning of both directions of the metaphor is: **“Only the mind exists”**.

Vipasyanā, mindfulness/awareness meditation

Levels of meditation:

„Territory of the forms”
(rupavacara):

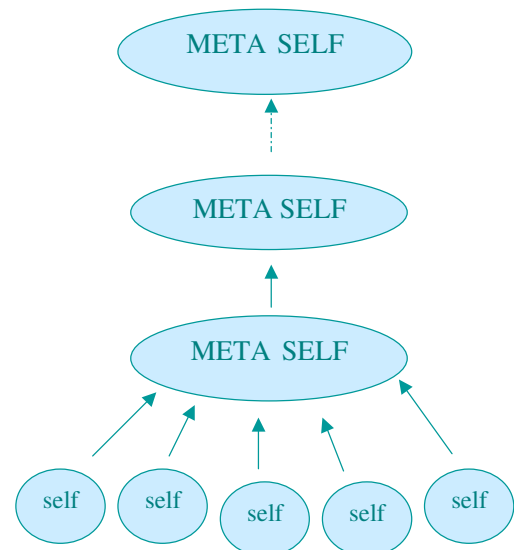
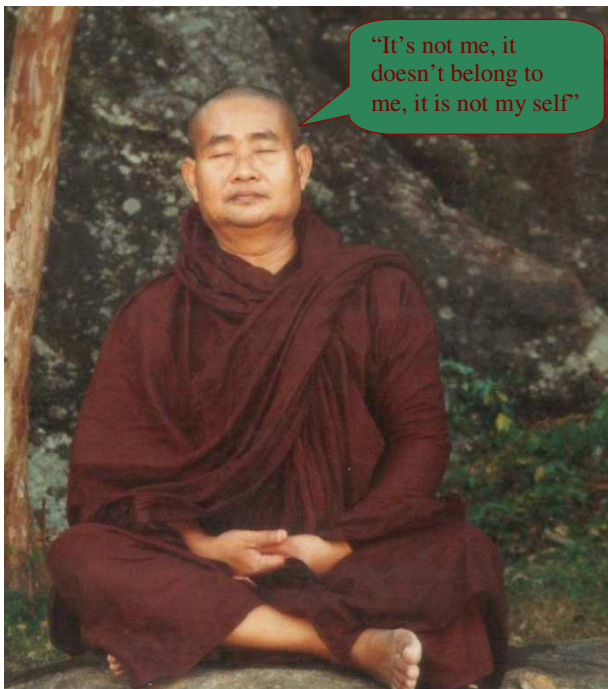
- **1. Jhāna:** free from sense desires and from unprofitable things, harmful bad states. It is characterized by direct thought, evaluation, one pointedness of consciousness, happiness (priti) and bliss (sukkha) born of concentration.
- **2. Jhāna:** it is characterized by internal confidence, one pointedness of consciousness, happiness and bliss.
- **3. Jhāna:** it is characterized by equanimity, mindfulness and bliss.
- **4. Jhāna:** It is characterized by purity of mindfulness due to equanimity.

„Territory of no forms”
(arupavacara):

- pure space without mind-object
- infinite consciousness
- nothingness
- neither perception nor non-perception

Purpose: practicing to become mindful, i.e. to experience what the person’s mind is doing as it is doing it, and to establish the presence of the mind in the world. The meditator carefully examines his own breathing, feelings, thoughts, etc. and realises that in the course of the process his mind is wandering unmindfully. He understands that everything is changing all of the time, and there isn’t any stable structure. As a consequence of this, there would be no point in identifying himself with any particular entity, because all entities are transitory and this leads to inevitable loss, which in turn implies suffering. The deconstruction of the self begins here. The practitioner says to himself: *“it’s not me, it doesn’t belong to me, it’s not my self”*. This type of **meditation automatically ends up feeling a depersonalisation**. The meditator attains higher and higher meditational levels, that is, he continually arrives to a new “meta-level”, and then to a “meta level” to the previous “meta-level”, and so on. Step by step he separates consciousness from everything else, indeed this is how he gets to higher and higher meditational levels.

While the meditator reaches higher and higher levels of meditation, the “seer” (i.e. subjective self) remains there in the back and pops up again and again by the very practice of meditation. This is a deep paradox of the Buddhist praxis.



Brahmajāla sutta (Dīgha Nikāya 1.)

“Here a certain ascetic or Brahmin declares and holds the view: ‘In as far as this self, being furnished and endowed with the fivefold sense-pleasures, indulges in them, then that is when the self realises the highest Nibbāna here and now.’ (...)

Another says to him: ‘Sir, there is such a self as you say. I don’t deny it. But that is not where the self realises the highest Nibbāna here and now. Why so? Because, sir, sense desires are impermanent, painful and subject to change, and from their change and transformation there arise sorrow, pain, grief and distress. But when this self, detached from sense-desires, detached from unwholesome states, enters and abides in the first jhāna, which is accompanied by thinking and pondering, and the delight and happiness born of detachment, that is when the self realises the highest Nibbāna here and now.’

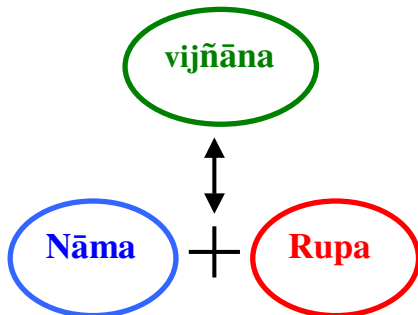
Another says to him: ‘Sir, there is such a self as you say. But that is not when the self attains Nibbāna. How so? Because on account of thinking and pondering, that state is considered gross. But when the self by the subsiding of thinking and pondering enters and abides in the second jhāna, with inner tranquillity and oneness of mind, which is free from thinking and pondering and is born of concentration, and accompanied by delight and joy, that is when the self realises the highest Nibbāna here and now’.”

Consciousness in early Buddhism

The etymology of *vijñāna* (consciousness): being derived from ‘vi’ + ‘jñāna’, is a kind of knowledge (*jñāna*) which separates (*vi*). It is defined as that which ‘vijānāti’: that which ‘discern’, discriminates’ or ‘distinguishes’ (S.III.87; M.I.292). The working of *vijñāna*, the discrimination constitutes the dualism of object and subject, that is, the objective world.

Nāma-rupa means:

1. Mind-body
2. Subject-object



Nāma means: feeling, perception, intention, contact, & attention.

Rupa means: the four great material elements, and the forms or physical bodies dependent on the four great elements.

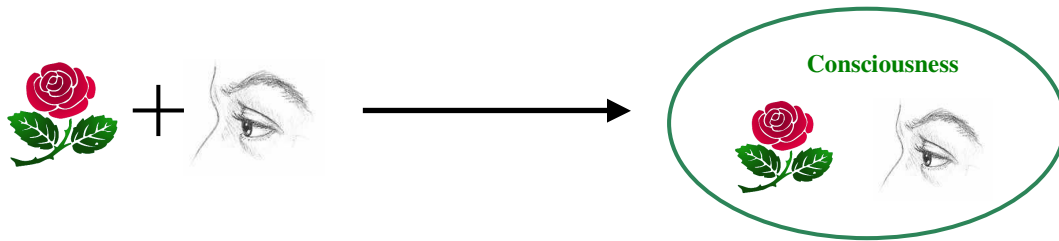
Vijñāna and nāma-rupa are each other’s requisite conditions.

It is possible that the reason why the Buddhist efforts of unification couldn’t work is because the very concept of consciousness as such automatically implies dualism. Moreover, consciousness as understood here is nothing else but the appearance of a dualism.

Beyond dualism?

The multiplication of consciousness

According to the early Buddhist sutras *consciousness is not something stable* in the center of a person, but an *emergent characteristic* that changes from moment to moment. When a sense-organ and an object meet, consciousness automatically arises. The texts list **six types of consciousness**: eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, nose-consciousness, tongue-consciousness, body-consciousness and mind-organ (*manas*) consciousness.



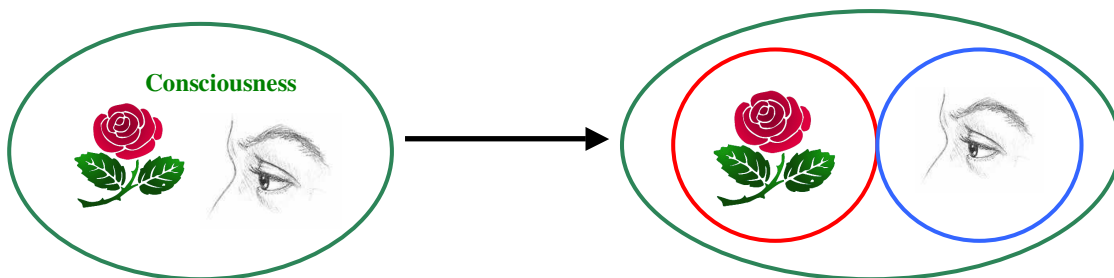
Yogācāra-school: a monist endeavor

According to the yogācāra (or vijñānavāda) school developed by Asanga and Vasubandhu (AD 4. century) the only real existing substance in the world is the mind or consciousness. *Everything is 'mind only'*, i.e. there are no external objects at all, the objects as we know them are conscious-constructs.

The vijñānavādin philosophers distinguished **eight types of consciousness** by adding two more types to the known previous six: mind-consciousness (*mano-vijñāna*), its function is to construct the ego; and store-consciousness (*ālaya-vijñāna*), the container of all mental states and creator of the order of world (place, time, causation, etc.). In this system perception is the bipartition of consciousness:

Chuan Shih lun (The Evolution of Consciousness)

„Consciousness evolves in two ways: 1. It evolves into selves (ātman); 2. It evolves into things (dharma). Everything perceived is included in these two objects. These two really do not exist, but consciousness evolves into these two representations.”



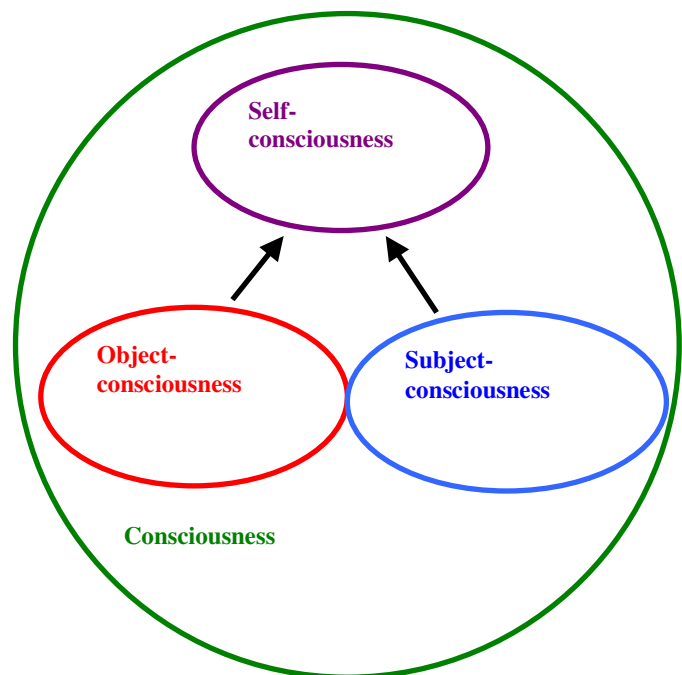
Asanga's model:

Asanga divided two main parts of all kind of consciousness: The sense organ as the subject-part (*darsana-bhāga*) and the sense data as the object-part (*nimitta-bhāga*):

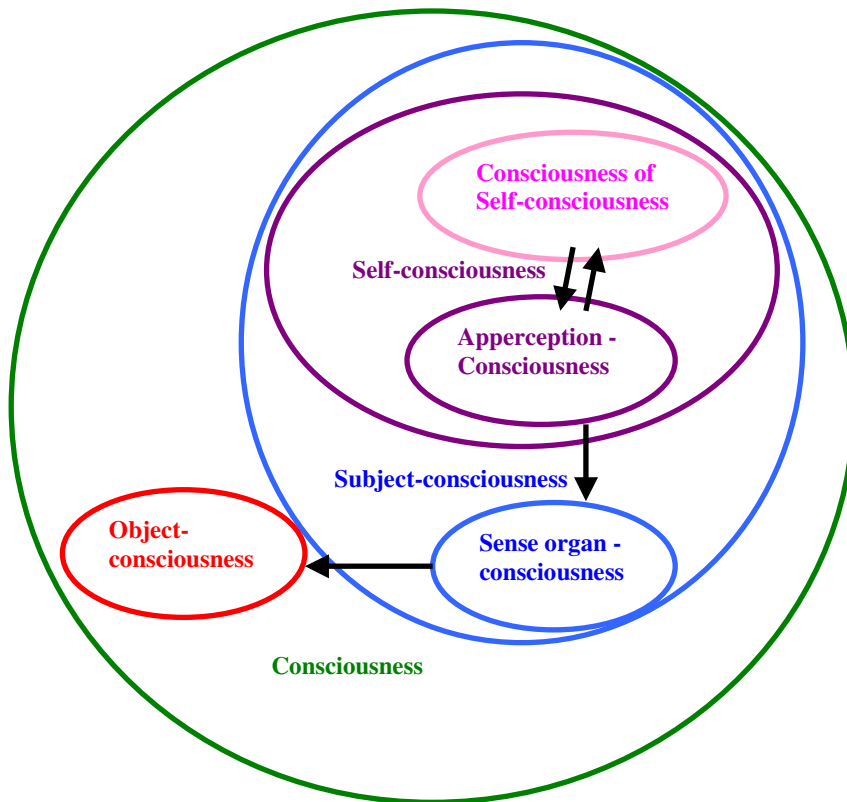
1. seeing-consciousness	←	eye-consciousness	→	2. form-consciousness
3. hearing-consciousness		ear-consciousness		4. sound-consciousness
5. olfaction-consciousness	←	nose-consciousness	→	6. odour-consciousness
7. gustatory-consciousness		tongue-consciousness		8. taste-consciousness
9. touching-consciousness	←	body/skin-consciousness	→	10. tactile-consciousness
11. mind-consciousness		mind (as consciousness)		12. idea-consciousness + 1-10
11 + mind as its basis	←	store-consciousness	→	1 – 10

Dignāga's model:

The classical mind-model of yogācāra was further elaborated by Dignāga (AD ca 480-540) Here consciousness is separated into three parts: Besides the object-part and the subject-part a new kind of consciousness emerges, **self-consciousness**. While the function of the subject-consciousness (i.e. the sense-organ type) is experience, the function of the new one is just to reflect on perception or experience. Self-consciousness fixes both the image of the experienced object (i.e. object-part) and the subject-part experiencing the object in memory.



A model by Dharmapāla & Hsüan-tsang



Dignāga's model was further developed by Dharmapāla and Hsüan-tsang (AD 6-7. century).

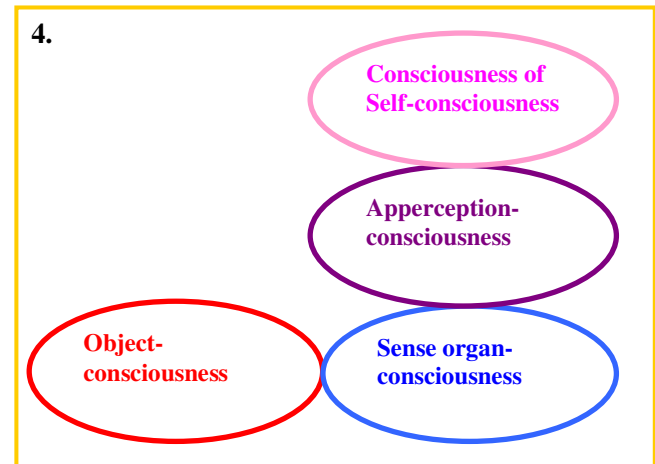
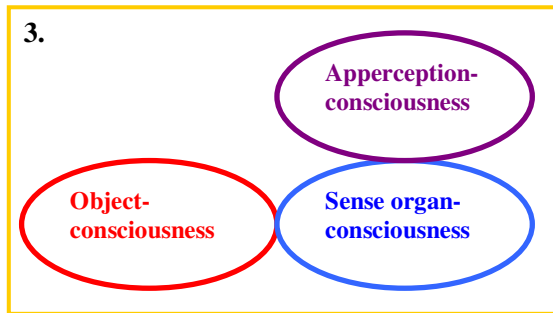
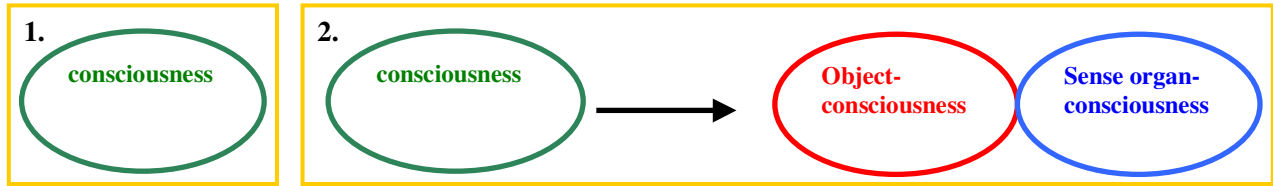
Accordingly, **consciousness consists of four parts**, from which three are the same as in Dignāga's model, but a new type of consciousness appears: **a consciousness that reflects on self-consciousness.**

For, without this fourth, the question would arise: if this part is missing, how could the third part be realized?

The first type of consciousness is the object-part, the other three together make up the subject-part, but the latter three appear as objects too, because they can experience each other. The second one: sense organ-consciousness can only experience the first one, i.e. the object-consciousness. The third one: the self-consciousness can experience the second one, that is sense-organ consciousness and also it can experience the fourth one; the consciousness of self-consciousness, that is, the consciousness that reflects self-consciousness. The fourth one, the consciousness of self-consciousness, can only experience the third one, self-consciousness, but has no relation to the second one.

Dharmapāla and Hsüan-tsang tried to reduce this complicated multiplicity to a monism.

They argued in the following way: The four parts can be understood as three, because the fourth one, the consciousness of self-consciousness is included in the third part already. But then it can be understood as two parts, because the last three parts constitute one experiencing part of consciousness, that is the subject, and the other one is just the "object". Finally, this can be understood as one single unit because all types of consciousness have the same nature: everything is mind (or consciousness) only.



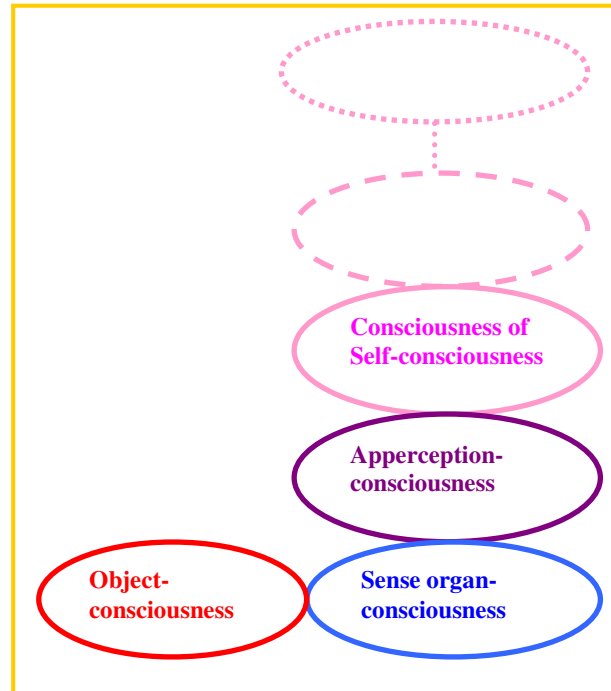
However Dignāga thought that there cannot exist another self-consciousness that experiences self-consciousness, because that would start an endless series of different consciousnesses reflecting permanently on each other, that is: *Regressus ad infinitum*.

Since the function of self-consciousness is to fix the experienced things in the memory, the “new consciousness” building on it would reflect on this memory, the next consciousness would reflect on the memory of memory and so on. This would make genuine experience impossible, because consciousness would fix on a given object and would not be able to move to a different object any more.

The possibility of the endless series was rejected by Dharmapāla and Hsüan-tsang as well.

A possible explanation for déjà vu?

Dignāga wrote about a functional disorder that can happen in the course of experiencing. The mind-model based on multiplying or “scissile” consciousness of the late yogācāra can provide an opportunity to a new theoretic approach of *déjà vu*. Accordingly, *déjà vu* is a kind of functional disorder that occurs when newer and newer consciousnesses reflecting each other come into being in special psychological circumstances or as a consequence of special damage. An endless series of consciousness begins to develop, one which the mind finally does away with, however.



CONCLUSION

1. The first person method in Buddhism has not served the purpose of eliminating dualism, because its ontology could not permit such insights. The history of Buddhist philosophy shows that practising first-person methodology either reflects our own dualist preconceptions about the mind by enabling us to see the world through them; without such preconceptions it preserves mental dualism on its own.
2. In the epistemology of the yogācāra (‘mind only’) school the monist endeavor results in the same consequence as in the above classical Buddhist meditation practice. By observing consciousness, meta-levels appear that create a new dualism. ***On a phenomenal level it is never possible to go beyond dualism.***

Acknowledgements

I want to thank for advises and support:

Farkas, Attila Márton, Ph.D.

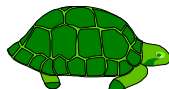
Kampis, George, Ph.D., D.Sc., Dr. Habil.

Tenigl-Takács, László, Dr.

Bakos, József, Ven.

This work was carried out with support of

Teki KaGyü



References

- Asanga (1992): *The Summary of the Great Vehicle by Bodhisattva Asanga translated from Chinese of Paramārtha*, John P. Keenan Eng. tr., Berkley, CA: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research.
- Dennett, Daniel C. (1991): *Consciousness explained*, Boston, MA, and London, Little, Brown and Co.
- Dīgha-Nikāya (1995): *The long discourses of the Buddha*, Maurice Walshe Eng. tr., Boston, Wisdom.
- Dignāga (1968): *On Perception: being the Pratyaksapaicchada of Dignāga's Pramānasamuccaya*, Masaaki Hattori Eng. tr., Cambridge, Harvard University Press.
- Frauwallner, Erich (1994): *Die Philosophie des Buddhismus*, Berlin, Akademie Verlag.
- Griffith, Paul J. (1992): *Memory in Classical Indian Yogācāra*, in: Janet Gyatso ed.: *In the mirror of Memory. Reflections on Mindfulness and Remembrance in Indian and Tibetan Buddhism*. Sri Satguru Publications. 109-131.
- Hayes, Richard. P. (1980): *Dinnāga's views on reasoning (SVĀRTHĀNUMĀNA)*, *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 8/ 1980. 219-277.
- Harvey, Peter (1995): *The selfless mind. Personality, Consciousness and Nirvāna in Early Buddhism*, Curzon Press.
- Hsiang-tsang (1973): *Ch'eng Wei-Shih Lun: The Doctrine of Mere Consciousness*, Wei Tat Eng. tr., Hong Kong.
- Lusthaus, Dan (2002): *Buddhist Phenomenology. A Philosophical Investigation of Yogācāra Buddhism and Ch'eng Wei-shih lun*, London and New York, Routledge Curzon.
- Swati Ganguly (1992): *Tretaise in Thirty Verses on Mere-consciousness. A critical English translation of Hsiang-tsang's Chinese Version of the Vijñaptimātratātrimśikā with notes from Dharmapāla's commentary in Chinese*. Delhi, Motilal Banarsides Publishers Private limited.
- Varela, Francisco – Thompson, Evan – Rosch, Eleanor (1991): *The Embodied Mind. Cognitive Science and Human Experience*, MIT Press.
- Waldron, William S. (2003): *The Buddhist unconscious. The ālaya-vijñāna in the context of Indian Buddhist thought*, London and New York, Routledge Curzon.
- Wood, Thomas E. (1994): *Mind only. A Philosophical and Doctrinal Analysis of Vijñānavāda*. Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited.