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The Sarvāstivāda and its Critics: Anātmavāda and the Theory of Karma

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The Sarvāstivāda, one of the main divisions of the earliest (non-Mahāyānist) Buddhism, is notable for the emphasis which it places on the Abhidharma. Its Abhidharmapitaka survives with exegesis culminating in the system of the Kashmirian Vaibhāṣikas expounded in the Abhidharmakośa of Vasubandhu. Like the Theravādins, the Sarvāstivādin Vaibhāṣikas deny that an unchanging 'Self' [*ātman, pudgala*] is the basis of personality and explain how past (or present) action (karma) can bear fruit in the present (or future) simply on the basis of the doctrine of Dependent Origination [*pratītyasamutpāda*]. They also agree with all other Buddhist schools that only intentional actions can lead to retribution: "It is intention [*cetanā*], O monks, that I call karma" (AN 3, 415). They differ, however, in their view of the mechanism of retribution and in their analysis of action itself. The first follows their doctrine that phenomena [*dharmā*] exist not merely in the present but also in the future and the past (the *sarvāstivāda*). They claim that the transience [*anityatā*] taught by the Buddha refers to their present activity [*kāritra*] and not their existence itself. This enables them to say that a karma in its present mode establishes a connection with its future consequence and in its past mode stimulates that consequence to pass from latency to present actuality. The action itself they analyse into intention and the deed itself, the first a mental phenomenon [*caitta*] and the second a configuration of matter [*rūpasamsthāna*]. In certain cases a self-reproducing imperceptible form of the latter is believed to arise, an *avijñāpti* or 'non-communicator', which amounts to an enduring and in some cases growing state of responsibility or deservingness. In his commentary on his Abhidharmakośa Vasubandhu presents a Sautrāntika (Sūtra-based) critique of the Kashmirian Vaibhāṣika doctrines, which accuses it of obscuring the simplicity and economy of the Abhidharmic teachings found in the Sūtras. The theory of existence in all three times is rejected for a doctrine of momentary existence in which karmic retribution is explained as the culmination of a gradual change in a chain of momentary mind-events initiated by the action [*cittasamtānaparināma*]. The dichotomy between (mental) intention and (material) deed is rejected: there is only intention, latent and active. The material *avijñāptis* go too. The facts which they are supposed to explain are accommodated in the model of gradual change initiated in the flux of mental events. However, both Vaibhāṣika and Sautrāntika accounts of karma are compromised by accommodating certain beliefs which cannot be justified in terms of the intentionalism of the philosophical theory,

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notably the beliefs that a donor benefits karmically every time his donation is used by a beneficiary even if he is unaware of that use, and that a person who instigates someone to commit a murder is more karmically disadvantaged if the assault is successful than if it is not. Vasubandhu's commentary on his *Abhidharmakośa* shows that he is aware of these difficulties, but he does not pretend to solve them. Both *Vaibhāṣika* and *Sautrāntika* approaches are thoroughly exegetical. They will not jettison a belief supported by the *Sūtras* even though it appears to contradict the fundamental teaching.

Of the various divisions of the earliest, non-Mahāyānist Buddhism, which the Mahāyānists refer to as the *Śrāvakayāna* or *Hīnayāna*, only the Theravāda survives as a living religion, being practised in Sri Lanka, Thailand and other parts of Southeast Asia. For knowledge of the other non-Mahāyānist Buddhist sects which once flourished on the Indian subcontinent and beyond we depend entirely on what has survived of their literature or, in some cases, on second hand accounts of their doctrines found in the writings of those who opposed their views.¹ Within this literature one of these sects stands out by reason of the thoroughness with which it systematized its interpretations of the *Abhidharma*: the sect of the *Sarvāstivādins*. This is the only *nikāya* apart from the Theravāda whose *Tripiṭaka* canon survives in its entirety. We also have much of its extensive corpus of post-canonical *Abhidharmic śāstras*. The *Sarvāstivādin Vinaya* flourished principally, though not exclusively, in the northwestern regions of the Indian subcontinent, particularly in *Gandhāra* and *Kashmir*.²

The cause of the separation of the first *Sarvāstivādins* from the Theravāda (*Sthaviravāda*) is said by unconfirmed and dubious tradition to have been a dispute over a point of *Abhidharmic* doctrine. It arose, we are told, in the middle of the third century B.C. between *Maudgalīputra-Tiṣya* (*Moggaliputta-Tissa*) and *Kātyāyanīputra* and concerned the existential status of the past and the future. To *Maudgalīputra-Tiṣya* is ascribed the view known as the *vibhajyavāda*, namely that what exists [*asti*] is only whatever is in present time, together with a part of what is past, that is, those past intentional actions, good [*kuśāla*] or bad [*akuśāla*], which have not yet given birth to the reward or punishment which are their effects. Against this view, which is that of the Theravāda, *Kātyāyanīputra* and those that sided with him are said to have insisted on the *sarvāstivāda*, 'the doctrine that everything exists [whether it be present, past or future].'³ According to this view all future events already exist and all past events continue to exist, not merely those past actions which have yet to bear fruit. The transient existence of an event in present time is seen as just one mode of an eternal existence, its momentary point of passage from existence in the future to existence in the past.⁴

Four facts are given by the *Sarvāstivādins* as proof of this doctrine of the real existence of all past and future phenomena. The first is a passage from their *Sūtra-piṭaka* (*Samyuktāgama* 3, 14) in which the Buddha Himself is taken as teaching explicitly that past and future matter [*rūpa*] really exist. The second is a canonical

passage in which the Buddha teaches the same fact by implication when He says that the arising of any cognition depends on two conditions: the cognitive faculty and its object. If the Buddha had held that past and future phenomena were non-existent, He would not have said this. Why? Because mental cognition [*manovijñāna*] is one of the forms of cognition. Since He held that it arises, He must have believed that past and future phenomena exist, since these are its objects.

These two proofs are scriptural. They are backed up by two non-scriptural arguments. The first is as follows. A cognition arises only when there exists an object of cognition. Past and future phenomena are cognized, therefore they exist. The second is that if past events were non-existent a good or evil action could not have an effect in the future. For at the time at which the reward or retribution should arise the action supposed to be the cause of this outcome [*vipākahetu*] would have ceased to exist: only an existent cause can give rise to an effect.⁵

The *Sarvāstivādins* were unique among the sects in taking their name from an *Abhidharmic* doctrine; and indeed, it was in the seven treatises which compose their *Abhidharmapiṭaka* that they deviated most from the other sects. The most fundamental of these seven canonical works is the *Jñānaprasthāna*. This, explains *Yaśomitra*, is the 'body' of the *Abhidharma* collection, the other six works being the 'feet' on which it rests.⁶ In *Kashmir* in about 200 C.E. an enormous collective commentary on the *Jñānaprasthāna* was composed. This great work, the *Mahāvibhāṣā* or *Vibhāṣā*, is the source of the name *Vaibhāṣika*, 'adherent of the *Vibhāṣā*' or 'expert in the *Vibhāṣā*' under which the *Sarvāstivādins* are generally known in subsequent accounts of the varieties of Buddhist doctrine.

The *Abhidharma* texts and the *Mahāvibhāṣā* were composed in *Sanskrit*; but apart from fragments none of them survives except in *Chinese*, and, in one case, *Tibetan* translations. However the *Abhidharmakośa* of *Vasubandhu* survives in the original *Sanskrit*, together with the author's own commentary [*-bhāṣya*] and the commentary of *Yaśomitra* [*-vyākhyā (sphuṭārthā)*]. This masterly work was composed in the fourth century C.E.⁸ It presents a systematic account of *Vaibhāṣika* *Abhidharma* in some six hundred (598) verses and elaborates, defends and occasionally criticises its doctrines in the prose autocommentary. The tendency of *Vasubandhu*'s criticisms is *Sautrāntika*, a term to whose meaning I shall return. Also *Sautrāntika* is a chapter appended to the commentary in which he refutes the soul-doctrine [*pudgalavāda, ātmavāda*] of the heretical Buddhist sect of the *Vātsīputrīyas* and that of the system of *Brahmanical* philosophy known as *Vaiśeṣika*. *Vasubandhu* refers to the doctrine he expounds in the verses as 'the system of the *Kashmirian Vaibhāṣikas*' [*kāśmīravāibhāṣika*]⁹, thereby excluding the tradition of certain non-*Kashmirian* sub-schools and emphasising the pre-eminence of the *Kashmirian* scholastic tradition.¹⁰ His work and that of his commentator *Yaśomitra* are the main basis of the following account of *Sarvāstivādin* doctrine and its *Sautrāntika* critique.

In this paper the purpose is to consider first how the *Vaibhāṣikas* resolved the problem of karma and then to consider the *Sautrāntika* critique of their solution. The word 'problem' is used because the theory of karma seems at first sight to call into

question the truth of two fundamental tenets of Buddhist doctrine: first that all conditioned things [*samskārah*] are impermanent [*anityāh*]¹¹ and second that all phenomena [*dharmāh*] are impersonal [*anātmānaḥ*].¹² Intentional actions [*cetayitvā karma*] are conditioned events. They are therefore impermanent. How, then, can they affect the present after their occurrence? And if all phenomena are impersonal, can we hold that past actions affect not just the present but the present of the person who intended the action? The problem was real, both within Buddhism itself, and in relation to the non-Buddhist, Brahmanical schools of thought. Within Buddhism there were the Ārya-sāmmatiyas of the Vātsīputriya Nikāya, an offshoot of the Sarvāstivādins, who held that the Sūtras do in fact teach the existence of a personal identity, a 'self' [*puḍgala*] which is the ground and support [*āśraya*] of changing mental states. Moreover, they used the theory of karmic retribution as evidence to support their doctrine.¹³ Outside Buddhism were the various schools of Brahmanical thought, all of which taught some variety of the doctrine that the basis or source of consciousness and action is an eternal [*nitya*] Self that remembers, recognizes and experiences the effects of its past.

THE SARVĀSTIVĀDA'S THEORY OF KARMA

Anātmavāda

Vasubandhu begins his refutation of these Buddhist and non-Buddhist soul-doctrines with the following:¹⁴

Is there no liberation [possible] in any system other than this? There is not. Why so? Because [the followers of the inferior religion (Yaśomitra: *kutirthyāh*)] do not recognize that that to which they apply the term 'self' is nothing more than a series of constituents [*skandhasamtāna*]. What, then [, do they recognize]? They wrongly believe that their identity [*ātman*] is a distinct reality [*dravyāntara*] [over and above this series]. And from [this] clinging to a Self arise the Afflictions [*kleśā*].

His commentator Yaśomitra quotes a hymn to Śākyamuni by the poet Mātṛceṭa:

The sequence of births does not come to an end so long as the mind retains any sense of personality ('I') [*ahaṃkāra*]. And this sense cannot leave one's awareness if one believes in the Self Doctrine. And since no teacher in the world but [You] has taught the Doctrine of Selflessness [*nairātmavādin*], there can be no Way out but Yours.¹⁵

The Buddha's teaching that all phenomena are impersonal [*sarve dharmā anātmānaḥ*] means that there is no phenomenon which is a Person in the sense of an entity other than the transient constituents of personality, nor any such entity within or behind phenomena.¹⁶ 'Self' is purely nominal [*prajñaptisat*]. Ordinary people and saints alike use it and other terms expressing personal identity;¹⁷ but the reality [*dravyasat*] to which the name is applied [*prajñapyate*] is actually this or that sequence of everchanging associations between five changing factors [*skandha*]: the body or matter [*rūpa*], feelings [*vedanā*], perceptions [*saṃjñā*], volitions [*samskāra*] and cognitions [*vijñāna*].

Pratītyasamutpāda

It was, says Vasubandhu, precisely to counter this idea that the factors constituting individuals require and presuppose a 'Self' as their basis that the Buddha taught His doctrine of dependent origination [*pratītyasamutpāda*]. The essence of this doctrine is that the coherence of phenomena is not the result of an unchanging and transcendental element which unifies them from within but comes about simply because these phenomena are causally related: when A is present B arises.¹⁸

Dharmas

There is then no agent of action [*kartṛ*], only actions arising as transient events within a continuum of causally connected states. What, then, is an action? To understand the Vaibhāṣikas' answer to this question their classification of phenomena must be understood. This differs in important respects from that of the Theravādin Abhidharma and from that accepted by the Sautrāntikas. Whatever exists is in one of two classes. It is either the result of causes and conditions [*samskṛta*]¹⁹ or it is not [*asamskṛta*]. Three things are not the result of causes and conditions. They are space [*ākāśa*]²⁰ and the two non-occurrences [*nirodha*].²¹ The two are: 1. 'non-occurrence (of the defilements [*kleśā*]) brought about through wisdom' [*pratisamkhyānirodha*], and 2. 'non-occurrence as a result of something other than wisdom' [*apratisamkhyānirodha*]. The first is, in the highest case, the nirvāṇa attained by an Arhat while still in his body [*sopadhīṣeṣanirvāṇadhātu*]. The second is the non-occurrence that pertains, for example, to all the other consciousnesses that would have occurred if one kind of consciousness, say a visual consciousness of yellow, had not arisen, or to all the life experiences that would have occurred in a particular incarnation if untimely death had not intervened.²²

These three causally unconditioned [*asamskṛta*] phenomena and one phenomenon which is causally conditioned are free of defilement [*anāsrava*]. This causally conditioned but undefiled dharma is the fourth Truth of the Noble [*āryasatya*], the Path to the Cessation of Suffering [*mārga*]. All other phenomena, i.e. all causally conditioned phenomena except the Path, are defiled [*sāsrava*].²³

Causally conditioned phenomena are classified into three types. They are either (i) material [*rūpa*], (ii) mental [*citta + caitta / caitasa (cittasamprayukta)*], or (iii) neither material nor mental. These last are termed 'conditioned phenomena which are not involved in cognition' [*cittaviprayuktāḥ samskārah*].²⁴ As Yaśomitra explains, they resemble mental phenomena in that they are immaterial [*arūpin*], yet they are unlike mental phenomena proper, such as feelings and volitions, because they do not arise at the same time as cognitions and with reference to the same faculty and object.²⁵ The most basic of these phenomena are sentences [*padakāya*], words [*nāmakāya*] and letters [*vyañjanakāya*], the similarity which defines an animate creature [*sattva*] as a member of a particular species [*(nikāya)sabhāgatā*], the four characteristics [*lakṣaṇa*] of any conditioned phenomena, namely birth [*jāti*], continuance [*sthiti*], decline [*jarā*], and impermanence [*anityatā*], and the so called 'possessions' [*prāpti*] and 'non-possessions' [*aprāpti*] which are believed to arise whenever any phenomenon, conditioned or unconditioned, occurs or does not occur in an individual stream of

conscious existence.²⁶

Karma

Vasubandhu begins his exposition of the subject of karma with the assertion that it is the *karmas*, the actions of sentient beings alone that are responsible for the diversity of the incarnations of these beings and indeed for the diversity of the universe itself, which exists solely as the receptacle of their experiences [*bhājanaloka*].²⁷ Just as the Self of the Brahmanical schools is nothing but the Five Factors of Personality [*skandha*], so the role which the majority of these schools assign to a world-creating and administering God [*Īśvara*] is taken in Buddhism by the actions of these same 'Self'-less persons.

What, then, is an action? It is divided by the Vaibhāṣikas into two parts: the intention [*cetanā*] which initiates the action and the intended action itself [*cetanākṛtam, cetayitvā karma*].²⁸ The intention constitutes action in thought [*mānasam karma*] and the action which arises from it is either verbal or bodily.²⁹ The intention is a mental phenomenon, a *cittasamprayukta*, whereas the verbal or bodily actions which it may initiate are purely material. It may be ethically good [*kuśala*], bad [*akuśala*] or indeterminate [*avyākṛta*].

Avijñapti

Any action of either of these two kinds, the verbal or the bodily, is a *viññapti*, that is to say, an action which communicates itself by being audible or visible. If the intention which gives rise to it is ethically good or bad and not merely indeterminate, then, provided it is intense enough or sufficiently meritorious or sinful in itself, there will also arise a verbal or bodily 'non-communicator' [*avijñapti*], an internal action which does not communicate itself to anybody else nor, in all cases, to the agent himself, as we shall see.³⁰ It rises from the communicated action;³¹ and, like that action, it is ethically charged.³² It also resembles that action in that it is an entity under the category of matter [*rūpa*] rather than thought.³³ However it is unlike such action in that it is perceptible only to the mind and not to the senses.³⁴ It is also different in that it is self-reproducing [*anubandha, pravāha*], whereas the outward action is a single, transient event.³⁵

In order to remain associated with the *skandha*-series of the individual the *avijñapti* requires the help of 'possessions' [*prāpti*], those phenomena neither material nor mental [*cittaviprayukta*] which the Vaibhāṣikas believe to be necessary if any phenomenon is to belong and continue to belong to the personality stream in which it arises.³⁶

The Vaibhāṣikas' main arguments for the existence of these non-communicators are the following:

1. If there were no non-communicators, there could be no Prātimokṣa discipline. Only if the act of undertaking the Buddhist vows to abstain from various actions gives rise to a continuous stream of non-communicated acts of abstention' [*viratilaṅkaṣaṇā avijñaptayah*], can we explain how it is that those who have taken these vows are always responsible for any infringement, even though they may be unconscious of their vows at the time when the infringement occurs. Similarly, to take professions at

the other extreme of the scale of morality, when a person commits himself to murder, theft, hunting or the like as his livelihood this conscious act of non-abstention [*avirati*] is followed by a stream of 'non-abstentional non-communicators' [*avirati-lakṣaṇā avijñaptayah*] which make him a murderer, thief, or hunter etc. even when he is not actually committing the sins in question.³⁷

2. If there were no non-communicators, the Buddha would not have taught in the Mahācūḍasūtra that the merit [*puṇya*] that comes to a person who does some pious act such as donating a garden [*ārāma*] or a monastery to the Saṅgha, goes on steadily increasing [*puṇyavṛddhi*] after the act and does so whether the donor is walking or sitting, awake or asleep.³⁸ The point of this argument is the belief that the merit earned by such a pious donation is augmented with every use that the beneficiary or beneficiaries make of it. Merit of this kind is called *paribhogānvayaṃ puṇyam*, 'merit determined by profitable use' and is distinguished from that derived from such actions as donations to shrines [*caitya*], in which there is no beneficiary, and in which, therefore, such merit as there is derives solely from the act of surrendering ownership [*parityāgānvayaṃ puṇyam*]. The problem to be explained, then, is the following. If such actions are analysable into nothing but initial intentions [*cetanā*] and the manifest acts which result from them, how could the subsequent use of a gift by others have any ongoing karmic consequences for the donor? The Vaibhāṣikas argue that this problem can be solved only by assuming that a non-manifest action-matter, a non-communicator, arises in the stream of the donor every time his gift is enjoyed by another stream. Demeritorious non-communicators of this sort can also arise. This occurs if the gift is for an immoral purpose, as is the case in the founding of a Hindu temple in which animal sacrifices will occur.³⁹

3. If there were no non-communicators, one would escape the karmic consequences of an evil action by having it done by someone else.⁴⁰ In fact, at the moment that a murder is accomplished on a person's instructions an *avijñapti* arises in the stream of the instigator, making him a murderer.

These arguments also exemplify the classification of non-communicators into three kinds: restraint [*saṃvara*], non-restraint [*asaṃvara*] or neither [*naivasamvarāsaṃvara*]. These pertain respectively to the following three classes of individuals:

1. monks [*bhikṣu*], nuns [*bhikṣuṇī*], male novices [*śrāmaṇera*], female probationers [*śikṣamāṇā*], female novices [*śrāmaṇerikā*], male and female lay Buddhists [*upāsaka, upāsikā*], and male lay Buddhists observing the twenty-four hour fasts [*upavāsaka, upavāsthā*], all these, with the exception of the last, having adopted lifelong abstentional vows [*prātimokṣasaṃvara*] of varying degrees of rigour;

2. those such as fishermen and hunters who have committed themselves to livelihoods that are the antithesis of Buddhist morality; and;

3. the mass of humanity, which falls between these extremes of virtue and sin [*madhyasthā*].

When a person takes Buddhist vows [*saṃvara*] or adopts a sinful livelihood, a stream of non-communicators will always be initiated. But morally determinate actions of other kinds, committed not only by those who have adopted neither Buddhist nor

sinful vocations [*naivasamvarasamvarastha*] but also by those who have, will give rise to corresponding non-communicators only under either of two conditions. The first is that the manifest action must have been strongly intended. It must have been prompted by an exceptionally pure or defiled state of mind [*prasādvavega, kleśavega*]. The second is that the manifest action must be particularly virtuous or sinful. A non-communicator will always arise, even if the intention behind the action is half-hearted, if it is one of a list of charitable donations that benefit the Buddhist Saṅgha or needy monks, if it is some pious act such as worshipping a Stūpa, if it is a pious vow, for example, not to eat without first venerating the Buddha, or is one of the major sins such as murder.

The function of *avijñapti* matter [*rūpa*] is to accommodate beliefs which suppose the existence of ethical states independent of consciousness. Now, what these beliefs have in common is that they more or less blatantly contradict the general Buddhist theory of action. Thus, if it is intention that is all-important, as this theory maintains, why should the sin of one who instigates a murder be dependent to any extent on whether or not the person engaged to carry out the murder succeeds or fails; why should merit accrue to a donor whenever his gift is used, after the initial intention has expressed itself in the physical and verbal act of giving; and why should being a Buddhist [*samvara*] or a professional sinner [*asamvara*] be considered a moral state over and above the states of mind in which this or that action is performed?

Retribution

Avijñaptis are only actions of another kind. They make retribution possible in certain cases, but only because one cannot have retribution without an action. The problem remains: how it is that actions can give rise to consequences after they have ceased to exist? The Vaibhāsikas' answer lies not in a particular class of phenomena but rather in their view nature of any phenomenon. As we have seen earlier, they argued that the fact that past intentional actions give rise to effects in the present is one of the proofs of the *sarvāstivāda*, the doctrine that phenomena exist not merely in the present but also in the future, before they are present, and in the past, after they are present no more. They cite the following scriptural verse:⁴¹

Actions do not cease to exist even after thousands of millions of aeons. It is certain that once they obtain the right moment and all the necessary conditions they subject creatures to their [inevitable] effects.

Actions, then, are eternal. To exist is their nature [*svabhāva*] regardless of whether they are in the past, the present, or the future. When the Buddha taught that all conditioned phenomena are transitory He was referring only to the process by which all phenomena have been, are, or will be briefly present after having been future and before becoming past. He did not mean that phenomena exist only for a moment after and before their nonexistence in the future and the past respectively. When an intentional action, good or bad, is occurring in the present, it is said to establish a relation with its still future effect, to 'seize' or 'anticipate' it, with the result that this effect will pass at some future moment from inefficacious existence to efficacious existence [*kāritra*]. When that moment is at hand, the intentional action, which is now

in the mode of past existence, 'bestows' [*prayacchati*] its effect in the present: when the experience-to-be approaches the present, the past act stimulates it to enter the present.⁴²

THE SAUTRĀNTIKA CRITIQUE

Let us now consider the Sautrāntika critique of this Kashmirian Vaibhāsika account of action and retribution. The term *sautrāntika* is the Sanskrit equivalent of the Pali *suttantika* and has the same primary meaning, namely 'one who is an expert in the Sūtras (/ Sūtrāntas).' In this sense it is parallel to the terms *vinayadhara* and *ābhidharmika*, meaning 'an expert in the Vinaya' and 'an expert in the Abhidharma [texts].'⁴³ However, Yaśomitra's commentary on the Kośa gives it a more specialized meaning: "Sautrāntikas are those who accept the evidence of the Sūtras and not that of the *śāstra*."⁴⁴ The *śāstra* to which he refers is evidently the Jñānaprasthāna and the other six texts of the Sarvāstivādin Abhidharmapiṭaka, since he makes it clear elsewhere that they reject the Kashmirian Vaibhāsikas' claim that the Jñānaprasthāna is the word of the Buddha.⁴⁵ There is no evidence that their Sūtrapiṭaka and Vinayapiṭaka were other than those of the Vaibhāsikas. Nonetheless they are referred to as a separate Nikāya in Indian sources.⁴⁶ The origins of the Sautrāntikas are obscure; but the opposition between Vaibhāsikas and Sautrāntikas on the matter of karma and retribution goes back at least to the second century C.E., since it is already central for Nāgārjuna when he presents the current Buddhist theories on this subject in his Karmaphalaparīkṣā (Mūlamadhyamakakārikā 17.2-20). He does not mention the schools by name but the arguments presented are exactly those opposed as Vaibhāsika and Sautrāntika in the Abhidharmakośa and its autocommentary.

The gist of the Sautrāntikas' critique of the Vaibhāsika Abhidharma is that it has obscured the simplicity of the Abhidharmic teachings found in the Sūtras themselves.⁴⁷ The simpler ontology which they saw in the Sūtras did away with a number of the Vaibhāsikas' basic categories. They denied that 'non-occurrence (of the defilements [*kleśā*]) brought about through wisdom' [*pratisamkhyānirodha*] and the other non-conditioned phenomena [*asamskṛtā dharmāḥ*] were entities [*dravyasat*]. For them the first, which includes *nirvāna*, was not an entity but an absence [*paś-cādabhāva*], the non-arising [*anutpāda*] of suffering. The same applied to 'non-occurrence caused by factors other than wisdom' [*apratisamkhyānirodha*]: this too was seen as the simple absence of certain events due to the absence of the necessary conditions. Space, likewise, was simply the absence of space-filling bodies.⁴⁸

Only conditioned phenomena [*samskṛtā dharmāḥ*] were held to be ultimately real [*dravyasat*]. Here too the Sautrāntikas simplified. Of the Vaibhāsikas' three categories (1. material entities [*rūpa*]; 2. mind and associated mental events [*citta* and *caittas*]; and; 3. the neither material nor mental [*cittaviprayukta*]) the Sautrāntikas accepted only the first two. The phenomena of the third category were dismissed as having no more than a conceptual or nominal existence [*prajñāptisat*]. Thus they eliminated the 'possessions' [*prāpti*] of the Vaibhāsika account of karma.⁴⁹ Furthermore, they accepted only ten of the eleven categories of material phenomena taught by the Vaibhāsikas, namely the five sense-organs [*indriya*] and the five kinds of sense-object

[viṣaya], rejecting their eleventh, the imperceptible *avijñapti*. They claimed, as we shall see, that the circumstances cited by the Vaibhāṣikas as evidence of its existence can be explained in purely mental terms.⁵⁰

The Sautrāntikas also rejected the Vaibhāṣikas' dichotomy between action as intention and action as matter. Motivated action, they said, is intention [*cetanā*] throughout. Beginning as resolve [*saṃkalpacetanā*] it develops to become verbal or physical [*kriyācetanā*].⁵¹

Finally, and most radically, they threw out the doctrine of the existence of phenomena in the past and future. They held that when the Buddha taught that phenomena are impermanent He meant that they cease instantaneously and spontaneously as soon as they arise.⁵² The Vaibhāṣikas' operation in the present [*kāritra*] was also momentary [*kṣaṇika*]; but their moment [*ksana*] was a finite division of time equal to 0.013333 of a second, and therefore infinitely divisible.⁵³ For the Sautrāntikas, however, a moment is indivisible, like a mathematical point in space. The Vaibhāṣikas' phenomenon, though it was brief enough in its state of activity in the present, had to dwell there long enough to be the substrate of the four marks of a conditioned entity: birth, continuance, decay and impermanence. For the Sautrāntikas, as we have seen, these marks, being among the *cittaviprayukta dharmas*, do not really exist [*dravyasat*]. They exist only nominally [*prajñaptisat*]: nothing really waits for its end, for however brief a span of time; nor is there any cause of its destruction. Its cessation is spontaneous.

How, then, does the Sautrāntika account for the process of karmic retribution taught in the Sūtras? He does so through the theory of 'the final, critical state [-viśesa] of a process of change [*parināma*] [initiated by intentional action] in the series of [momentary] mental events' [*cittasamānāparināmaviśesa*].⁵⁴ An intentional action, though momentary [*ksanika*], is a 'seed' [*bija*] which initiates a gradual transformation [*pariṇāma*] in the series of subsequent mind-events; and this transformation culminates at some future time to give rise in the next moment to the fruition of that action as reward or punishment. The intentional action is necessary if the effect is to arise; but it does not need, as the Vaibhāṣika argued, to continue to exist at the time that the effect arises. The action is to its effect as the seed is to the fruit: between the two lie processes of gradual transformation [*parināma*].⁵⁵ In his Mūlamadhyamakārikā Nāgārjuna shows how the Sautrāntika sees his answer to the problem as avoiding the two extremes of eternalism [*śāśvatavāda*] and annihilationism [*ucchedavāda*]:⁵⁶

If [, as the Vaibhāṣika maintains,] an action continued to exist [after its occurrence] up to the time of its consequence, it would have to be eternal.⁵⁷ If [on the other hand] it ceased to exist [after its occurrence], then being non-existent what consequence could it produce? [The Sautrāntika denies this latter consequence:] The seed initiates a series [of stages] beginning with germination. It is from that series [rather than from the seed] that the fruit arises; but that series does not develop unless there is a seed to start it. Because the series arises from the seed and the fruit arises from the series, the fruit depends on the seed, but [the seed] is neither utterly annihilated nor eternal. [Likewise, a mind-event [*citta*]

in which there is a good or bad intention] initiates a series of mind-events [*cittasamāna*]. It is from this [series] that the consequence [good or bad, in good or bad incarnations] comes about; but the [series] does not get under way without the [initial] mind-event. Because the series arises from the mind-event and the consequence arises from the series, the consequence depends on the [intentional] action; but [the action] is neither utterly annihilated [in the sense that it has no effect] nor eternal.

CONCLUSION

The Vaibhāṣika project is primarily exegetical: it outlines and defends what it sees as the system of the canon itself. It offers this system as a comprehensive description of extra-textual reality, because it believes that the Buddha's system is the only true and truly liberating doctrine; but it demonstrates the necessity of its categories from the evidence of the word of the Buddha. Everywhere we encounter arguments in the form: if X were not so, the Buddha would not have made the following statement(s). In the introduction to his commentary on his Abhidharmakośa Vasubandhu explains the meaning of the work's title in a manner which makes his own commitment to this exegetical perspective entirely clear. He tells us that the title Abhidharmakośa means Abhidharma-Sheath and that this is open to two analyses: 'The Sheath [*kośa*] of the [Sword which is the] Abhidharma' and '[The Sword] whose sheath is the Abhidharma', where Abhidharma means the Abhidharmapiṭaka. Both senses, he explains, express the fact that his work presents the essential teachings of that part of the Tripiṭaka, a part considered by the Kāśmīra-Vaibhāṣikas, whose view he is representing, to be the word of the Buddha himself.⁵⁸

This desire to reflect the teachings of the Buddha is a desire to show their complete and systematic nature. The Sarvāstivādin Abhidharmapiṭaka reflected by Vasubandhu is itself a systematization of the teachings of the Sūtras, and one which goes far beyond the meaning and implications of those early texts, as both the Sautrāntika and the indifferent philologist would agree: they do not support the *sarvāstivāda*, the *avijñāptis*, or the various phenomena neither mental nor material among which we find the *prāptis*. Nonetheless, the Sūtras remain the ultimate point of reference; and beliefs originating from, or supported by Sūtra passages are allowed to compromise what might otherwise have been a more symmetrical doctrine. We have seen evidence of this in the Vaibhāṣikas' arguments for the existence of *avijñāptis*. The theory of intention [*cetanā*], which appears to be the very heart of the Buddhist doctrine of action, is tacitly pushed aside by beliefs which entail a less rational, more magical view of karmic consequences.

The Sautrāntikas' point of view might have been expected to be more consistent. Discarding many of the categories sanctified by the Sarvāstivādin tradition they offered a more economic and coherent model of change and responsibility which, as they claimed, was certainly closer to the position of the Sūtras. However, their desire for coherence did not tempt them to explain away the maladjusted karma beliefs that appear in these Vaibhāṣika arguments for the existence of *avijñāptis*. They deny the conclusion: what the Vaibhāṣikas call *avijñāptis* are for them simply changes

[*pariṇāma*] in the stream of consciousness. But they do not deny that meriḥ arises in the donor as the result of an action outside his consciousness and volition, namely the use of his donation by a beneficiary, that responsibility arises in an instigator to murder when and only when the murder has been successfully accomplished, or that acts of lay Buddhist piety are consequential (initiate a change in the stream of consciousness) regardless of the strength of intention, whereas other virtuous acts will do so only if that intention is intense. Vasubandhu as Sautrāntika confronts the first two of these beliefs. He offers no explanation of how these changes can come about. He says only that it is in the nature of things that they do, and admits that the problem is impenetrable. If he prefers the theory of change in the stream of consciousness to that of the *avijñāpti* in these cases, it is only, he says, because it is less unreasonable to believe that an action by one person gives rise to a phenomenon in another's mind-series than to believe, as the Vaibhāṣikas do, that such an action gives rise to a phenomenon that is connected neither with the body of the agent nor with mind of the person affected.⁵⁹ In the first belief there is only one problem: the basic one of interpersonal causality. In the second case there are two: that and the problem of the *avijñāpti*'s materiality.

NOTES

Abbreviations used in the text and notes are as listed below:

AN = Aṅguttara Nikāya

MCB = Mélanges chinois et bouddhiques, Bruxelles 1931—

Abhidh-k = Abhidharmakośa

Abhidh-k-bh = Abhidharmakośabhāṣya

Abhidh-k-vy = Abhidharmakośabhāṣyavyākhyā

1. The term 'sect' here translates the Sanskrit and Pāli *nikāya*. It refers, in the words of Heinz Bechert, to "a group or community of monks that mutually acknowledge the validity of their *upasampadā* or higher ordination and therefore can join together in the performance of acts prescribed by Vinaya or Buddhist ecclesiastical law." See 'Mahāyāna Literature in Sri Lanka: the Earliest Phase', in L. Lancaster (ed.), *Prajñāpāramitā and Related Systems. Studies in honour of Edward Conze*, (Berkeley: The Group in Buddhist Studies, etc., 1977), 363.

2. This Vinaya ('in ten sections' [Daśādhyāya]) is referred to as the Vinaya of Kashmir; see Étienne Lamotte, *Histoire du Bouddhisme Indien des Origines à l'ère Śāka* (Bibliothèque du Muséon, Vol. 43, Louvain: Institut Orientaliste de Louvain, 1958), 191. The Kashmirian Vibhāṣā on this text is probably the Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādins (adopted by the Tibetans); see *ibid.* p. 192.

3. André Bareau, *Les Sectes Bouddhiques du Petit Véhicule* (Saigon: École Française d'Extrême Orient, 1955), 33; 137 (n.5); Étienne Lamotte, *op. cit.*, 665-667. Abhidh-k-bh on 5.25c: *ye hi sarvaṃ astīti vadanti atītam anāgataṃ pratyutpannaṃ ca te sarvāstivādināḥ | ye tu kecid asti yat pratyutpannaṃ adattaphalaṃ cātītaṃ karma kiñcin nāsti yad dattaphalaṃ atītam anāgataṃ ceti vibhajya vadanti te vibhajyavādināḥ ||*

4. For the four *sarvāstivādas*, the Mahāvibhāṣā's four accounts of the nature of the difference that occurs when a phenomenon passes from the future into the present and from the present into the past (the theories of Dharmatrāta [transformation], Ghoṣaka [change of emphasis], Vasumitra [passage through a moment of efficacy] and Buddhadeva [shift in relational definition]) see *ibid.* 5.25c - 26 (approving the third).

5. For these four arguments, scriptural and rational, see Abhidh-k 5.25ab (*sarvakālāstitiktatvād dvayāt*

sadvīṣayāt phalāt) and commentary. For the scriptural passages see Louis de la Vallée Poussin (tr), *L' Abhidharmakośa de Vasubandhu* (Paris: Geuthner, 1923-31) on 5.25ab, 51(n.1 and n.2).

6. Abhidh-k-vy on 1.2b: *śāstram iti jñānaprasthānam | tasya śārīrabhūtasya ṣaṭ pādāḥ prakaraṇa-pādāḥ, vijñānakāyaḥ, dharmaskandhaḥ, prajñaptiśāstram, dhātukāyaḥ, saṅgītiparyāya iti ||*

7. Abhidh-k-vy on 1.3: *vibhāṣayā divyanti caranti vā vaibhāṣikāḥ | vibhāṣāṃ vā vidanti vaibhāṣikāḥ ||*

8. See Erich Frauwallner, *On the Date of the Buddhist Master of the Law Vasubandhu* (Rome: Istituto per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1951) for the later dating (distinguishing the Kośakāra from the earlier, Mahāyānist author of the Triṃśikā etc.) and Stefan Anacker, *Seven Works of Vasubandhu the Buddhist Psychological Doctor* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1984), 7-24, for the earlier (following hagiographical sources which do not so distinguish). See also (against the distinction) Lambert Schmithausen, 'Sautrāntika-Voraussetzungen in Viṃśatikā und Triṃśikā' in *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Süd- und Ostasiens XI* (1967), 109-136 and Ālayavijñāna. *On the Origin and Development of a Central Concept of Yogācāra Philosophy* (Tokyo: International Institute for Buddhist Studies, 1987), 262-263 (n.101).

9. Abhidh-k 8.40ab: *kāsmīravaibhāṣikanīsisiddhaḥ prāyo mayāyaṃ kathito 'bhidharmaḥ |*

10. Abhidh-k-vy ad loc.: *santi vaibhāṣikā na kāsmīrā ye bahirdeśakā vaibhāṣikāḥ |*

11. Abhidh-k-bh on 2.47a: *sarve saṃskārā anityāḥ*; Candrakīrti, *Mūlamadhyamakakārikāvyākhyā* on 1.3 (quoting Āgama): *anityā bata saṃskārā utpādayavyadharmīṇaḥ...*

12. Abhidh-k-bh on 2.47a: *sarve dharmā anātmānaḥ*; *ibid.* Pudgalavinīcaya, 1204 (ed. Swāmi Dwārikādās Śāstri, Varanasi: Bauddha Bharati, 1981 [Bauddha Bharati Series, 5-6]. 2nd edition. All page references in these notes to the Kośa, the bhāṣya and Yaśomitra's vyākhyā are to this edition): *sarve dharmā anātmānaḥ* [=Saṃyukta 10. 7; see La Vallée Poussin, *op. cit.*, vol. 4, 252]; Abhidh-k-bh on 3.28ab (462): *ātmā ātmeti bhikṣavo bālo 'śrutavān pṛthagjanaḥ prajñāptim anupatitāḥ | na tv ātmā vā ātmīyaṃ vā* (cf. La Vallée Poussin, *op. cit.*, vol. 4, 249 (n. 1)).

13. Abhidh-k-bh, Pudgalavinīcaya, 1214: *yadi tarhi pudgalo nāsti ka eṣa saṃsarati*, "If, then, there is no person, who is this that transmigrates [in accordance with his acts]?"

14. *Ibid.* 1189: *kiṃ khalv ato 'nyatra mokṣo nāsti | nāsti | kiṃ kāraṇam | vitathātmadṛṣṭīniṣṭatvāt | na hi te skandhasaṃtāna evātmajñāptim vyavasyanti | kiṃ tarhi | dravyāntaram evātmānaḥ parikalpayanti | ātmagrāhaprabhāvāś ca kleśā iti ||*

15. Abhidh-k-vy. 1189: *stotrakāreṇāpy eṣo 'rtha uktaḥ "sāhaṅkāre manasi na śamaṃ yāti janma-prabandho rīhaṅkāraś calati hṛdayād ātmadṛṣṭau ca satyām | anyāḥ śāstā jagati ca yato nāsti nairātmyavādī nānyas tasmād upaśamavidhes tvaṃmatād asti mārgaḥ" ||*

16. Abhidh-k-vy. 1204: *sarvadharmā anātmāna itī | na caita ātmavabhāvaḥ | na caiteṣu ātmā vidyate ity anātmānaḥ sarvadharmāḥ ||* (i.e. glossing *anātman-* as both *karmadhāraya* compound ['non-self'] and *bahuvrīhi* ['self-less']).

17. See the Mānuṣyakasūtra quoted at Abhidh-k-bh, Pudgalavinīcaya, 1201 - 1202 (... *vyavahāra-mātram evaitat* /); *ibid.* p. 1214 10 - 13 (on the Buddha speaking of His former lives).

18. See Abhidh-k-bh on 3.28ab (*hetur atra samutpādāḥ samutpannaṃ phalaṃ matam*), p. 458: *santi tarhi kecid ya ātmani saty āśrayabhūte saṃskārādīnāḥ bhāvaṃ parikalpayanty avidyādināḥ cotpādāt tadutpattim | atas teṣāṃ kalpanāṃ paryudāsītum idaṃ nirdhārayāṃ babhūva "yasyaivotpādād yad utpadyate tasminn eva sati tad bhavati nānyasmin" ||*

19. See Abhidh-k-bh 16: *hetupratyayaṇitā rūpādayaḥ saṃskṛtāḥ |*

20. Abhidh-k 1.5d: *tatrākāśam anāvṛtiḥ*; Abhidh-k-bh ad loc.:... *yatra rūpasya gatiḥ*; Abhidh-k-vy ad loc.:... *avakāśam dadātīti ākāśam iti nirvacanam |*

21. Abhidh-k 1.5bc: *trividhaṃ cāpy asaṃskṛtam | ākāśam dvau nirodhau ca...*

22. *Ibid.* 1.6 and commentary; also Abhidh-k-bh on 2.55d (321).

23. Abhidh-k 1.4: *sāsravānāsravā dharmāḥ saṃskṛtā mārgavarjitaḥ / sāsravā āsravās teṣu yasmāt samanūserate // anāsravā mārgasatyam trividham cāpy asaṃskṛtam //*
24. Abhidh-k-bh on 2.36: *ime saṃskārā na cittena samprayuktā na ca rūpasvabhāvā iti cittaviprayuktā ucyante /*
25. Abhidh-k-bh on 2.36 (210): *cittagrahaṇam cittasamānājatīyapradarśanārtham / cittam iva cittena ca viprayuktā ity arthaḥ /...cattā api cittena tulyajātīyāḥ / te tu cittena sahlambane samprayuktāḥ / tadviśeṣanārtham viprayuktagrahaṇam /*. For the meaning of the term *cittasamprayukta* ('engaged with cognition') see Abhidh-k 2. 34cd and commentary, which gives the five *śamatās* (< *saṃ-* in *saṃprayukta*), the 'equalities' of substrate (faculty), object, form, time and number.
26. See Abhidh-k 2.35-48 and commentary. According to Yaśomitra Vasubandhu's list is not meant to be exhaustive. There are other *cittaviprayukta* phenomena, such as schism [*saṅghabhedā*]; see Abhidh-k-vy 210.
27. Abhidh-k 4. 1a and commentary: *atha yad etat sattvabhājanalokasya bahudhā vaicitryam uktaṃ tat kena kṛtam / na kenaciḍ buddhipūrvakaṃ kṛtam / kiṃ tarhi / sattvānāṃ karmajaṃ lokavaicitryam /*. Cf. Abhidharmadīpavibhāṣāprabhā (ed. Padmanabh S. Jaini, Tibetan Sanskrit Works Series, Volume 4, second edition, Patna: Kashi Prasad Jayaswal Research Institute, 1959) on 4.1. [155], p. 118: *etāni khalu trīṇi karmāṇi śubhāśubhāni dvividhāsyāpi sattvabhājanalokasya hitāhitanimittāny utpattāu sampattāu ca vaicitryasya kāraṇam / neśvarakālapuruṣapradhānādayaḥ /*, "These three kinds of action [mental, physical and verbal], when either good or bad, are, being the causes of what is pleasant and what is not, the cause of the arising and maintenance of the world in both its kinds, i.e. the world of creatures and the receptacle-world [which is their habitat], not God, Time, the Individual Soul or Fundamental Matter."
28. Ibid. 1b: *cetanā cetanākṛtaṃ ca tat /*. The commentary ad loc. quotes the canon: *dve karmaṇi cetanā karma cetayitvā ca*.
29. Ibid. 1cd: *cetanā mānaṣaṃ karma tajaṃ vākkāyakarmaṇi //*
30. Abhidh-k-bh on 1.11: *rūpakriyāsvabhāvāpi satī vijñāptivat paraṃ na vijñāpātīty avijñāptiḥ /*
31. Abhidh-k-bh on 1.11: *samāsatas tu vijñāptisamādhisambhūtaṃ kuśalākuśalaṃ rūpam avijñāptiḥ /*
32. Abhidh-k 4.7a: *nāvāyāktāsty avijñāptiḥ*. The commentary: *kiṃ kāraṇam / avyākṛtaṃ hi cittaṃ durbalam / ato na śaktaṃ karmākṣeptuṃ yan niruddhe 'pi tasminn anubadhnīyāt*, "Why [is there no such thing as an ethically indeterminate *avijñāpti*]? It is because an ethically indeterminate awareness is weak. It cannot project an action [of the *avijñāpti* kind] which could continue undiminished even after that [outwardly manifest action] had ceased."
33. Abhidh-k 1.9ab: *rūpaṃ pañcendriyāny arthāḥ pañcāvijñāptir eva ca*, "matter is the five sense-organs, the five sense-objects and *avijñāpti*."
34. Abhidh-k 15cd: *dharmāyatanaḥātāvākyāḥ sahāvijñāptyasamskṛtaiḥ*, "[These seven entities] together with *avijñāpti* and the [three] unconditioned phenomena are referred to as the *dharmāyatana* and as the *dharmadhātu* ('the sphere of mental objects')."
35. Abhidh-k 1.11 and commentary (*anubandhaḥ śubhāśubhaḥ, kuśalākuśale prāptiprabandhaḥ*). See also n. 31 above.
36. Abhidh-k 2.36bcd: *prāptir lābhaḥ samanvayaḥ / prāptyaprāpti svasamānāpatitānām...*
37. Abhidh-k-bh 583⁴⁵.
38. Abhidh-k 580 and Abhidh-k-vy ad loc.
39. Candrakīrti, Mūlamadhyamakārikāvākyāḥ on 17.5: *apūṇyaṃ ca tathāvidham / paribhogānvayam ity arthaḥ / tad yathā devakulādīpratiṣṭhāpanam yatra sattvā hanyante / yathā yathā hi tatkiṛtau prāṇino hanyante tathā tathā taddevakulādyupabhogāt tatkartṛ nāṃ samāne paribhogānvayam apūṇyam api jāyata ...//*, "There is also demerit of this sort, demerit, that is, which grows with use [by beneficiaries]. An example is the founding of a temple in which living creatures are immolated.

- Whenever living beings are killed there in honour of the deity, a commensurate demerit of this sort arises in the personality-streams of the founders as a result of the use of the temple or similar endowment."
40. Abhidh-k-bh on 4.4ab.
41. Étienne Lamotte, MCB IV (1935) 152: *na praṇāsyanti karmāṇi kalpakotiśāitair api / sāmāgrīṃ prāpya kālam ca phalanti khalu dehinām //*. See also S. Anacker, op.cit., 103. The verse is also quoted by Candrakīrti on Mūlamadhyamakārikā 17.21d.
42. See Abhidh-k 2.59 and commentary. Vasubandhu uses the term $\sqrt{\text{grah}}$ / *prati-grah*. Yaśomitra gives $\sqrt{\text{ā-kṣip}}$ as a synonym and explains that 'to seize' or 'anticipate' an effect means to be established as the cause of that effect (ad loc., 333²⁷⁻²⁸): *...gṛhṇantīty avadhāraṇam / pratigṛhṇantīti / ākṣipanti hetubhāvenāvatiṣṭhanta ity arthaḥ /*. The past cause which 'bestows' its effect in the present is termed the *vipākahetu*; see ibid. on 2.59d.
43. See, e.g., Abhidh-k-bh on 4.34.
44. Abhidh-k-bh 15: *kaḥ sautrāntikārthaḥ / ye sūtraprāmāṇikā na tu śāstraprāmāṇikās te sautrāntikāḥ /*
45. For this usage see, e.g., Abhidh-k-bh on 7.11, 1050: *varaṃ śāstravirodho na tu sūtravirodhaḥ*, 'It is better to contradict the *Śāstra* rather than the *Sūtras*.' Yaśomitra ad loc. explains: *abuddhoktam abhidharmaśāstram ity abhiprāyaḥ*, "The point is that the *Abhidharmaśāstra* is not the word of the Buddha himself." The *Vaibhāṣikas* hold that the *Abhidharmapiṭaka* consists of the teachings of the Buddha collected and redacted by Kātyāyanīputra and others; see Abhidh-k-bh 15²³⁻²⁷.
46. Candrakīrti introduces the *Sautrāntika* view of retribution refuted in Mūlamadhyamakārikā 17.6-11 as the view of 'the followers of another *Nikāya*': *nikāyāntariyāḥ* (135¹ in P.L. Vaidya's edition, *Buddhist Sanskrit Texts*, No. 10, Darbhanga: Mithila Institute, 1960); *aikanikāyikaiḥ* (ibid. 136¹⁹).
47. See Abhidh-k-bh on 1.3 (15) on the *Sautrāntika* view that the *Abhidharmapiṭaka* is contained in the *Sūtrapiṭaka* itself in the form of such *Sūtras* as the *Arthaviniścaya*.
48. Abhidh-k-bh on 2.55d, 320¹³ (*atha ko 'yaṃ viśaṃyogo nāma...*) -327.
49. Abhidh-k-bh on 2.36cd (debate between *Vaibhāṣika* and *Sautrāntika* on the existence of *prāptis*).
50. Abhidh-k-bh on 4.4ab, 578-590: *avijñāptiḥ pūrvam evoktā / sāpi dravyato nāstīti sautrāntikāḥ...*
51. Abhidh-k-bh introducing 4.1; on 4.3c: *saṃkalpacetanā pūrvam bhavaty evaṃ caivaṃ ca kariṣyāmiti / tathā cetayitvā paścāt kriyācetanotpadyate /... kāyakarmasamśabdītā cetanāviśeṣāt...*
52. For the *Sautrāntika* arguments against the *Vaibhāṣika* theory of existence in the future and the past see Abhidh-k-bh on 5.26.
53. See Louis de la Vallée Poussin, 'Sarvāstivāda', in MCB 5 (1936-7) 140.
54. See Abhidh-k-bh, Puḍgalaviniścaya, 1229 (*katham asaty ātmani vinaṣṭāt karmaṇa āyatyāṃ phalotpatīḥ...*) to 1231¹⁰ (...*na punar vipākāntaram iti*). The present author's rendering of *pariṇāma* follows Vasubandhu, ibid. 1230⁶⁻⁸: *yaḥ karmapūrvā uttarottaracittaprasavaḥ sā samāntiḥ / tasyā anyathotpatīḥ pariṇāmaḥ / sa punar yo 'nantaram phalotpādanasamarthaḥ so 'ntyapariṇāma-viśiṣṭatvāt pariṇāma* viśeṣaḥ /, "The 'series' [*samānti*] is the sequence of mind-events that arises in the wake of an intentional action. The 'process of change' [*pariṇāma*] is the fact that this series changes as it proceeds. The 'final, critical point of the process of change' [*pariṇāma* viśeṣa] is that mind-event in the series which has the power to give rise directly to the fruit of the action. It is called *pariṇāma* viśeṣa, literally 'exceptional change', because it is distinguished [*viśiṣṭa*] by [the fact that it is] the culminating [moment of the process of] change."
55. Ibid. 1229¹¹ - 1230⁵: *naiva tu vayaṃ vinaṣṭāt karmaṇa āyatyāṃ phalotpatīḥ brūmah / kiṃ tarhi / tatsamāntipariṇāma* viśeṣād bījaphalavat /, "But we do not claim that the retribution in the future arises from the no longer existent action. What do you claim then? [We claim that it arises] from the specific transformation of the series [of events that arises] from that [action]."

56. Mūlamadhyamakakārikā 17.6 - 10: *tiṣṭhaty ā pākakālāc cet karma tan nityatām iyāt / niruddhaṃ cen niruddhaṃ sat kiṃ phalaṃ janayiṣyati // 6 // yo 'ñkuraprabhīrtir bijāt saṃtāno 'bhipravartate / tataḥ phalaṃ ṛte bijāt sa ca nābhipravartate // 7 // bijāc ca yasmāt saṃtānaḥ saṃtānāc ca phalodhavaḥ / bijāpūrvāṃ phalaṃ tasmān nocchinnaṃ nāpi śāsvatam // 8 // yas tasmāc cittasaṃtānaś cetaso 'bhipravartate / tataḥ phalaṃ ṛte cittāt sa ca nābhipravartate // 9 // cittāc ca yasmāt saṃtānaḥ saṃtānāc ca phalodbhavaḥ / karmaṃpūrvāṃ phalaṃ tasmān nocchinnaṃ nāpi śāsvatam // 10 //*

57. One might argue (with the Theravādin *vibhajyavāda*) that the action would not be eternal, because it would cease to exist once its consequence had been experienced. But Candrakīrti explains for Nāgārjuna: *naitad evaṃ pūrvāṃ vināśarahitasyākāśādivat paścād api vināśena sambandhābhāvāt / vināśarahitasya cāsaṃskṛtatvaprasaṅgād asaṃskṛtānām ca vipākādarsanād avipākatvena sadaivāvasthānān nityatābhyupagama eva karmaṇām upapadyate /*, "This is not so, for what had been spared annihilation up to that point would also be dissociated from annihilation thereafter, being like space and other such [unconditioned phenomena]. Whatever escapes annihilation must be non-conditioned, and non-conditioned phenomena are not seen to undergo any process of maturation into something else. Because they do not 'mature' they endure for ever. It follows that we would have to accept that actions are eternal."

58. Abhidh-k-bh on 1.2cd.

59. See Abhidh-k-bh on 4.4ab.

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3

On the Status of Plants in Earliest Buddhism¹

Lambert Schmithausen

In Vedic religion as well as in Jainism, not only animals but also plants and even the elements - especially water and earth - are living, sentient beings, and injuring (especially killing) them entails retribution. In Vedic religion, killing living beings is enjoined in the context of ritual, which at the same time provides means for avoiding retributions, but *brahmacārins* (not yet entitled to ritual) and renunciators (who have abandoned ritual) can avoid retribution only by entirely avoiding injuring or killing. The same is true of the Jainas, who do not believe in ritual. Hence, especially Jaina monks and nuns have to refrain from killing or injuring any living beings, including plants and elements as much as possible. The Buddhists, on the other hand, have usually rejected the idea that plants are sentient beings, not to speak of the elements. In the Prātimokṣasūtra, however, Buddhist monks and nuns, too, are prohibited from injuring plants and even from digging the earth or spoiling water. The question to be dealt with in my paper is whether at all, or to what extent, such prohibitions presuppose a belief in the sentience of plants etc., and whether there are other clues for ascertaining the status of plants, etc., in Earliest Buddhism. The result of my investigation is that there are some passages in the Suttapiṭaka which seem to imply that on the one hand in earliest Buddhism it was still taken for granted that plants, too, are living beings. On the other hand, they appear to have been felt to be a kind of border-line case, with a growing tendency to ignore their sentience, more or less, when it raised serious problems of practicability.

When asking what status plants had in earliest Buddhism, I put this question, on the one hand, as a historian of ideas. The answer depends on what the sources (in my case mainly the early texts) disclose if one tries to understand them without preconceptions, in a natural way, so to speak. This means, among other things, that one should try to understand a passage, if possible, by itself and against the background of the ideas and terminology or phraseology of its own time, and that one should not lightly follow the interpretations of commentaries stemming from a

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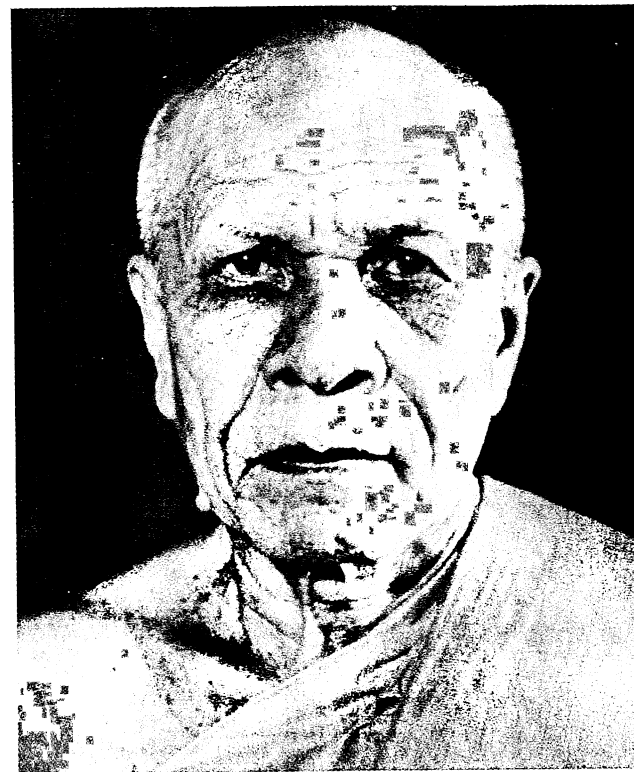
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This volume is respectfully dedicated to Phramonkolthepmuni (Sodh Candasaro) (1884-1959) who staked his life to recover the path to enlightenment, the core of Buddhism that was for so long lost to the world