

questions from all of you. As many as we can get to.

00:03.54

In the interest of giving as much time to that as possible, I'm not going to give biographical information on people beyond their names and affiliations because you can easily find all of that on the very nice Web pages that Chris has put together to go with this conference. So I think I'll just name people as they come up in the order of speaking and we'll take it from there.

00:04.18

Our target remarks for this panel will be given by Professor Georges Dreyfus who is the Professor of Religion and Chair of the Department of Religion at Williams College. And so I'll turn it over to him.

GEORGES DREYFUS

00:04.35

Thank you. I want to thank the organizer for inviting me. I'm not sure what target- Ok. It's

fine if it works. Does it work? I'm not sure what target essay's supposed to mean. I feel like someone I have a big target sign on myself and people are going to take pot shots, but anyway I'm supposed to be trained for that, so that's fine, too.

00:05.07

My topic, my paper is available on the Web site, so I'm not going to really launch into an elaborate discussion, but I am going to try to summarize my topic. Which I think is already quite ambitious, though it's by far not as ambitious as some of the remarks which Owen has made.

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I have no claim of solving deeper metaphysical problems, but just to explore - and "just" is obviously in comma - just to explore the notion of intentionality. Now, I said just in comma because this is obviously a huge can of worms and in this room there are a lot of people who are

much more competent than I am to talk about this issue.

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So, I'm going to limit myself, use a little defensive strategy, but I think it's appropriate. And talk about what I know a little bit about, which is how Buddhists, some Buddhist thinkers have dealt with this topic and particularly Dharmakirti, about whom we have already spoken.

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Now, the starting point of this enterprise may be with a famous quote from Brentano, which is- goes "Every mental phenomena is characterized by what the scholastic of the Middle Age called the intentional inexistence of an object and what we could call also, not entirely in unambiguous terms, a reference to content, a direction upon an object by which we understand a reality, in this case, or inanimate objectivity."

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Now this is a mouthful. And there are people in this room who are experts on the kind of

tradition which have dealt with this question, but it is important to remember that the term intentionality is a Western term. I do not know of any Buddhist term which would directly translate - and Gary and Stephen will correct me if-

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-would directly translate the notion of intentionality. So what I am doing here is a little bit of what my friend Jay called "fusion philosophy," which is trying to establish a dialogue between Indian philosophy or Buddhist philosophy in this case and some of the similar discussion in the Western tradition.

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Now, my paper, as I say, starts focused on Dharmakirti, who is by the way not 7th century BCE, but 7th century CE. So, let's make this clear. So, his view of the mind is in many ways very typical of the Buddhist Abhidharmic tradition. That is a mind for the Abhidharma is

made of a stream of moments of awareness. A stream of mental events.

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And Dharmakirti is for the same view. Now, one particular characteristic or one aspect of a take on the mind is that the mind is understood from a first person perspective. And in that I think the Buddhist tradition is not very different from some of the Western thinkers who have been already mentioned here, such as James, Surcell (ph), and so on.

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Now, what Dharmakirti contributes to this Buddhist discussion of the mind is an epistemological reflection on the nature of the cognitive advances, which are part, which constitute the mental stream of sentient beings.

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Now, the key element in Dharmakirti's theory is a term, akara (ph), which I translate as aspect. Which is basically a kind of representation. The idea is that we do not perceive directly the

world, but we take the world, we perceive the world by, through representations, which are generated in our mind in, through the contact with the sense and the external object.

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So, this is a kind of- It is, in a way, a representationalist view of the mind. Now, we could have here very kind of, simplistic view of representation and take for a presentation is something which is come from the outside world, which is generated in our mind and then interpreted by our thoughts.

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And I think there is some elements in maybe Locke and some of the other British empiricists, which lead to this kind of view. I have argued in my paper that the Buddhist view's actually more complex and I would say more sophisticated than that. At least, that's my judgment, obviously.

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Now, the problem with this view of let's say, representation as a kind of copy image of the

external world, is that it assumes that when we have impressions of the external world, well- That we have impression of the external world and that we take in the impression and just interpret it, or think about it.

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The problem, obviously, is that it's hard to understand how these images, these impressions that we have, constitute in and of themselves knowledge. And Dharmakirti is very clear and quite sophisticated about that.

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Because he understands that for him, there is a very basic difference which is to be made in which how the mind operates. The mind- one part of the mind, perceptions operate what he called, what we could call directly or without the mediation of language and concepts and takes the object as it is.

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There is another part of the mind, the conceptualization, which deals with the external

objects indirectly and interprets them. Now, we could think then we hear that Dharmakirti's view of representation, of the mind, of representation is kind of classical empiricist's view, but it's not.

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Because for Dharmakirti, Dharmakirti's quite aware that, like Sellers, for example, that impressions are not forms of knowledge. That when we are hit over the head, that contact with the external world is not the form of knowledge, but that it will become a form of knowledge only when it is integrated within our conceptual schemes.

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For Dharmakirti, the discussion is couched in terms of pramana, which I translate and I apologize to the Sanskrit in advance, as valid cognition. Actually, literally, it means valid cognition, but for the sake of simplicity and to understand more the Buddhist view, I'm going to call it valid cognition.

00:12.25 For Dharmakirti, valid cognition implies the ability of that cognition to lead sentient beings to successful actions. And therefore, for a perception to lead, to a successful action, we cannot just see a patch which happens to be blue, but we need to see that patch as being blue.

00:12.46 And therefore, knowledge for Dharmakirti, it clearly involved not just a kind of bare taking-in of external reality, but involved a process of interpretation. And so, for Dharmakirti - and in my paper I lay down the way in which this is indeed in some way problematic for Dharmakirti, but I think it's- I would argue that this is a valid insight.

00:13.17 Knowledge, particularly knowledge about the external world, cannot be reduced just to our being impacted by external objects and generating a likeness of the external object, but involved a kind of cooperation between perception and

conception. And that, I think, is in a way the main point that Dharmakirti wants to make.

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And I take him- I take this point to be roughly similar to what Sellers said a few decades ago. Now, I think in the, as I said, for Dharmakirti, his main purpose is to present an epistemology. And so, for Dharmakirti, the articulation of the fact that- of the different contribution of perception and conception is, in a way, what he's mostly interested in.

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I think, however, there is a question of what is the contribution of perception in more precise terms to this cognitive process. This is a question, by the way, that I often have when I read Sellers, because Sellers talks about impression and he's very keen to argue that these impressions are not knowledge.

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And as a- And I think I agree with that, but I am interested to think, to see whether there are

ways of thinking about the contribution of perception to the cognitive process, over and above saying that this just leads to interpretation.

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Now, Dharmakirti's main way of dealing with this problem is to argue that perception induces or causes conceptualization and that's certainly the most important role of perception. There is, however, a tantalizing suggestion that there may be some ways to talk about the input of perception, which go over and above this strict causal role. And this is why I talk about a more extended sense of intentionality.

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That is, intentionality that is the ability of the mind to be above, about something to be directed to an object. That ability for Dharmakirti in the full sense of the word, clearly involves the cooperation of perception and conceptualization. There is no full blown

intentionality in Dharmakirti unless
conceptualization is introduced.

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But, there may be a kind of weaker or more
extended sense of intentionality and this is what
I call phenomenal intentionality. And I have,
really I am using a term which I don't really
quite understand myself, but I'm suggesting there
is something here interesting that may be
explored.

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Dharmakirti is, by the way, mostly a philosopher.
The problem in these kinds of dialogues is that
we - and no one has rightly talked about that is
that we tend to over-generalize and talk about
The Buddhists and The Scientists, as if these
were kind of coherent positions.

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Dharmakirti is, first and foremost, a
philosopher, an epistemologist. And his main
concern is, therefore, to do epistemology. It's
not- Dharmakirti, whether he meditated himself or

not we will probably never know, but he's not well-known for his contribution to the theory of meditation.

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So, nevertheless, he does mention in some part of his work that he invokes something which is a kind of phenomenological reduction, which is something like in some kind of meditative state, you kind of don't close your mind to these sensory inputs, but let your sensory inputs impact your mind. And you remain in that state.

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And in that state, you obviously don't have conceptualization and conceptualization arise when you get out of that state. Nevertheless, it appears from Dharmakirti's suggestion that there is some kind of- perception is seeing something in some weak sense of the word seeing.

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Now, I'm suggesting that this may be actually an interesting point for further research. That is, my understanding of this kind of dialogue is a

pretty much a pragmatic understanding. That is that we are proceeding here under the assumption that the mind can be studied in various ways and that basically first and third person approaches should be combined.

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Now, I think contrarily to Owen that there are a lot of people - they may be in this room or not - but who would disagree with that if you are an elementalivist (ph), you clearly do not agree with that. So, we're already talking about a kind of limited segment of the neurocognitivist community.

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But that's my understanding. Now, that understanding obviously involves that there is a kind of collaboration between both sides and that Buddhists are able to provide interesting first person accounts of meditative experience. But, and this is where you're going to be maybe shocked and surprised, if you look at the

traditional Buddhist literature, there are almost no first hand accounts of that.

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And so you might say, well, why are you guys here? I mean, we thought you were bringing the data and in fact, if you look at your literature, there is practically no first hand account of meditative experience. There are a few, but they are very, very fragmentary.

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So, I think here, there is an interest in a research project, which is like Alan is setting up a research meditation and research. And it would be interesting to kind of have people produce first hand accounts of various experiences. And probably most of it would be completely irrelevant, but there might be interesting things we could discover in this process.

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So, this is one reflection that I- Could I have a little more time or do I have to stop?

GARY TUBB

00:19.55 You have another 5 minutes.

GEORGES DREYFUS

00:19.57 Five minutes, ok. I don't have much more to say, so that's perfect. No, so this is one point I wanted to make. Another point, I think, is that the picture that I gave of Dharmakirti's approach and the way it could be extended and used and so on, I think is going to be able to account for certain aspects of Buddhist- for certain kinds of- part of the territory that Buddhist Abhidharma or Buddhist psychology covers.

00:20.31 And a large part. But it's not necessarily going to cover everything, because there is in Buddhist tradition the idea that a kind of distinction between what you could call operative state of consciousness, which engage with the world. It might be perception or conception. And then a much more basic subliminal state of

consciousness, which is called by various ways in the Yogacharya (ph) tradition, about which my friend Bill is an expert.

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It's called laya-vijñāna - to store consciousness - but the idea exists in many Buddhist traditions. Not all, it's important to understand, but in many Buddhist traditions. And I think this notion, obviously, in some way plays an important doctrinal role and so, we should not assume necessarily that it is based on experience. But I think it is going to involve an interesting domain of the mind.

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And a domain which is not well understood, if we take intentionality to mean conceptual intention or epistemic intentionality, as well as phenomenal intentionality. And as I say in my paper, Dharmakirti does not cover this topic because his interest is different, but I think if within the framework of a conference like this, if we think about intentionality it is important

to include this kind of mental state in the discussion of intentionality.

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Now, we could clearly say that this mental state, yeah, we could clearly say that these mental states are not intentional. At that point, we would be faced with the task of explaining in which sense they are mental and that's an interesting discussion.

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We could take another track here, which was suggested to me by my friend Evan, reading in the phenomenological tradition, and talk about still further expanding the notion of intentionality and talking about a kind of operative intentionality.

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It's an intentionality which is not object directed, but which is a kind of openness to the world, a kind of potentiality or capacity or receptivity, maybe, to the world that we have. And that would be one interesting way to explore,

to further extend intentionality. Or maybe we would not call it intentionality and call it something else.

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But to understand what is, from the point of view of the Buddhists, a deeper or in the sense of more basic level of consciousness. That, I think, exploration would be actually quite interesting because there are a number of meditations in the Buddhist tradition, which have described as objectless.

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And this kind of meditations, obviously, do not seem to be falling under the rubric of intentionality. At least if we understand intentionality in the sense of a kind of object directed intentionality. So I think that kind of exploration is going to be useful, actually, to the Buddhists, in a sense because I remember being always very puzzled by what this notion of historic consciousness is.

00:24.05 Because it's described as unclear, subliminal but covering the whole body and so on, and it's not the sense of touch and all that. And I think with this kind of dialogue with Western ideas and Western neuroscientific practice, I think there is a lot to be learned about some of the more basic levels of the mind for all the sides. Ok.

GARY TUBB

00:24.32 Thank you very much. That was perfectly timed. And we'll be hearing next from Ned Block, who is Silver Professor Philosophy and Psychology at NYU.

NED BLOCK

00:24.45 Thanks, that was- I was very interested to read Professor Dreyfus's paper. It's the first thing I'd seen that explains Dharmakirti in terms that a contemporary philosopher or scientist, I think, can understand.