

Sellarsian Buddhism

Comments on Jay Garfield, *Engaging Buddhism: Why It Matters to Philosophy*

Evan Thompson

Forthcoming in *Sophia*

Engaging Buddhism: Why It Matters to Philosophy is momentous.¹ It weaves multiple strands of Indian, Tibetan, and East Asian Buddhist philosophy together with Anglophone philosophy in a rich tapestry that includes metaphysics, epistemology, phenomenology, logic, the philosophy of language, and ethics. It shows new ways to do “cross-cultural philosophy” (a term I believe Jay coined) and new ways to do Buddhist philosophy. Philosophers and Buddhist scholars will be reading it for many years to come.

My role here, however, is to be a critic. I will focus on Jay’s discussions of the self, consciousness, and phenomenology in Chapters 4, 5, and 6. Although there is much that I admire in these chapters, there is also a lot I disagree with. Jay criticizes my views about consciousness and the self, as well as Dan Zahavi’s views, but he appears to misunderstand us. I believe that he also misunderstands Husserl, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty, and so he goes astray when he juxtaposes them to Buddhist philosophers.

I have a diagnosis of the source of the problem. It is Jay’s commitment to certain ideas he takes from Wilfrid Sellars. Jay repeatedly invokes Sellars’s famous phrase, “the myth of the given,” and he presents Buddhist philosophy as an evolving critique of various conceptions of the “given.” Buddhist doxographers take note: *Engaging Buddhism* is the root text for “Sellarsian Buddhism,” a new Buddhist modernist philosophical system. (Or maybe the system is “Buddhist Sellarsianism,” depending on which commitment takes priority.) The core ideas of Sellarsian Buddhism are as follows: (1) “our own experience... is as opaque to us and as deceptive to us as the objects we encounter” (p. 75); (2) “[w]e construct ourselves and our awareness just as surely as we construct the objects we posit” (*ibid.*); (3) the construction of ourselves and our

¹ Jay L. Garfield, *Engaging Buddhism: Why It Matters to Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015). All parenthetical page references in the text are to this book.

awareness is conceptual and happens mainly through introspection (pp. 35, 197); and (4) “the mind, and even consciousness, are hidden, rather than manifest phenomena, known only by inference, and through imperfect processes” (p. 170).

These propositions are extreme. The first proposition does not state simply that our experience is or can be opaque to us, but rather that it is just as opaque as the objects we encounter. The proposition suggests that there is no epistemological and phenomenological difference between the way external objects are given to us and the way our subjectivity is given to us. The second proposition is ambiguous between meaning either that we construct both ourselves and the objects we experience, or that the construction is epistemologically and phenomenologically the same in both cases, that is, that our subjectivity is constructed in the same way that the objects we encounter are constructed. I take Jay to intend the second meaning, because it supports the first proposition: If our subjectivity and the objects we encounter are epistemologically and phenomenologically constructed in exactly the same way, and external objects are opaque to us, then our experience is just as opaque to us as external objects are. The third proposition asserts that our self-construction and self-awareness are conceptual and introspective, and thus implies that there is no such thing as nonconceptual and nonintrospective forms of self-awareness. The proposition also implies that introspection or introspective self-awareness should be understood according to an object-perception model. Finally, the fourth proposition does not state that we sometimes know about our own minds through inference, but rather that inference is the only way we know about our own minds. Given the asserted equivalence between inner awareness and outer perception, this proposition also suggests that all outer perception is inferential, and hence that there is no such thing as direct (noninferential) perception or “intuition” in the (Kantian and Husserlian) phenomenological sense.

All these propositions are very problematic. Indeed, I think they are all unacceptable. I will come back to them at the end of this commentary.

1. Phenomenology

Jay distinguishes between what he calls “surface” versus “deep” phenomenology, and between “bracketing” versus “not bracketing” when we do phenomenology. Let me start with bracketing.

Jay uses Husserl’s idea of “bracketing”—the *epoché*—in order to bring *Yogācāra* and *Madhyamaka* ideas into conversation with European phenomenology. But Jay misunderstands the *epoché*, so the conversation goes awry. He states that we “bracket the external world” when we perform the *epoché*. This is not what “bracketing” means for Husserl. “Bracketing” means “bracketing the natural attitude.”² More precisely, it means “suspending our reliance on the natural attitude.” Still more precisely, it means “suspending our reliance on the natural attitude’s *general positing of independent existence*.” The natural attitude posits the world as always there in a way that involves spontaneously believing in the independent existence of most of the objects of waking experience. To bracket this general positing means to refrain from relying on it. We cease to rely on our habitual and unreflective positing of the external world as existing in itself with its own objective being. Husserl states that this suspension is equivalent to bracketing our understanding of being as “positable objectivity” in order to make way for an understanding of being as “phenomenon.”³ Strictly speaking, the *world* is not bracketed; what we bracket is *our positing attitude* and the correlate of that attitude, namely, the world as a *posited object*. This understanding is required for the “phenomenological reduction” and transcendental analysis, including transcendental analysis of the natural attitude. It is the mark of the phenomenological attitude and it runs throughout the work of Husserl, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty.

² See Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy. First Book. General Introduction to a Pure Phenomenology*, trans. F. Kersten (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1986), Part Two: Chapter One, and Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*, trans. Dorion Cairns (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1960), pp. 20-21.

³ Husserl, *Ideas, op. cit.*, p. 60.

For this reason, I disagree with Jay when he writes that the question of whether to bracket divides Husserl from Heidegger, and that Heidegger regards bracketing as impossible or incoherent (pp. 176, 187, 189). On the contrary, Heidegger's entire project in *Being and Time* presupposes the suspension of the natural attitude and its conception of being as positable objectivity. Heidegger does not need to perform the *epoché* because he is already working within the space that it has opened up. As Merleau-Ponty writes in the Preface to *Phenomenology of Perception*: "Heidegger's '*In-der-Welt-Sein*' [being-in-the-world] only appears against the background of the phenomenological reduction."⁴

Husserl and Heidegger differ in many important ways, but not in the way that Jay describes. Not only does Heidegger's existential analysis presuppose the *epoché*, but also Husserl already knew well what Jay presents as Heidegger's unique insight, namely, that bracketing applies both to the positing of the subject and to the positing of the object. Jay writes, "Any argument for bracketing the reality of the external object of knowledge is equally an argument for bracketing the reality of the subject" (p. 195). Far from contradicting Husserl, this point is central to his thought. On the one hand, bracketing the natural attitude already includes suspending our reliance on the positing of the subject's *empirical* reality as a psychological entity in the world. Were it not for this suspension, phenomenology would be introspective psychology rather than transcendental analysis. On the other hand, the subject, understood *transcendentally* as the subject pole of the subject-object correlational structure of ordinary experience, is just as "constituted" as the object pole. Moreover, to say that the subject is "transcendentally constituted" is precisely to say that it is given through ongoing syntheses of intentional experience of the world rather than fully and immediately to itself. In other words, we can describe it as "constructed," if by "constructed" we mean being a product of motivated intentional syntheses. Although there are complicated questions about the constructed versus unconstructed aspects of subjectivity in Husserl's phenomenology, Jay does not mention them. He does not refer to any of Husserl's primary texts or the secondary literature on these issues, so it is hard not to read his description of Husserl as a caricature.

⁴ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Don Landes (London: Routledge Press, 2013, p. p. lxxviii.

Let me connect these points to Jay's distinction between "surface" and "deep" phenomenology. He writes that the surface versus deep distinction parallels the distinction between phenomenology as introspection and phenomenology as transcendental analysis (p. 179). Introspection, no matter how careful and sophisticated, gets at only the surface of our cognitive lives, "that which can in principle be observed, not to the non-introspectible processes and events that underlie and generate it" (p. 180). Deep phenomenology, however, is "the inquiry into the fundamental cognitive, affective, and perceptual processes that underlie and which are causally or constitutively—biologically or metaphysically—responsible for those we find in introspection" (*ibid.*).

Deep phenomenology, as Jay describes it, corresponds to what I call "neurophenomenology" but not to phenomenology as transcendental analysis. Neurophenomenology uses introspective reports to inform our understanding of neural activity and vice-versa.⁵ Jay attributes to me a view about introspection that I do not hold, namely, that "when trained introspectors look inside, they find mental reality *as it is*" (his emphasis, p. 208). This is not my view, and the passage he quotes from my book, *Mind in Life*, does not say this. Rather, my view is that the cognitive neuroscience of consciousness cannot avoid relying on introspective data—data about what individuals take their experience to be under various conditions—and therefore we need to improve our methods for getting and interpreting such data. The point of neurophenomenology is to use introspective data to inform our understanding of neural activity and vice-versa. Neurophenomenology is precisely a way to go from surface phenomenology to deep phenomenology. Using improved introspection, we bring to light new neural data, which, in turn, can lead us to revise our understanding of how introspection functions and what it can and cannot access. There are now a number of published neuroscience studies that follow this approach.⁶

⁵ See Sina Fazelpour and Evan Thompson, "The Kantian Brain: Brain Dynamics from a Neurophenomenological Perspective," *Current Opinion in Neurobiology* 31 (2015): 223-229.

⁶ See my review article cited in the previous note.

Transcendental phenomenology, however, is a different kind of project. First, it is concerned with the conditions of possibility for being, understood transcendently and phenomenologically as “phenomenon,” and empirically as “positable objectivity.” Transcendental phenomenology requires the *epoché* (in the sense explained above). Second, its domain of inquiry is not what we find in introspection. Rather, its domain of inquiry is the *life-world* and everything that encompasses. The life-world includes what we experience via introspection, but introspective experience is just one limited area of investigation, even within phenomenological psychology. Third, transcendental analysis certainly is not an inquiry into the causal processes underlying introspection. Although causal-explanatory models can inform phenomenology (and it can inform them), its method of analysis is descriptive and interpretative, not causal-explanatory.

Jay’s notion of “deep phenomenology” comes from thinking about how to bring the *Yogācāra* philosophers into conversation with phenomenology and cognitive science today. On the one hand, it is tempting to read them as doing what we would call transcendental analysis. On the other hand, it is also tempting to read them as doing proto-cognitive science. The problem with both readings is that we impose our categories on them. To put the *Yogācāra* insights to work in philosophy today, we may need to create new hybrid or creole concepts; perhaps Jay means for “deep phenomenology” to be this kind of concept. I applaud the project, but I think more work needs to be done to get the phenomenology part of the concept right.

2. The Self

Jay thinks that there is no self, that nothing exists that deserves to be called a self. I think that our body and experiential sense of self deserve to be called a self. Jay thinks that the experiential sense of self is based on illusion—the illusion that self-identity is real and the illusion that conscious awareness is self-presenting or reflexive. I think that the experiential self is a construction but not an illusion, that the construction depends on the reflexivity of conscious awareness, that reflexive awareness cannot be reduced to metacognition or introspection, and that self-construction, as both process and product,

performs important functions, such as autobiographical memory.⁷ My aim here is not to argue for my views but to correct what appear to be some misunderstandings in Jay's book about both my view of the self and Dan Zahavi's closely related view. I will do the same for reflexive awareness in the next section.

Jay describes our view of the self as "minimalism," and he considers it to be preferable to more metaphysically robust views of the self. Our view is certainly minimalist compared to the idea that the self is a metaphysical substance with identity conditions. Nevertheless, his use of the term "minimalism" is problematic. Jay takes it from Zahavi, who argues that the "minimal self" is the experiential sense of prereflective self-awareness.⁸ But I disagree with Jay when he writes, "Zahavi... take[s] the self to be nothing but a kind of pure subjectivity, a self-consciousness that accompanies all consciousness, a sort of mine-ness, with no substantial owner, either synchronically or diachronically" (p. 99). On the contrary, Zahavi does not claim that the self is *nothing but* the "mineness" or "first-personal givenness" of experience. Rather, his claim is that "nothing that lacks this dimension deserves to be called a self."⁹ In other words, prereflective self-awareness is required for any experiential sense of self. Zahavi also argues, however, that there is a narrative and intersubjective self. The minimal self is necessary but not sufficient for the narrative and intersubjective self. Zahavi's view of the self is *multifaceted*, not minimalist.

My view of the self is also multifaceted. Jay cites a passage from my book, *Mind in Life*, in which I describe how the nervous system constructs what I call "sensorimotor selfhood." He asks "whether such a pattern of activity is what we grasp when we grasp ourselves *as selves*" (his emphasis, p. 101). His concern is that such a pattern seems too

⁷ For our debate on these issues, see Jay L. Garfield, "Reflections on Reflectivity: Comments on Evan Thompson's *Waking, Dreaming, Being*," *Philosophy East and West* 66 (2016): 943-951, and Evan Thompson, "Response to Commentators on *Waking, Dreaming, Being*," *Philosophy East and West* 66 (2016): 982-1000.

⁸ See Dan Zahavi, *Subjectivity and Selfhood: Investigating the First-Person Perspective* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), p. 106.

⁹ *Ibid.*

minimal to qualify as the kind of self that we habitually take ourselves to be. What I argue in *Mind in Life*, however, is that what we grasp when we grasp ourselves as selves is first and foremost our *lived body*. Sensorimotor selfhood is part of the biological and phenomenological structure of the lived body. I also argue that the lived body is prereflectively self-aware and that its reflexive awareness is part of the structure of time consciousness. Furthermore, I argue that empathy and enculturation construct an autobiographical and social self grounded on the lived body and time consciousness. In these ways, the self is a multifaceted construction.

Is the multifaceted self unreal, a mere conceptual fabrication or fiction? I do not think that it should be described this way. Of course, it is not a thing, in the sense of a substance. It is an emergent process, constructed through self-organizing activities at multiple spatiotemporal scales, and it supervenes on the enculturated, living body in a rich social setting. It is a mistake to think that it has an independent, nonrelational existence, but being dependent and relational do not make it unreal.

Another philosopher Jay describes as a minimalist about the self but who is better described as having a multifaceted view is Jonardon Ganeri.¹⁰ Ganeri's view combines ideas from across the Sanskrit cosmopolis, specifically from *Pudgalavāda* and *Yogācāra* Buddhism, *Cārvāka* naturalism, and *Nyāya* realism. This cosmopolitan, pan-Indian perspective strikes me as more productive for cross-cultural philosophy than a strict Buddhist view. From a historical perspective, to privilege the Buddhist view isolates it from the rest of Indian philosophical culture. From a philosophical perspective, to privilege the Buddhist view is to engage in Buddhist apologetics. Multifaceted views of the self draw from a larger and richer body of cross-cultural philosophical materials than do contemporary Buddhist no-self views. In my estimation, multifaceted views work better in our polycentric, multicultural, cosmopolitan world, and they also have a greater degree of consilience with cognitive science.

¹⁰ See Jonardon Ganeri, *The Self: Naturalism, Consciousness, and the First-Person Stance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

3. Consciousness

The idea that conscious awareness is reflexive is central to *Yogācāra* Buddhism and European phenomenology. Both traditions hold that any episode of conscious awareness consists in its awareness of its intentional object and its awareness of itself as that very awareness. Both traditions also hold that this kind of self-awareness is intrinsic to conscious awareness. In other words, this kind of self-awareness does not require another episode of reflection, introspection, or metacognition that takes the awareness as its intentional object and to which the awareness is extrinsically related. Other formulations of the reflexivity thesis are that all awareness involves awareness of itself, that all consciousness includes prereflective self-consciousness, or simply that all experiencing involves experiencing that very experiencing.¹¹

Jay will have none of this. In his chapter on consciousness he argues against the idea of reflexive awareness. My complaint is that he seems to misunderstand the reflexivity viewpoint and he neglects the problems with the causal account of memory that Śāntideva, Candrakīrti, and Tsongkhapa use to try to rebut Dignāga's memory argument for reflexive awareness. I will also argue that he misconstrues the relationship between prereflective self-awareness and skillful action.

Misunderstanding Reflexive Awareness

Jay takes the reflexivity thesis to entail that any conscious state is immediately and intrinsically known by its subject (pp. 139, 142, 145-47). I disagree. The kind of self-awareness that reflexivity implies is not sufficient for self-knowledge. To say that an episode of conscious awareness involves experiencing that very awareness does not imply that one has declarative knowledge of either its content or its characteristics as a mental act. Put another way, reflexive awareness is entirely compatible with a fundamental lack of self-knowledge. In Dan Zahavi's words: "pervasive, pre-reflective self-consciousness is definitely not identical with total self-comprehension, but can rather

¹¹ See Galen Strawson, "Self-Intimation," *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* 14 (2015): 1-31.

be likened to a precomprehension that allows for subsequent reflection and thematization.”¹²

This point is relevant to how we read Dignāga. Jay writes, “On Dignāga’s account, every mental state takes itself as object, providing a representation of itself, as well as of its object, to consciousness” (p. 146). On this reading, Dignāga is like Brentano, who held that every mental act apprehends itself as a secondary intentional object. Brentano states that when we hear a sound, “the sound is the *primary object* of the *act* of hearing, and... the act of hearing itself is the *secondary object*.”¹³ It is not obvious that we should read Dignāga according to this model. Consider that Birgit Kellner translates *Pramāṇasamuccayavṛtti* 1.9a as “cognition arises with two appearances, with its own and with that of the object. The self-awareness of that [cognition] with both appearances is the result.”¹⁴ She argues that “self-awareness” here means the self-awareness of cognition as having both a subject aspect and an object aspect, but that the subject aspect is not a secondary intentional object. This interpretation makes Dignāga’s view more like Husserl’s than Brentano’s. Kellner also makes the important point that self-awareness, for Dignāga, is “a hallmark of *access* to the mental... self-awareness is an immediate, nonconceptual mode of awareness that provides access to how mental content (including feelings, etc.) presents itself subjectively.”¹⁵

Leaving Dignāga aside, we can acknowledge such nonconceptual access without claiming that it is sufficient for self-knowledge. Reflexive awareness (*svasaṃvedana*) is the nonconceptual feeling (*vedana*) of being aware in being aware. This form of self-awareness is a necessary precondition for being able to access one’s mental states via metacognition, but it does not amount to self-knowledge. This way of understanding reflexive awareness (*svasaṃvedana*) parallels Zahavi’s view that prereflective self-

¹² Zahavi, *Subjectivity and Selfhood*, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

¹³ Franz Brentano, *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*, trans. A. C. Rancurello, D. B. Terrell, and L. McAlister (London: Routledge Press, 1973), p. 128.

¹⁴ Birgit Kellner, “Self-Awareness (*svasaṃvedana*) in Dignāga’s *Pramāṇasamuccaya* and *vṛtti*: A Close Reading,” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 38 (2010): 203-231, at p. 220.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 227-228.

awareness is a “precomprehension that allows for subsequent reflection and thematization.”¹⁶

As we can see from this conception of reflexive awareness, the reflexivity thesis, contrary to Jay’s assertion, does not entail that my knowledge that I have the belief that *p* “is part and parcel of the belief itself” (p. 147). Jay writes that Zahavi and I “defend just such a view,” but this is not the case. I have never defended this view and neither to my knowledge has Zahavi.

Jay considers the idea that reflexive awareness is “objectless” in the sense of not being object-directed. He objects that “while this might vouchsafe the very general self-knowledge that one is aware, it would hardly take one to knowledge of the *contents* of one’s own mind, and may in the end be too thin to count as any knowledge worth having” (pp. 147-48). This way of putting things, however, is tendentious. Once again, the claim is not that reflexive awareness gives one knowledge of one’s own mental states. Rather, it is that reflexive awareness is a necessary precondition for such knowledge.

Jay writes that to assert that a state is “intrinsically conscious,” as Zahavi and I do, entails that “its being conscious is independent of its relation to any object, to any perceptual system, or to any other psychological processes” (p. 164). I cannot tell why he thinks this claim follows, but it does not follow from our view. First, we do not maintain that a state is “intrinsically conscious.” We maintain that reflexive awareness or prereflective self-consciousness is intrinsic to or constitutive of the intentionality of consciousness (i.e., no state is a conscious intentional state unless it is prereflectively self-aware). Second, we maintain that reflexive awareness and intentionality (object-directedness or relatedness) are interdependent aspects of consciousness; neither one occurs without the other.

¹⁶ For a detailed reading of Dignāga along these lines, see Sonam Kachru, “Who’s Afraid of Non-conceptual Content: Rehabilitating Dignāga’s Distinction Between Perception and Thought,” paper presented at the workshop, “Conceptuality and Nonconceptuality in Buddhist Thought,” University of California, Berkeley, Center for Buddhist Studies, November 4-6, 2016.

Here we do come upon an interesting difference between the phenomenological viewpoint and certain Indian and Tibetan views. For example, for Advaita Vedānta, intentionality is a distorted mental superimposition onto consciousness, which, in itself, is pure reflexivity. Yogācāra Buddhism, especially as elaborated in the Tibetan Mahāmudrā and Dzogchen traditions, holds a similar view.

In any case, Zahavi and I, following Husserl, analyze reflexivity as inseparable from intentionality. Hence, it is not the case that “Zahavi’s and Thompson’s view... like Husserl’s, raises the possibility of a state being conscious, but not being conscious of anything” (p. 164). When we state that prereflective self-consciousness or reflexive awareness is “intrinsic” to consciousness, “intrinsic” means that the relevant kind of self-awareness cannot be analyzed into an extrinsic relation between two otherwise independent mental states; it does not mean that the state’s being conscious consists in its being reflexive apart from its being intentional.

The Memory Argument

Jay endorses Candrakīrti’s and Śāntideva’s criticisms of the memory argument for reflexive awareness. The argument roughly goes like this:

1. When I remember yesterday’s blue sky, I remember not just the blue but also the seeing of blue (the visual awareness of blue).
2. To remember something one must have experienced it.
3. Therefore, at the time of the visual perception, the seeing (visual awareness) must have been experienced along with the object seen (i.e., there was a reflexive awareness of the seeing).

Here is Jay’s presentation of Candrakīrti’s rebuttal: “All that is necessary for memory... is that the cognition that counts as a memory be caused in the right way by a previous cognitive episode. So I might experience today’s sunshine, fail to be reflexively aware that I am experiencing it, and tomorrow recall the sunshine in an episode caused (in the right way) by today’s perception, but in neither case thematize my own subjectivity in the matter” (p. 141).

This response has two problems. First, the point about not thematizing my own subjectivity is irrelevant. The memory argument does not require that my subjectivity be

thematized in the perception or the memory. On the contrary, the subjectivity can and usually does remain unthematized in both cases. In consciously seeing the blue sky, there is implicitly an experiencing of the seeing. The memory includes this unthematized self-awareness by implicitly including the seeing in the memory. The kind of memory in question is what cognitive psychologists call “episodic field memory”—the factive memory of personally experienced events as remembered from the first-person perspective. In remembering the blue sky, the blue sky is given to me in memory as seen from my first-person perspective, which is to say as a phenomenal content correlated to my seeing. Thus, the visual awareness (the subject aspect) comes along with the blue sky (the object aspect) in the memory. Only in the case of a reflective memory is the seeing experience (the subjectivity) thematized.¹⁷

Second, it is not sufficient for a state to be a factive episodic field memory that the memory be caused in the right way by the previous cognitive episode. To appreciate this point we need to look at Śāntideva’s rebuttal of the memory argument. The rebuttal takes the form of an analogy. A hibernating bear is bitten by a rat. When he wakes up in the spring he experiences the pain of the infected wound and knows on that basis that he experienced a rat bite, even though at the time of the bite he was not aware of the bite. Jay describes the point of the analogy as follows: “(1) One can come to be aware of a previous event through causal sequelae of that event even though one was not aware of that event at the time of its occurrence. (2) Those sequelae can induce a cognitive state intentionally directed at that previous occurrence even if one was not aware of that occurrence at the time” (pp. 141-42).

The analogical argument, however, seems faulty, for two reasons. First, the two situations are not properly analogous. There is a crucial difference between the bear scenario and the recollection of the past perception. The bear is not consciously aware of the pain when he gets bitten but the past visual perception of blue (*ex hypothesi*) is a

¹⁷ See Evan Thompson, “Self-No-Self? Memory and Reflexive Awareness,” in Mark Siderits, Evan Thompson, and Dan Zahavi, eds., *Self, No Self? Perspectives from Analytical, Phenomenological, and Indian Traditions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 157-175.

conscious visual perception. So the analogy would have to be revised so that the visual perception of blue is unconscious and this unconscious perception triggers a causal sequence culminating in my memory of the content of the unconscious perception. The problem here is that there is no evidence that we have factive episodic field memories for such unconscious perceptions.¹⁸ In other words, that the perception is conscious is necessary for it to be consolidated as a factive episodic memory.

Second, the two conditions given in the analogy are not enough to explain the phenomenology of episodic field memory, specifically how the past appears as past in this kind of memory experience. The two conditions are (1) being subject to an event of which one is not aware, and (2) as a result being caused to have a later cognition directed at that event. To refer mentally to the past on the basis of information retrieved in the present is like reading the date-stamp on a letter and on that basis thinking about the date on which the letter was sent. What is missing is precisely an experience whose intentional content includes “remembered episode as experienced by me.” Memory is not thinking about the past on the basis of present marks (like tree rings or time stamps or present mental images); it is representing the past by or through calling back one’s past experiencing, and that requires that one was implicitly aware of that experiencing when it happened.

Jay writes that “contemporary cognitive science, with its reconstructive, rather than storage-and-retrieval models of memory, is on the side of Candrakīrti and Śāntideva in this debate” (p. 142). This statement presents a partial view of memory research and is not supported with any references to the cognitive science literature on memory. Generally speaking, the cognitive science view is that although episodic memory always involves a creative reconstruction of the past from the standpoint of the present, it is based on re-enacting aspects of the brain patterns and body states that were originally generated in consciously perceiving an event, including those subserving affect and self-experience, and thus it brings back to life, as it were, not just what was experienced (the object aspect) but also how it was experienced (the subject aspect), though both aspects

¹⁸ *Ibid.* See also Paul Bernier, “Dignāga on Reflexive Awareness,” *Philosophy East and West* 65 (2015): 125-156.

are subject to constant elaboration.¹⁹ Thus, Dignāga’s argument—and its later presentation by Śāntarakṣita—goes to the core of episodic field memory as a cognitive process that brings back not just past consciously experienced events but also how it was to experience those events. What the argument contends is that given that factive episodic memory requires previous conscious experience (a point that cognitive science supports), and that this kind of memory brings back not just the past consciously perceived event but also how it was for one to experience it, one must have experienced one’s experiencing at the time.

Prereflective Self-awareness and Skillful Action

Jay writes that “when real expertise kicks in... [a]ction becomes automatic” (p. 174). But what exactly does “automatic” mean? From a cognitive science perspective, “automaticity” generally means “independent of attention and awareness” (though the concept can be operationalized in many different ways). Expert performance, however, is highly attention-dependent, even if expert attention is not effortful in the way that novice attention is. What about awareness? Jay says that the expert “just plays, spontaneously” (p. 174). If “spontaneously” is supposed to entail being independent of awareness, then we need to ask exactly what sort of awareness we are talking about. Jay writes, “Now, in *one* sense, that of explicit access to what is going on, that of phenomenal feel, or of self-consciousness, there is no consciousness” (*ibid.*) But these are not one sense; they are many senses. “Explicit access” usually means “accessible to verbal report,” but whether all phenomenal feels are accessible to verbal report is disputed. “Self-consciousness” can mean either reflective self-monitoring or prereflective self-awareness. What Jay needs to show for his argument to be effective against me and Zahavi—and I would add, Husserl, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty—is that expert performance is automatic in the sense of

¹⁹ See Laurence Barsalou, “Grounded Cognition,” *Annual Review of Psychology* 59 (2008): 617-645, and Daniel L. Schacter, Donna Rose Addis, and Randy L. Buckner, “Remembering the Past to Imagine the Future: The Prospective Brain,” *Nature Reviews Neuroscience* 8 (2007): 657-661.

not being prereflectively self-aware; we agree that it need not involve self-monitoring (though in point of fact it often does²⁰).

Jay seems to misinterpret Merleau-Ponty on this point. Jay says that my description of skillful action as prereflectively self-aware diverges from Merleau-Ponty's because I write about there being a nonreflective sense of "I can" in the flow of habitual action.²¹ The expression, "I can," however comes straight from Merleau-Ponty, who takes it from Husserl. Both use it to describe the prereflective awareness of oneself as a bodily subject in action, and both argue that it is transcendently prior to the Cartesian "I think." The "I can" is precisely not an "I think I can." Therefore, it is not "an illicit interpretation that undermines the claim that all of this [consciousness in skilled action] is *non-reflective*" (p. 212). On the contrary, when Merleau-Ponty writes, "Consciousness is originally not an 'I think that,' but rather an 'I can',"²² he is describing the lived body's prereflective self-experience as the subject of immersed action.²³

4. Sellarsian Buddhism

To conclude, let me come back to the thoughts that seem to be driving Jay, the propositions that I call "Sellarsian Buddhism." These propositions are as follows: (1) Our own experience of ourselves is as opaque as our experience of external objects. (2) We construct ourselves and our awareness. (3) This construction is conceptual and happens

²⁰ See Barbara Montero, *Thought in Action: Expertise and the Conscious Mind* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

²¹ Evan Thompson, *Mind in Life: Biology, Phenomenology, and the Sciences of Mind* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), pp. 249, 313-314.

²² Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

²³ It is also incorrect to say that this approach differs from Heidegger's and that "Thompson contrasts his position with Heidegger's" (p. 212). I contrast my position with Hubert Dreyfus's (1991) reading of Heidegger (see *Mind in Life*, pp. 313-314). In my view (and Zahavi's), unlike Dreyfus's, Heidegger clearly accepts the idea of prereflective self-awareness or self-acquaintance.

through metacognition. (4) Consciousness is a hidden phenomenon, known only by inference.

These propositions are extreme and implausible. Yes, our experience is often opaque, but self-awareness is not properly analyzed as a form of object-awareness and hence it should not be treated as essentially the same as the perception of external objects.²⁴ Yes, we construct ourselves and our world through our conceptual activities, but it does not follow that our awareness is entirely constructed and that all experience is conceptually mediated or concept-dependent. Yes, our sense of self requires metacognition, but metacognition is not sufficient for self-awareness all by itself because it requires prereflective self-awareness or reflexive awareness as a necessary condition.²⁵ Yes, we can make inferences about consciousness, but we are also noninferentially acquainted with our being conscious in virtue of our being conscious. Do I need to infer that I am in pain in order to feel pain?

Of course, all these claims—Jay’s and mine—depend on what “conceptual” means. According to Buddhist epistemologists (*pramāṇavādins*), conceptual cognition is the cognition of particulars in terms of equivalence classes constructed through the mental operation of “exclusion from that which is other” (*anyāpoha*).²⁶ According to cognitive scientists, conceptual cognition is either, at a minimum, the perceptual ability to type-

²⁴ For a classic argument in support of this point, see Sidney Shoemaker, “Self-reference and Self-awareness,” *Journal of Philosophy* 65 (1968): 555-567; for discussion with reference to phenomenology and Buddhist philosophy, see Aaron Henry and Evan Thompson, “Witnessing from Here: Self-Awareness from a Bodily Versus Embodied Perspective,” in Shaun Gallagher, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of the Self* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 228-251.

²⁵ For the arguments in support of this point, see Zahavi, *Subjectivity and Selfhood*, *op. cit.* and Kristina Musholt, *Thinking About Oneself: From Nonconceptual Content to the Concept of a Self* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015).

²⁶ See Mark Siderits, Tom Tillemans, and Arindam Chakrabarti, eds., *Apoha: Buddhist Nominalism and Human Cognition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

identify instances and recognize them accordingly,²⁷ or, more fully, being able to draw upon organized bodies of knowledge about categories and use that knowledge in higher-order cognition (thinking, reasoning, judging, planning, etc.).²⁸ According to philosophers, conceptual cognition is having thoughts consisting of mental elements that are systematically relatable and freely combinable.²⁹ Given these various construals of conceptual cognition, it is arguably the case that not everything in our experience is conceptually mediated or concept-dependent. For example: (1) We can discriminate many particular determinate qualities, such as particular shades of colour, that we cannot hold in memory and re-identify (type-identify and recognize).³⁰ (2) Our experience of being located in a global and orientable space, whose directions are intrinsic and body-centred, is not a function of our conceptual capacities, but rather is a form of intuition, in the Kantian and Husserlian sense of an experience that presents the object itself without the mediation of thought, and is a condition of possibility for the perceptual recognition and conceptualization of things in space.³¹ (3) Ordinary conscious experience is for a

²⁷ See Jesse Prinz, *Furnishing the Mind: Concepts and Their Perceptual Basis* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2002), and Eric Mandelbaum, “Seeing and Conceptualizing: Modularity and the Shallow Contents of Perception,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* (2017): doi:10.1111/phpr.12368

²⁸ See Edouard Machery, *Doing Without Concepts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

²⁹ Gareth Evans, *Varieties of Reference* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 100-105.

³⁰ See Diana Raffman, “On the Persistence of Phenomenology,” in Thomas Metzinger, ed., *Conscious Experience* (Thorverton, UK: Imprint Academic, 1995), pp. 293-308. Imprint Academic; Sean Kelly, “The Non-conceptual Content of Perceptual Experience: Situation Dependence and Fineness of Grain,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 62 (2001): 601-608.

³¹ See Robert Hanna, “Kant and Nonconceptual Content,” *European Journal of Philosophy* 13 (2005): 247-290; Robert Hanna, “Kantian Non-conceptualism,” *Philosophical Studies* 137 (2008): 41-64; and Lucy Allias, “Kant, Nonconceptual

subject; it belongs to the content of an ordinary conscious experience that it is given to the subject. This kind of subjectivity or experiential self-specification is independent of having a self-concept and being able to use the first-person pronoun.³² (4) In absorbed, skillful pursuits and “flow states,” we are acutely sensitive to the world and we have an experiential, activity-based knowledge, but one that presents the world as a milieu of attractions and repulsions, not as a domain of objects and properties that would stand as the truth-conditions of judgements.³³ (5) The background affect of existential moods, such as anxiety, despair, and joy, affect how the whole world seems or feels, but not in a way that seems adequately expressible by any discursive (propositional) judgement.³⁴

It is important to note that my motivation here is to call attention to forms of experience that do not show the kind of “exclusion” (*apoha*), perceptual type-identification, or generality, systematicity, and freely recombinable structure characteristic of conceptual thought and its expression in linguistic judgement. The

Content, and the Representation of Space,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 47 (2009): 383-413.

³² See José Luis Bermudez, *The Paradox of Self-Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998); Zahavi, *Subjectivity and Selfhood*, *op. cit.*; and Musholt, *Thinking About Oneself*, *op. cit.*

³³ See Cussins, “Content, Conceptual Content, and Nonconceptual Content,” *op. cit.*; Hubert Dreyfus, “Overcoming the Myth of the Mental: How Philosophers Can Profit from the Phenomenology of Everyday Expertise,” *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 79 (2005): 47-65; Hubert Dreyfus, “The Myth of the Pervasiveness of the Mental,” in Joseph Shear, ed., *Mind, Reason, and Being-in-the-World: The McDowell-Dreyfus Debate* (London: Routledge Press, 2013), pp. 15-39. A *locus classicus* for this idea is Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Structure of Behavior*, trans. A. Fisher (Pittsburgh, PA: Dusquesne University Press, 1963), pp. 168-169.

³⁴ See Matthew Ratcliffe, *Feelings of Being: Phenomenology, Psychiatry, and the Sense of Reality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

motivation is not to provide an immediate, nonconceptual, ground of justification for knowledge, so there need be no allegiance to the epistemological “myth of the given.”³⁵

I am not sure whether a Sellarsian must reject these points. On some readings of Sellars, nonconceptual content is compatible with rejecting the “myth of the given.”³⁶ So I would like to ask Jay exactly what he thinks the “myth of the given” is and why we should think that the foregoing points about nonconceptual content fall prey to it.

Let me end by sharpening the issue. Consider the following statement from Sellars’s 1981 Carus Lectures: “To reject the Myth of the Given is to reject the idea that the categorial structure of the world—if it has a categorial structure—imposes itself on the mind as a seal imposes an image on melted wax.”³⁷ The early Husserl’s so-called “static phenomenology” may fall prey to this myth to the extent that it takes consciousness to impose the act-content (noesis-noema) structure on itself in transcendental reflection.³⁸ Nevertheless, his later “genetic” and “generative” phenomenologies depart from the idea that the correlational structure of intentional experience is simply given to the transcendental ego in reflection; rather, the correlational structure always requires constitution (motivated syntheses of developmentally and culturally situated intentional experience). Merleau-Ponty also clearly rejects the idea that consciousness is “given” in this sense. Nevertheless, all their investigations, analyses, and arguments proceed on the basis of an understanding of consciousness as prereflectively self-aware. So, unless they are wrong, prereflective self-awareness does not entail accepting the “myth of the given.”

³⁵ See Susan Hurley, “Non-conceptual Self-consciousness and Agency: Perspective and Access,” *Communication and Cognition* 30 (1997): 207-248.

³⁶ See Carl B. Sachs, *Intentionality and the Myths of the Given* (London: Routledge Press, 2015).

³⁷ Wilfrid Sellars, “Foundations for a Metaphysics of Pure Process: The Carus Lectures of Wilfrid Sellars,” Lecture I: The Lever of Archimedes, §45. *The Monist* 64 (1981): 3-90. Available at <http://www.ditext.com/sellars/carus.html>

³⁸ See Sachs, *Intentionality and Myths of the Given*, *op. cit.*

I conclude by submitting that Jay's way of engaging *Yogācāra* Buddhism and European phenomenology seems partly motivated by misplaced anxieties about the "myth of the given." Hence, my new doxographic category—Sellarsian Buddhism, whose central doctrine is that attachment to the "myth of the given" is the cause of suffering.