

Cursory Notes on *Vimśatikā Vijñaptimātratāsiddhiḥ*.

Kaspars Eihmanis

PhD student, National Chengchi University,
Faculty of Philosophy

Vimśatikā Vijñaptimātratāsiddhiḥ opens with the statement of the author's thesis, stated in the auto-commentary *vṛtti* : 「安立大乘三界唯識。以契經說三界唯心。」¹ According to the Mahāyāna the three realms of sensuous desire, form and formlessness are consciousness only (*vijñapti-mātratā*; 唯識). This statement embraces the view that everything we come to know, become aware of, i.e. cognise, is dependent on transformations of consciousness. This statement is further attested by the affirmation found in Mahāyāna scriptures that the three worlds are mind-only (*cittamātra*; 唯心). Vasubadhu also provides us with the definition of the key terms found throughout the text, concepts forming the core of the Yogācāra theory of consciousness and epistemology: 「心意識了名之差別。此中說心意兼心所。」² Mind (*citta*; 心), thought (*manas*; 意), consciousness (*vijñāna*; 識) and cognising (*vijñapti*; 了) are different names, hence throughout the treatise the concepts of mind and thought are used together with the concept of mental concomitants (*caitta*; 心所).

Preliminary statement describes not only the thesis of the author, but also recounts the intention of the author in writing the treatise, those countering the possible counter-arguments against *vijñapti-mātratā*. This becomes obvious upon reading the following verses and their commentaries, the rest of the treatise is devoted to providing proofs for the *vijñapti-mātratā* thesis as well as refuting counter-arguments raised by Buddhist and non-Buddhist critics, who mainly hail from the realist schools of Indian philosophy.

As a modern reader, I might employ two different approaches in an attempt to make the text philosophically relevant. I might approach text diachronically by situating its worldview, arguments and concepts within the context of Indian Buddhist debates of the 4th century. And since I approach the text mainly through its Chinese translation, coupled with original Sanskrit as well as several contemporary English translations,³ I would also have to take into consideration its reception in Chinese Buddhist milieu and peculiarities of Chinese translation. This approach would be Buddhological, with all its subsequent requirements of philological skills as well as an constant effort no to stray too far away from the historical context of the text in order to avoid unnecessary and uncharitable misinterpretation. Furthermore, I could choose to minimise the constraints of the historical context and concentrate on the intrinsic thrust of the arguments, their philosophical relevance, or simply their philosophical coherence and veridicality. Throughout this seminar, as well as in this paper, I have chosen the second approach, i.e. the arguments that Vasubadhu furnishes in defence of *vijñapti-mātratā* speak directly to my philosophical sensibilities, hence I

¹CBETA, T31, no. 1590, p. 007, b27.

²CBETA, T31, no. 1590, p. 007, b28.

³ Cook, Francis H. *Three Texts on Consciousness Only*. Berkeley: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research 1999.

Kalupahana, David J. *The Principles Of Buddhist Psychology*. State University of New York Press, 1987. Anacker, Stefan. *Seven Works of Vasubandhu: The Buddhist Psychological Doctor*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1984.

Kochumuttom, Thomas A. *A Buddhist Doctrine of Experience: A New Translation and Interpretation of the Works of Vasubandhu the Yogacarīn*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1982.

choose to engage them directly, taking up a role of an interlocutor in an imaginary dialogue. Needless to say, in order to engage the arguments directly, one must at least possess a rudimentary historical and philological knowledge of the text in question, in attempt to avoid the most flagrant misinterpretations or over-interpretations. There might be situations in which one could come up with straw man arguments, faults of which would be caused by misreading the text or misplacing the world-view of the text. As a result, I'm forced to read the text closely, nevertheless I do not choose the role of a philological bystander, but on the contrary opt for the confrontation.

What is at stake here is the question of idealism and arguments mustered to support this view. I state my own position from the outset to be that of realism. Having agreed that it was impossible to refute the arguments of Bishop Berkeley, in support of his thesis that matter does not exist and everything in the universe is merely ideal, Samuel Johnson had famously stricken a stone with his foot and exclaimed: "I refute it *thus*."⁴ On occasion, I would also subscribe to another famous 'corporeal argument' of G.E.Moore put forward in his "Proof of the External World."⁵ I could go so far as to agree with David Stove that to seriously doubt the existence of external world verges on insanity and is a symptom on the list of nosology of human thought - classification of failings of human thinking on a par with medical nosology: classification of human diseases.⁶ But even Stove acknowledges that Bishop Berkeley, apart from his preposterous denial of the existence of material world, should be credited for his astuteness in fishing out equally faulty arguments of his predecessors and contemporaries. I believe this also is the case with Vasubandhu's *Viṃśatikā*. Although I completely disagree with the author's thesis on *vijñapti-mātratā*, on the contrary I do subscribe to the statement of the mind-independent world and support the type of direct/indirect realism espoused by Vaibhāṣika-Sarvāstivāda and Sautrāntika schools of Mainstream Buddhism, I do find Vasubandhu's arguments forceful in exposing the shortcomings and faults in his opponent's theses and theories. Although I find Vasubandhu's denial of the existence of external world egregious, therefore the whole Yogācāra theory of consciousness as faulty from the outset, I admire the author's astute logical arguments and the way he brings out inconsistencies in his opponent's counter-arguments.

Below I will summarise the whole treatise in outlining the main arguments of the author as well as counter-arguments and objections of the opponent. For the sake of brevity, I will provide each verse of the text with an appropriate name of the argument in question, where necessary I will categorise arguments (e.g. Dream Argument, *Paramāṇu* Category etc.). Since the text of Vasubandhu's commentary is too long to quote it here, I have summarised it and provided my own paraphrase.

⁴ *Boswell's Life of Johnson*, ed. G. B. Hill, rev. L. F. Powell, 6 vols. Oxford, 1935, I, 471.

⁵ "I can prove now for instance, that two human hands exist. How? By holding up my two hands, and saying, as I make a certain gesture with the right hand, 'Here is one hand', and adding, as I make a certain gesture with the left, 'and here is another'. And if, by doing this, I have proved ipso facto the existence of external things, you will all see that I can also do it now in numbers of other ways: there is no need to multiply examples...Of course, it would not have been a proof unless three conditions were satisfied; namely (1) unless the premiss which I adduced as proof of the conclusion was different from the conclusion I adduced it to prove; (2) unless the premiss which I adduced was something which I knew to be the case, and not merely something which I believed but which was by no means certain, or something which, though in fact true, I did not know to be so; and (3) unless the conclusion did really follow from the premiss. But all these three conditions were in fact satisfied by my proof." Quoted from Moore, G.E. "Proof of an External World." In *G.E.Moore: Selected Writings*. Routledge, 1993, pp. 147-170.

⁶ Stove, David. "What is Wrong with Our Thoughts? A Neo-Positivist Credo" In *The Plato Cult and Other Philosophical Follies*. Basil Blackwell, 1991, pp. 179-205.

Vasubandhu	Opponent
<p>Main Thesis: All Perception is Consciousness. 「安立大乘三界唯識。以契經說三界唯心。」 The three realms are consciousness only. 「內識生時似外境現。」 The consciousness resembles external objects of perception.</p>	<p>(1) Argument for the existence of external field of perception.</p> <p>Objection: 「若識無實境。則處時決定。相續不決定。作用不應成。」 Restriction of place and time, non-restriction of mental continuum cannot be established if consciousness has no real objects of consciousness. If one assumes the non-existence of external objects of perception, how does one explain plurality of consciousnesses in one place and time. Imagined and dream-like phenomena have no real function.</p>
<p>(2) Dream Argument. 「處時定如夢。身不定如鬼。同見膿河等。如夢損有用。」 Time and place are restricted as in dreams. Bodies are not restricted: hungry ghosts <i>preta</i>, due to their <i>karman</i>, all alike perceive rivers of puss. Wet dreams involve a function. 「由此雖無離識實境。而多相續不定義成。又如夢中境雖無實而有損失精血等用。由此雖無離識實境。而有虛妄作用義成。如是且依別別譬喻。」 There are no real objects of perception apart from consciousness. The simile of the dream is used to demonstrate the concept of function: function is real in a dream as it real in a dream.</p>	
<p>(3) Argument for the Unreality of Hell Guardians. 「一切如地獄。同見獄卒等。能為逼害事。故四義皆成。」 Guardians by definition do not suffer, therefore they are not real. Therefore, if they are not real, they are the product of the consciousness conditioned by <i>karman</i>.</p>	<p>Counter-Argument for the Reality of Hell Guardians.</p> <p>Objection: Hell guardians <i>naraka</i> are real. As animals appear in celestial realm, so do <i>naraka</i> in hells. Therefore they must be real.</p>
<p>(4) Argument for the Existence of Animals in Heaven. 「如天上傍生。地獄中不爾。所執傍生鬼。不受彼苦故。」 Animals born in heaven experience happiness, but hell guardians do not experience pain, those are incompatible examples.</p>	<p>Objection: The dominant power of beings in hells produces elements that make up the ‘corporeal’ environment of the hell realms, including hell guardians.</p>
<p>(5) Argument for the Transformation of Consciousness. 「若許由業力。有異大種生。起如是轉變。於識何不許。」 Opponent, by admitting that dominant power or <i>karman</i> produces hellish environment, plays into the hands of Vasubandhu, who further advances his position.</p>	

Vasubandhu	Opponent
<p>(6) Vāsanā Argument. (Karman Category). 「業熏習餘處。執餘處有果。所熏識有果。不許有何因。」 Invitation to reflect upon the question of relations between the cause and the effect of the <i>karman</i>. Why assume that the function of the <i>vāsanā</i>, i.e. impression, and its subsequent effect originate in different places? Naturally, why not assume that they originate in mind.</p>	<p>Argument from the scripture. 「有教為因。」</p> <p>Objection. Why would the Buddha speak of the sense bases <i>āyātana</i> of materiality etc. 「謂若唯識似色等現無別色等。佛不應說有色等處。」</p>
<p>(7) Argument from the Hidden Intention of the Buddha. (Hermeneutic Devices.) 「依彼所化生。世尊密意趣。說有色等處。如化生有情。」 Argument from the scripture by the opponent is countered by the argument from the scripture by the proponent.</p>	
<p>(8) Argument in Support of the Hidden Intention of the Buddha. 「識從自種生。似境相而轉。為成內外處。佛說彼為十。」 The Buddha merely used to distinguish the ‘external’ from the ‘internal’, although in reality consciousness is born from the seeds, transforming it creates the likeness of the external objects.</p>	<p>Question for the Clarification of the Hidden Motive.</p>
<p>(9) Argument for the Value of the Hidden Meaning. (Soteriological Category.) 「依此教能入。數取趣無我。所執法無我。復依餘教入。」 Helps to realise the absence of the self, which in turn helps to realise the absence of the self of <i>dharmas</i>. A Madhyamikan thrust?</p> <p>Salvaging the Argument. (Dharmatā and Buddha Perception.) Not non-existence of <i>dharmas</i>, but non-existence pertaining to the constructed self which functions in the mode of the grasper and the grasped <i>grāhyagrāhakā</i> 所取能取. <i>Nirabhilāpya-dharmatā</i> apart from words 離言法性 that is the object of perception of Buddhas exists.</p>	<p>Question for the Value of the Hidden Meaning.</p> <p>Counter-Argument for the Non-Existence of Consciousness. 「若知諸法一切種無。入法無我。是則唯識亦畢竟無何所安立。」 If all <i>dharmas</i> are empty of self, likewise is the consciousness. Is it possible to establish mere representation if there is no object that this representation is a representation of? If the external existents are denied, consciousness likewise can be denied, i.e. pronounced non-existent.</p>

Vasubandhu	Opponent
<p>(10) Argument Against the Theory of Atoms I (Paramāṇu Category). 「以彼境非一。亦非多極微。又非和合等。極微不成故。」 Object of perception is not: 1) One thing (Vaiśeṣika); 「或應是一」 2) Many atoms (Sarvāstivāda); 「或應是多」 3) Compound [of atoms] (Sarvāstivāda). 「或應多極微和合及和集」 Because: 1) A substance that is different from its parts is logically untenable and cannot be grasped as an object of perception. 「且彼外境理應非一。」 2) Atoms cannot be grasped individually. 「理亦非多。極微各別不可取故。」 3) Single atom is not demonstrable. 理非和合或和集為境。一實極微理不成故。」</p>	<p>Further Question on the Reality of the Sense Fields. [The Orthodox Definition of <i>Paramāṇu</i> in <i>Mahāvibhāṣā</i>: 「問彼極微量復云何知。答應知極微是最細色不可斷截破壞貫穿不可取捨乘履搏掣。非長非短。非方非圓。非正不正。非高非下。無有細分不可分析。不可親見。不可聽聞。不可嗅嘗。不可摩觸故說極微。是最細色。此七極微成一微塵。」 (T27n1545_136_p0702a04)</p>
<p>(11) Argument Against the Theory of Atoms II (Paramāṇu Category). Impossibility to Demonstrate a Single Atom. 「極微與六合。一應成六分。若與六同處。聚應如極微。」 The following argument that atoms cannot be joined together to form larger aggregates and visible matter itself, since they do not have parts, is, taking into consideration the state of the atomic theory of his day, very reasonable, i.e. it is a logical critique that any proponent of the atomic theory would have to contend with.</p>	<p>Objection of Kashmiri <i>Vaiḥāṣikas</i>. Atoms do not unite. Atoms have no parts. The combined forms possess the characteristics of union.</p>
<p>(12) Argument Against the Theory of Atoms III (Paramāṇu Category). Untenability of Larger Combination of Atoms. 「極微既無合。聚有合者誰。或相合不成。不由無方分。」 If atoms do not unite, to what the union of larger combination belong to? <i>Vaiḥāṣikas</i> cannot salvage their theory by providing anything that would resemble an experimental proof of their unobservable entities – for them atoms are known only through mental analyses and while single atoms are not directly observable, a physical assemblage of them 合集 is known through direct perception <i>pratyakṣa</i> 現量 - therefore Vasubandhu's sceptical critique is fully justified.</p>	<p>[It is obvious from the text, that <i>Vaiḥāṣikas</i> distinguished between the combination 聚 and the union 有合 of atoms, as being two different things. The standard terminology though is 合集 for an agglomeration of the same type of atoms and union of the atoms of diverse types 和合.]</p>

Vasubandhu	Opponent
<p>(13) Argument Against the Theory of Atoms IV (Paramāṇu Category). 「極微有方分。理不應成一。無應影障無。不異無二。」 No parts, no unity. No parts, no concealment. It must logically follow that there is a combined form that differs from that casts shadows and acts to conceal [one atom from another].</p>	<p>Argument for the Functionality of the Combination of Atoms. Objection. Shadow and concealment belong to combinations of atoms but not to individual atoms. Evasion from answer by posing another answer.</p>
<p>(14) Argument for the Denial of Unity. (Contradictions of Perception). 「一應無次行。俱時至未至。及多有間事。并難見細物。」 The unity of the perceptual object would involve the impossibility of gradual movement in space and time.</p>	<p>Doubting the Appropriate Usage of the Critique of Atomic Theory to Deny the Reality of the Sense Fields.</p>
<p>(15) Arguments Against the Valid Means of Knowledge. Pratyakṣa 現量. (Pramāṇa Category). 「現覺如夢等。已起現覺時。見及境已無。寧許有現量。」 A return to the Dream Argument: direct awareness is like in a dream. When direct awareness occurs, the seen and the seeing are already non-existent (<i>kṣaṇikavāda</i>).</p>	<p>Objection from the Pramāṇa 量. Means of valid knowledge <i>pramāṇa</i> determine existence and non-existence of elements. Direct perception as the most reliable means of gaining knowledge.</p>
<p>(16) Arguments Against Memory as Support for the Existence of the External World. Dream Arguments. 「如說似境識。從此生憶念。未覺不能知。夢所見非有。」 Memory simply resembles the external objects of perception. This memory is merely a transformation of consciousness. Counter-argument. One must be fully awake and possess the non-discriminating knowledge <i>nirvikalpajñāna</i> to realise that waking is as unreal as dreaming.</p>	<p>Objection from the Existence of Memory as the Support for the Existence of Perceptual Objects. 「要曾現受意識能憶。是故決定有曾受境。見此境者許為現量。由斯外境實有義成。」 That which is remembered must have been perceived in the preceding moment. Therefore the sphere of perceptual objects must exist, as well as the direct perception of them. Objection against Dream Argument. Upon waking we realise the unreality of the dream, why not so in waking state?</p>
<p>(17) Arguments for the interchange between individual consciousnesses. Dream Argument. 「展轉增上力。二識成決定。心由睡眠壞。夢覺果不同。」 There is no necessity to postulate externally existing entities. Interaction, hence moral amelioration, occurs between two individual consciousnesses by means of the dominant condition <i>adhipati-pratyaya</i> of <i>karman</i>. The consciousness in a dream is characterised by torpor, the effects of <i>karman</i> are different.</p>	<p>Counter-Argument from the Possibility of Moral Amelioration. If everything is just the transformation of consciousness, how is the moral improvement possible without postulating good companions and true doctrine as really existing. Argument from the different effects of karman in dreams and waking.</p>

Vasubandhu	Opponent
<p>(18) Argument from the Supernatural Power I 「由他識轉變。有殺害事業。如鬼等意力。令他失念等。」 As magical powers wielded by sages can harm others, likewise, death is a an occurrence in the mental continuum of a living being.</p>	<p>Objection from the death of the body. 「若唯有識無身語等。羊等云何為他所殺。若羊等死不由他害。屠者云何得殺生罪。」 If everything there is consists of transformation in consciousness, body and speech being non-existent, how does one account for killing a sentient being?</p>
<p>(19) Argument from the Supernatural Power II. 「彈咤迦等空。云何由仙忿。意罰為大罪。此復云何成。」 Argument from the authority of the scriptures: the Buddhas example of the mental harm as a great offence.</p>	
<p>(20) Argument from the Pure Knowledge the Buddha. 「他心智云何。知境不如實。如知自心智。不知如佛境。」 Due to ignorance, we known other minds in a distorted way, not unlike we know our own minds. Only pure knowledge of the Buddha knows according to the reality, the way it it really is.</p>	<p>Objection: How is the Knowledge of Others Minds Possible? 「若唯有識。諸他心智知他心不。」 If only consciousness exists, do we known the minds of others? If one can know other minds, therefore others exist, hence consciousness-only cannot be demonstrated.</p>
<p>(21) Argument from the Omniscience of the Buddha. 「我已隨自能。略成唯識義。此中一切種。難思佛所行。」 Only the Enlightened one' s know the full extent of the consciousness-only doctrine.</p>	

A careful reading *Vīṃśatikā* allows us to assess the arguments by grouping them according to the subject matter they relate to. The main thesis of the treatise, that all perception is consciousness-only, therefore consciousness resembles external objects of perception, which are non-existent, is stated at the very outset of the text, the following verses and commentary are an attempt to provide the thesis with a systematic argumentative warrant. The main thesis is the statement of subjective idealism *par excellence*. After reading the treatise, only a stubborn revisionist would want to force Vasubandhu into the non-idealist procrustean bed. The wording and the actual content of the arguments leave no doubt that for the author only consciousness exists, anything else is a representation of consciousness, a simulacrum, external reality is neither existent substantially nor is something that our sense data refers to. Vasubandhu's position is not even an phenomenalist one, notwithstanding his obvious affinities with certain Sautrāntika views, especially theory of momentariness *kṣaṇīkavāda*. When I speak of Vasubandhu's view as an subjective idealist one, I do understand the limitations of this categorisation. Idealism has a long pedigree in the tradition of European philosophy, any dictionary and encyclopaedia of philosophy would attest to there being many types of idealism: objective, subjective, transcendental, absolute and various shades in between. With the exception of Bishop Berkeley, none of the idealisms found in the European tradition, come close to the forceful denial of external reality as it is found in *Vīṃśatikā*. Therefore, I even doubt that the application of the name of idealism to Vasubandhu give a full justice to his views. Maybe a cumbersome neologism like vijñaptism with an attending description of it would do the justice? For the time being it suffices to assume that in the global

history of philosophy, the predecessor to Berkley's subjective idealism by way of family resemblance is found in Vasubandhu.

As I stated earlier, I find most of the Vasubandhu's arguments unconvincing. Since the premises of some of the inferences are either fallacious or unwarranted, their conclusions naturally are faulty. Many dream arguments, which invite us to contemplate the similarity of dreaming and waking states of mind (Vs. 2, 16, 17), remind as of a stock of similar arguments found in Greek philosophy (Plato), Chinese philosophy (Zhuangzi) as well as Modern European philosophy (Descartes). Even some contemporary philosophers would summon some findings of neuroscience to support the view that the pain experienced in the dream mirrors that one in the waking life. To borrow Vasubandhu's simile, it is true that wet dreams are caused by intercourse in the dreams, although I doubt that someone has become pregnant while dreaming of the intercourse, or has been relieved of hunger because of enjoying the meal in the dream, or has suffered a severe hang-over due to a prolonged bout of binge drinking in the dream. And I'm not even thinking of being raped or mutilated in the dream! What kind of arguments one would need to persuade him that dreaming is different from waking and that I don't dream up these lines while typing?

Some of the arguments would not be comprehensible if taken out of the context of the Buddhist cosmology and soteriology and, like arguments for the unreality of hell guardians and animals in heaven (Vs. 3, 4). I don't think that Vasubandhu used them in manner contemporary philosophers use thought experiments, I'm not charitable enough to think that most if the Buddhist in his time, as well as now, believed in the existence of what we would call supernatural agents (*devas, pretas*, etc.). At least the realist opponent, who argues for the existence of hell beings, does not seem to entertain a thought experiment. Likewise the arguments from supernatural powers (18, 19), as well as arguments for the omniscience of the Buddha (Vs. 20, 21) show that the authors subscribed to a list of supernatural metaphysical beliefs. I don't think that arguments for the existence and non-existence of hell guardians come even close to resemble something on a pair of "brain in the vat" and other peculiar thought exercises of contemporary analytic philosophers.

Some of the arguments are a good example of typical Mahāyāna hermeneutical method, especially those which deal with the arguments from hidden meaning of the Buddha (Vs. 7, 8, 9). Others are to be understood in the light of the theory or *karman* (Vs. 6). Although this is not the occasion to dwell deeper into the subject of the *karman* theory, it seems obvious that a great part of the Buddhist metaphysics both in Abhidharma and Madhyamaka and Yogācāra, deal, and at times struggle, with the problem of *karman* in the light of the denial of substantial self *ātman*. *Viṃśatikā* is not an exception: the discussion of reality of hell guardians, transformation of consciousness and reality of external world have a direct bearing upon the *karman* theory, without which the soteriology of Buddhism would be seriously undermined. The same actually goes for the theory of momentariness *kṣaṇikavāda*, if followed to its logical conclusions would put under the question the possibility of perception, knowledge and Nirvāna.

The most interesting arguments in respect of their logical structure and forcefulness are those which deal with the arguments against the atomic theory *paramāṇu* (Vs. 10, 11, 12, 13), as well as the arguments about the valid means of knowledge *pramāṇa* (Vs. 14, 15). Although the arguments against direct perception *pratyakṣa* could be taken in with a pinch of salt, the arguments against the atomic theory are ingenious. One must admit that in terms of argumentative skills Vasubandhu far more outsmarts his assumed realist opponents, forcing them to reconsider their views or even acknowledge defeat and lack of counter-arguments, although being an author of the treatise, Vasubandhu has portrayed his opponents not in the best light. Hence I would tend to think of Vasubandhu's arguments as successful in drawing out inconsistencies and contradictions in Sarvāstivāda, Sautrāntika and non-Buddhist traditions of philosophising, nevertheless so far we

have not seen any convincing and reasonable arguments in favour of the denial of the external world.

But Vasubandhu's arguments, although not sound enough to convince me – although I regularly am puzzled by them and seem to be even persuaded - are interesting from the context of the Buddhist debate. He raises many interesting issues, which should trouble any Buddhist realist.

From the point of view of the history of Buddhist philosophy, Vasubandhu's critique of metaphysical realism is succinct in drawing out logical inconsistencies and fallacies of his opponents. The treatise clearly shows that the author possessed superb argumentative skills, logical astuteness and metaphysical subtlety.

As I already mentioned in the opening chapter of this paper, my ontological presuppositions and epistemological convictions strongly favour scientific worldview and philosophies that tend to support it. In reading the *Vimśatikā* I consciously identify with the common-sense realist approach typified by Sarvāstivāda and Sautrāntika, or Abhidharma in general. Although I can hardly subscribe to the Sarvāstivāda substantialism and essentialism or, Sautrāntika theory of momentariness *kṣaṇikavāda* – these theories deserve separate treatment - I nevertheless have never really entertained the idea of the non-existence of external reality. I side with those rationalist and empiricist philosophers who contend that not only science, but also any kind of every-day inquiry or dealings are based on the supposition that the data of our senses correspond to something 'out there'. And although it has been fashionable among the leading philosophers of the past one hundred years to deride the direct realism as naive realism, even among the leading philosophers of mind we can find some voices that object to this view.⁷ Although the nature of this correspondence can be debated, and naïve direct realist convictions seriously questioned by the science itself. Nevertheless, fallibility of our senses, cognitive biases and probabilistic characteristic of most our knowledge aside, I find it unreasonable to seriously doubt the existence of the external world. I simply find no reason to warrant such beliefs. Moreover, metaphysical idealism of Vasubandhu's type leads to solipsism, mounting up insuperable problems in the fields of ethics. Therefore, if the question "Do I support Vasubandhu's theories" calls for my allegiance to metaphysical idealism, my answer is no. I'm a realist struggling with its internal problems.

On the other hand, as a historian of Buddhist philosophy, I look upon Vasubandhu's theories as one of the answers in the long series of realism vs. anti-realism debates not only in the history of Indian Buddhism, but also in the global history of philosophical ideas. Vasubandhu's ideas in particular and Yogācāra ideas in general on the role of consciousness and the denial of the external world predate George Barkley and Edmund Husserl by more than thousand years, therefore it is of tremendous importance to understand them not only in the Buddhist context but also in the wider context as well.

⁷ Searle, John. *Seeing Things as They Are: A Theory of Perception*. Oxford University Press, 2014.