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Review

Reviewed Work(s): The Self's Awareness of Itself: Bhaṭṭa Rāmakaṇṭha's Arguments against the Buddhist Doctrine of No-Self by Alex Watson

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*The Self's Awareness of Itself: Bhaṭṭa Rāmakaṇṭha's Arguments against the Buddhist Doctrine of No-Self.* By Alex Watson. Wien: De Nobili, 2006. Pp. 433.

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The central role and the philosophical significance of the controversy about the existence of an *ātman* ("self") in Indian philosophy has been examined in Claus Oetke's masterpiece "*Ich*" und *das Ich*, which philosophically investigates the conflicting opinions about the self and its nature in Theravāda Buddhism, Vaiśeṣika, Nyāya, and Bhāṭṭamīmāṃsā. Alex Watson's learned book *The Self's Awareness of Itself: Bhaṭṭa Rāmakaṇṭha's Arguments against the Buddhist Doctrine of No-Self* introduces into this debate the views of a Śaiva Siddhānta author, Bhaṭṭa Rāmakaṇṭha, who lived in Kashmir between circa A.D. 950 and 1000 (p. 115). In fact, thanks to the accurate work of Nidodi Ramachandra Bhatt, Dominic Goodall, and Pierre-Sylvain Filliozat, among others, we already had excellent editions and translations of some of Rāmakaṇṭha's works, whereas a philosophical appreciation of his contribution was still a desideratum. Watson has focused on a portion of the first chapter of Rāmakaṇṭha's *Nareśvaraparīkṣāprakāśa* ("[Commentary throwing] light on [Sadyojyotis'] investigation into the human being and God"—henceforth *NPP*). The motivation behind Watson's choice of author lies in the fact that, according to him (p. 77), Rāmakaṇṭha was the most dialectically engaged thinker of the Śaiva Siddhānta school (his predecessors and successors rather neglecting genuine philosophical confrontations with other schools). As well, this text in particular is the Śaiva Siddhānta text that devotes the "most space to dialogue with other traditions." Moreover, "It is not only the amount of space devoted to, but also the manner of, this engagement with other traditions that sets the first chapter of *NPP* apart from earlier Śaiva Siddhānta texts, and indeed from many of the others by Rāmakaṇṭha" (p. 77). So, both because of its dialogic character and its content, an inquiry about the existence and nature of the self, the first chapter of the *NPP* allows Watson to insert Rāmakaṇṭha directly into the philosophical arena of classical Indian thought.

The book is divided into five parts. An introduction presents an overview of the Indian controversy about the existence of an *ātman* (briefly outlining the theses of various Buddhist and Hindu schools), introduces Rāmakaṇṭha, and offers some editorial remarks about the *NPP* text. This is followed by four chapters in which portions of the first chapter of the *NPP* are critically edited, translated, and extensively commented on by Watson. The book's chapters, and the paragraphs therein, present Watson's own partitions of the text and are meant to guide its philosophical understanding by distinguishing the opponents' views from those of the *siddhāntin* (the upholder of the correct view, identifiable with Rāmakaṇṭha himself) and by demonstrating the various steps of the argument within each view.

The first argument Watson has selected from the *NPP* is dedicated to the inference of the self based on desire and the synthesis of cognitions, an inference most Naiyāyikas believe to be the only way to demonstrate the existence of the self, as well as to the Buddhist opposing arguments. The next chapter focuses on self-

**For the full review, see <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/270189> (04.06.2020).  
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