

The Self as a Process. Bhaṭṭa Rāmakaṇṭha's Middle Ground Between a Naiyāyika Eternal Self and a Buddhist Momentary Stream of Consciousness.

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The introduction will outline what is at stake in debates between Naiyāyikas and Buddhists about the existence or non-existence of a self (ātman).

The first part will present arguments that refute two Naiyāyika arguments for the existence of a self: 1) That found in the commentaries to Nyāyasūtra 1.1.10 claiming that synthesis (pratisandhāna/anusandhāna) implies the existence of a single entity that is the agent of all of the cognitions that are synthesized; 2) The argument that qualities (guṇas) require a substrate (guṇin/āśraya), that properties (dharma) require a property-possessor (dharmin).

The second part of the paper will present arguments against the coherence of the (Dharmakīrtian) Buddhist attempt to explain away our experience of ourselves as temporally extended; the Buddhist claim that momentary perceivers experience themselves as permanent as a result of mistakenly superimposing permanence on to themselves will be subjected to scrutiny.

The final part will expound Bhaṭṭa Rāmakaṇṭha's (950-1000) concept of non-momentary consciousness (jñāna, saṃvit) as an alternative to the two positions criticized above. It differs from the Buddhist concept of consciousness in that it denotes something enduring. But it differs from a Naiyāyika self in that it does not denote something other than consciousness in which consciousness inheres.

Against such a concept the Dharmakīrtians argued that consciousness is differentiated by its objects; every object must be perceived by a different (bhinna) consciousness, because if the object did not mark or transform consciousness in some way (i.e. make it different from the previous consciousness), consciousness would not be aware of it. In response Rāmakaṇṭha points out that the Buddhists accept consciousness to be single in one moment even if it perceives a multi-coloured object. If a plurality of objects at one moment does not entail the plurality of consciousness at that moment, why should a plurality of objects over time entail the plurality of consciousness over that time?