

MIND ONLY  
A PHILOSOPHICAL  
AND DOCTRINAL ANALYSIS  
OF THE VIJÑĀNAVĀDA

Thomas E. Wood

MONOGRAPH NO. 9  
SOCIETY FOR ASIAN AND COMPARATIVE PHILOSOPHY  
University of Hawaii Press  
Honolulu

© 1991 University of Hawaii Press  
All Rights Reserved  
Printed in the United States of America

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Wood, Thomas E., 1946–

Mind only : a philosophical and doctrinal analysis of the  
Vijñānavāda/Thomas E. Wood.

p. cm.—(Monograph no. 9 of the Society for Asian and  
Comparative Philosophy)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-8248-1356-1

I. Yogācāra (Buddhism) 2. Vijñaptimātratā. I. Title.  
II. Series: Monograph . . . of the Society for Asian and  
Comparative Philosophy : no. 9.

BQ7496.W66 1991

294.3'42—dc 20

90-41660

CIP

Camera-ready copy was prepared by the author.

University of Hawaii Press books are printed  
on acid-free paper and meet the guidelines  
for permanence and durability of the Council  
on Library Resources

# CONTENTS

	Page
Introduction	ix
<i>Part I:</i> <i>Śūnyatā and the Doctrine of the Three Self Natures</i>	
Ch 1	1
Ch 2	31
Ch 3	49
<i>Part II:</i> <i>Nirvāṇa and Buddhahood</i>	
Ch 4	63
<i>Part III:</i> <i>The Existence of Other Minds and the Omniscience of the Buddha</i>	
Ch 5	93
Ch 6	107
Ch 7	133
Ch 8	149
<i>Part IV:</i> <i>The Doctrine of Collective Hallucination</i>	
Ch 9	163
Ch 10	171
Conclusion	191
Appendixes:	
App I	199
App II	207
App III	219
App IV	223

Notes	233
Bibliography	269
Index	289

## ABBREVIATIONS

AA	Abhisamayālaṃkāra
AK	Abhidharma-kośa
AKB	Abhidharma-kośa-bhāṣya
AKSV	Sphuṭārthā Abhidharma-kośa-vyākhyā
AN	Aṅguttara-nikāya
CWSL	Cheng wei shilun
JNA	Jñānaśrīmitra-nibandhāvaliḥ
MBh	Vyākaraṇamahābhāṣya (Patañjali)
MMK	Mūla-madhyamaka-kārikā
MMKV	Mūla-madhyamaka-kārikā-vṛtti (Prasannapadā)
MN	Majjhima-nikāya
MV	Madhyānta-vibhāga
MVB	Madhyānta-vibhāga-bhāṣya
MVBṬ	Madhyānta-vibhāga-bhāṣya-ṭīkā
NB	Nyāya-bindu
NBṬ	Nyāya-bindu-ṭīkā
PS	Pramāṇa-samuccaya
PSV	Pramāṇa-samuccaya-(sva)-vṛtti
PV	Pramāṇa-vārttika
PVB	Pramāṇa-vārttika-bhāṣya (Prajñākaragupta)
PVin.	Pramāṇa-viniścaya
RNA	Ratnakīrti-nibandhāvaliḥ
SD	Samtānāntara-dūṣaṇa
SN	Samyutta-nikāya
SS	Samtānāntara-siddhi
TB	Tarka-bhāṣā (Mokṣākaragupta)
TS	Tattva-saṃgraha
TSN	Tri-svabhāva-nirdeśa
TSP	Tattva-saṃgraha-pañjikā

Triṃś.	Triṃśikā
TT	Triṃśikā-ṭikā
Viṃś.	Viṃśatikā
VV	Viṃśatikā-(sva)-vṛtti

The doctrine of rebirth is largely identified in the popular mind of the West with the major Indian religions, Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism. To some extent this is justified, since it is only in these major religious systems that the doctrine of rebirth is accepted as the orthodox view and, as such, plays a central role in religious belief. It is not always recognized, however, that in these religions rebirth is regarded as *undesirable*. All three of the religions are concerned with the attainment of liberation (*mukṭi*, *mokṣa*) from the cycle of rebirth (*saṃsāra*). In Hinduism, for example, the aim is to attain a state of merging or identity with God (*īśvara*) or the Absolute (*brahman*). The Buddha, on the other hand, taught a path that leads to *nirvāṇa*.

The term "*nirvāṇa*" refers to something that is blown out (as when one blows out the light of a lamp), extinct, vanished, calmed, quieted, or liberated from existence, or to the state in which this has occurred. There were disputes amongst the Buddhist schools about the subtleties of this "blowing out" or "extinction," but throughout the history of Buddhism in India the meanings of "cessation" or "destruction" were taken to be central to the meaning of the term "*nirvāṇa*." The Hīnayānist school that accepted the annihilationist meaning of the term the most unequivocally was perhaps the Sautrāntika school, for the Sautrāntikas maintained that *nirvāṇa* was not itself a state or thing, but only the extinction of all the conditioned factors of existence of what we refer to as a "person" or "individual." Their principal philosophical opponents, the Sarvāstivādins, maintained that *nirvāṇa* is a positive state which itself exists, but even this view appears to be annihilationist on closer examination, for even the Sarvāstivādins defined *nirvāṇa* as simply the state *in which* all the factors of existence are extinct.<sup>1</sup>

Any interpretation of *nirvāṇa* as a positive state of some sort would appear to be precluded by one of the most basic formulations of Buddhist doctrine, the four-fold noble truths (*ārya-satya*). These are: the truth of suffering (*duḥkha-satya*), the arising of suffering (*samudaya-satya*), the cessation of suffering (*nirodha-satya*) and the

path leading to the cessation of suffering (*mārga-satya*). Here it is essential to realize that, according to Buddhist doctrine, *all* states of existence — even that of the highest gods — are impermanent and, as such, states of suffering (*duḥkha*). Since *nirvāṇa* is *defined* as the cessation of suffering, and since all states of existence are held to involve suffering, it would appear to follow that *nirvāṇa* is the cessation of all states of existence. If *nirvāṇa* were any kind of positive entity, the four-fold noble truths should have mentioned a positive state (*ens*) of non-suffering which is independent of the *samsāric* process of suffering, the arising of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the path leading to the cessation of suffering. The oldest texts, however, never seem to refer to such a thing.<sup>2</sup> In the early Buddhist texts, at least, *nirvāṇa* is defined — as it is in the formulation of the four-fold noble truths — as simply the cessation of *samsāra*.<sup>3</sup>

Consider, for example, the Aggi-vacchagotta-sutta of the Pāli canon. In this *sutta*, a wanderer by the name of Vacchagotta asks the Buddha whether the world is eternal or not, whether the world is finite or not, whether the soul and the body are the same or different, and whether the Tathāgata exists after death, does not exist after death, both exists and does not exist after death, or neither exists nor does not exist after death. The Buddha tells Vacchagotta that he has no view on these questions. When asked why, the Buddha replies that these questions have nothing to do with leading the “*brahma-faring*”: these views, he says, involve wrangling and fettering, and do not “conduce to turning away from, nor to dispassion, stopping, calming, super-knowledge, awakening, nor to *nibbāna*.” Then Vacchagotta asks where the monk arises whose mind is thus freed. The Buddha says in reply that “arises” does not apply, that “not arises” does not apply, that “both arises and not arises” does not apply, and that “neither arises nor not arises” does not apply. When Vacchagotta expresses bewilderment at this teaching, the Buddha says that his teaching is hard to see and to understand, and that it is rare, excellent, beyond dialectic, subtle and comprehensible only by the intelligent. He then asks Vacchagotta whether a fire goes to the east, west, north or south when it is extinguished. Vacchagotta replies that this question does



not apply, since the fire simply *goes out* (*nibbāna*) when it has exhausted its fuel. Then the Buddha says:

Even so, Vaccha, that material shape, feeling, perception, impulses and consciousness by which one might define the Tathāgata — all have been got rid of by the Tathāgata, cut off at the root, made like a palm-tree stump that can come to no further existence in the future. Freed from reckoning by form, feeling, perception, impulses and consciousness is the Tathāgata: he is deep, immeasurable, unfathomable, as is the great ocean. “Arises” does not apply, “not arises” does not apply; “both arises and does not arise” does not apply and “neither arises nor does not arise” does not apply.

Note that in this *sutta* it is not the defilements (*kleśas*) of the Buddha which are said to “go out”. What “goes out” is the Tathāgata himself.<sup>4</sup>

There are some passages in the oldest strata of Buddhist texts which are sometimes cited as evidence against the view that *nirvāṇa* is simply the complete cessation of existence. One passage which is frequently cited is Udāna VIII. i, which says:

Monks, there exists that condition wherein is neither earth nor water nor fire nor air: wherein is neither the sphere of infinite space nor of infinite consciousness nor of nothingness nor of neither-consciousness-nor-unconsciousness; where there is neither this world nor a world beyond nor both together nor moon and sun. Thence, monks, I declare is no coming to birth; thither is no going (from life); therein is no duration; thence is no falling; there is no arising. It is not something fixed, it is immovable, it is not based on anything. That indeed is the end of ill.

Ud. VIII. ii adds the following:

Hard is the infinite (*anattā*) to see; truth is no easy thing to see; / Craving is pierced by him who knows; for him who sees this nothing remains.

And Udāna VIII. iii adds to Ud. i and ii the following:

Monks, there is a not-born, a not-become, a not-made, a not-compounded. Monks, if that unborn, not-become, not-made, not-compounded were not, there would be apparent no escape from this here that is born, become, made, compounded. But since, monks, there is an unborn etc., therefore the escape from this here that is born, become etc. is apparent.<sup>5</sup>

This passage begins by asserting "There is (*atthi*) a condition" etc. Ordinarily such a passage would assert that there is some *positive* entity with such and such qualities. In Udāna VIII, however, the descriptions that follow the phrase "There is..." are consistently negative. Furthermore, there are clear indications in the passage that it is to be understood in the context of the teaching of the four-fold noble truths, for Ud. VIII says explicitly that the condition described is the "end of ill" (i.e. *nirvāṇa*). Similarly, Ud. VIII. iii says that if there were not the not-born, not-become, not-compounded etc. there would be no escape from *saṃsāra*. This, too, is an unmistakable indication that Ud. VIII is to be understood simply in terms of the four-fold noble truths of suffering, the arising of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the path leading to the cessation of suffering.

Interpretations of such passages which attribute a positive character to *nirvāṇa* appear to commit the philosophical error of "hypostasizing the negative." In ordinary language, if we want to say that there is no entity *x*, we can do so, if we like, by referring to the non-existence of *x*. But this does not mean that the non-existence of *x* is itself a real thing. Similarly, it appears that Ud. VIII simply restates at greater length the third of the four-fold noble truths, i.e. that there is an end of suffering, and that suffering is therefore neither necessary nor eternal. That this is the meaning that is intended is clear from the very wording of the third noble truth (*nirodha-satya*), for "*nirodha*" simply means "cessation" or "destruction."

The term "*śūnya*" (Pāli "*suñña*"), which is found in the older texts and becomes particularly important in the texts of the Mahāyāna, is closely related in meaning to the terms "*nirodha*" and "*nirvāṇa*." The adjective "*śūnya*" means 1) empty, void; 2) vacant; 3) non-existent; 4) lonely, desolate, deserted; 5) utterly devoid or

deprived of; 6) bare or naked. The corresponding nominatives “*śūnyam*” and “*śūnyatā*” mean 1) vacuum, void, blank; 2) sky, space, atmosphere; 3) non-entity or absolute non-existence. It is also relevant here that the Indian mathematicians who discovered the number zero called it “*śūnyam*.”

The foregoing definitions (all of which are closely connected in meaning) also apply to the terms “*śūnya*,” “*śūnyam*” and “*śūnyatā*” as they were used in the Buddhist texts. These terms, which are connected with the notions of “absence,” “lack,” “devoidness,” “non-existence” etc., were invested in Buddhism with religious significance because, according to Buddhist doctrine, all states of existence involve suffering. The ultimate aim of the Buddhist life, at least in the earliest texts, was the cessation of all suffering, the attainment of which was called *nirvāṇa*. “*Nirvāṇa*” means “blowing out,” and is a synonym of the term “*nirodha*,” which means extinction. *Nirvāṇa*, therefore, is the attainment of the state of *śūnyam* or *śūnyatā*, i.e. a state of emptiness or voidness in which all of the suffering connected with all states of existence is entirely absent.

The religious significance of the term “*śūnya*” and its connection with the notion of *nirvāṇa* is the theme of the Cūḷa-suññata-sutta of the Majjhima-nikāya.<sup>6</sup> In this *sutta* the Buddha teaches that the cessation of suffering depends on the cessation of being and becoming. In this connection he describes for his interlocutors a series of stages or planes which moves progressively from consciousness to unconsciousness, and from being to non-being:

- (a) Consciousness of humanity
- (b) Consciousness of the forest
- (c) Consciousness of the earth
- (d) Consciousness of the infinity of space
- (e) Consciousness of the infinity of thought
- (f) Consciousness of nothingness (*ākāṅkṣāsaññā*)
- (g) Consciousness of neither consciousness nor unconsciousness
- (h) Objectless cessation of consciousness
- (i) The supreme, ultimate void (*paramānuttarā suññatā*).



There is a passage in this *sutta* which describes emptiness (P. *suññatā*) in terms of the analogy of the forest. Life in the forest — the traditional refuge of Indian religious men who had renounced worldly life — is extolled because it is held to be free of the cares and suffering attendant on worldly life. However, it is not any of the *positive* qualities of the forest or life in the forest which are extolled in the *sutta*, but the mere fact that the forest is devoid (*śūnya*) of the those things which trouble people in the cities and towns.<sup>7</sup> Since it is the mere voidness or emptiness (*suññatā*) which gives forest dwellers some release from suffering, the *sutta* concludes that earth itself, which is devoid of even the vegetation of the forest, should provide an even greater release from suffering [cf. consciousness of the earth, stage (c) above]. The *sutta* then proceeds through the succeeding states (d) through (i) above, arriving ultimately at the view that the final release from suffering (*duḥkha*) is attained when the Buddhist attains the supreme, ultimate void (*paramānuttarā suññatā*). This is the stage that ensues after the attainment of the “objectless cessation of consciousness.”

There are passages in the early texts which state that the *world* is itself empty (*suñña*). However, these texts specify that the world is empty in the sense that it is “empty of self or what belongs to a self.” The schools of the Hīnayāna took this to mean, not that the world itself was unreal or literally void, but that there is no self or soul in a person or sentient being.<sup>8</sup> In lieu of a soul-theory, the early Buddhist texts described a person or sentient being in terms of the five groups (*skandhas*) of form (*rūpa*), feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saṃjñā*), impulses (*saṃskāras*) and consciousness or mind (*viññāna*).<sup>9</sup> A useful analogy — one that is found in the Hīnayāna work called the *Milinda-pañha* — is that of a chariot. Just as, it is said, it would be an error to think of a chariot as an entity apart from its constituent parts like the axle, the hub, the wheel and so on, so it is an error to think that there is an entity or substance — a self — apart from the constituent elements of form, feeling, perception, impulses and consciousness. On this view, the self (*ātman*) is unreal. What really exists is only an ever-changing stream of constituent elements or *dharmas*.

The Mahāyānists rejected this interpretation of emptiness (*śūnyatā*), or to be more precise, thought that it did not go far enough. According to the *sūtras* and *śāstras* of the Mahāyāna, even these purported constituent elements are unreal and void (*śūnya*, *abhāva*). This theme can be traced back to the very earliest Mahāyāna texts. In the Aṣṭa-sāhasrikā-prajñā-pāramitā, for example, the statement that all *dharma*s are signless, wishless, unaffected, unproduced, unoriginated and *non-existent* (*abhāva*) appears as a *leitmotif* at least six different times.<sup>10</sup> This doctrine of the voidness of all *dharma*s (*sarva-dharma-śūnyatā*) raises the following question: If the world is unreal, what is that we *seem* to experience? The two major schools of the Mahāyāna diverged over the answer to this question. According to the Vijñānavādins, the world is nothing but mind (*vijñāna-mātra*). On this view, mind as such is real, and it is only external objects which are unreal. The Vijñānavāda, therefore, had an answer to the question "What is it that we actually experience?" The answer is: "What we see is a mere illusion (*māyā*) or appearance (*ābhāsa*) of the mind." The other school — the Śūnyavāda or Madhyamaka — was more radical. According to the Śūnyavādins or Mādhyamikas, even the teaching that the world is mind only is a provisional truth. In the final analysis, even the mind itself is non-existent, empty and void (*śūnya*). Even experience is unreal.<sup>11</sup>

Support for both interpretations of the doctrine of the voidness of all *dharma*s can be found in the Mahāyāna texts. On the one hand, there are many passages in the Mahāyāna *sūtras* which state that the world is nothing but the false ideation of the mind, like a dream.<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, there are numerous passages which state that all *dharma*s are void (*sarva-dharma-śūnyatā*), and since mind (*vijñāna*) itself is just a group of *dharma*s, according to Buddhist doctrine, it should follow that mind itself is strictly void. The two schools, therefore, differed about which interpretation was the highest or direct teaching (*nītārtha*) and which was the provisional or indirect teaching (*neyārtha*). According to the Śūnyavādins, the mind only teachings of the Mahāyāna scriptures were addressed by the Buddha to those disciples who could not grasp or accept the teaching that everything (including the mind) is

totally unreal and void. People of the ordinary sort will always insist on asking: "How can the world be totally unreal when it is perfectly obvious that I am seeing *something*?" According to the Mādhyamikas, the Buddha replied to this sort of person: "What you see is merely a mental creation (*viparyāsa, māyā*)." According to the Śūnyavādins, however, the correct and final teaching of the Buddha is: "You are not seeing anything at all. Everything is non-existent and void." It was only when an individual was unable to grasp this teaching that the Buddha met the person halfway by saying that what the person saw was real, but only as an appearance (*ābhāsa*) of the mind.<sup>13</sup>

The Mādhyamikas were clearly the more radical school of the Mahāyāna, for while it might make sense to say that there is no external world, it is not at all obvious how it could make any sense to say that both the world *and* the mind that seems to perceive it are non-existent.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, the Vijñānavādins also maintained that the Mādhyamika doctrine was doctrinally or soteriologically objectionable. The Buddhist scriptures state that the aim of the Buddhist religion (*buddha-dharma*) is to lead sentient beings from *saṃsāric* suffering to the liberation from suffering which is found in *nirvāṇa*. The Vijñānavādins argued that none of these teachings make any sense on the view that the mind — and therefore suffering itself — is unreal and totally non-existent (*abhāva*). The Vijñānavādins, therefore, interpreted the statement in the *sūtras* that all *dharma*s are void to mean that everything is mind only. This view, which interprets the doctrine of emptiness to mean that what does exist (i.e. mind) is *devoid* of any material object or thing, may be called the doctrine of "other emptiness," as opposed to a doctrine of emptiness as such.

This would appear to be a less plausible interpretation of the Mahāyāna doctrine of the emptiness of all *dharma*s than the Mādhyamika one, though it is one that is far more defensible — and even far more intelligible — on philosophical grounds. Furthermore, the Vijñānavādin interpretation can be more easily reconciled with the earlier texts which were recognized as canonical by all of the Buddhist schools. According to all the Buddhist schools, mind or consciousness (*vijñāna*), as one of the five groups



of *dharma*s, is destroyed in the final *nirvāṇa* of total extinction (*nirupadhi-śeṣa-nirvāṇa*).<sup>15</sup> The Vijñānavādins believed that the mind continues to exist and that *saṃsāra* continues to be real, at least as a mental phenomenon, as long as the *nirupadhi-śeṣa-nirvāṇa* has not been attained. The only difference between the Hīnayānists and the Vijñānavādins on *this* point was that the Vijñānavādins, unlike the Hīnayānists, maintained that *saṃsāra* is purely ideal or mental.

The terms “emptiness” (*śūnyatā*, *śūnyam*) and “mind only” (*vijñapti-mātra*) are treated as closely related terms in the Vijñānavāda. This can be seen in the first chapter of the Madhyānta-vibhāga (“The Discrimination between the Middle and the Extremes”).

This work is ascribed either to a Maitreyanātha or to Ārya Asaṅga (fl. 350 C.E.), who in the Buddhist tradition is said to have been the half-brother of Vasubandhu (the real founder of the school) and the individual responsible for converting Vasubandhu to the Mahāyāna. There is also a commentary (*bhāṣya*) on the text which is ascribed to Vasubandhu (MVB), and another commentary (*ṭīkā*) on Vasubandhu’s commentary by Shīramatī (MVBT). If the *bhāṣya* on the MV is authentic, it means that the MV itself is probably an older text than even the Viṃśatikā or Triṃśikā of Vasubandhu.

Chapter 1 (*lakṣaṇa-pariccheda*) of the Madhyānta-vibhāga consists of two parts. Verses 1-11 are principally concerned with the subject of what is called “false ideation” (*abhūta-parikalpa*); verses 12-22 are principally concerned with the topic of emptiness (*śūnyatā*). This is a rather rough division, however, for both of these are regarded as interconnected concepts. (The concept of *śūnyatā*, for example, actually occurs in the definition of the false imagination which is given in the first verse.) The connection between these two concepts is contained in the doctrine of the three self natures (*tri-svabhāva-lakṣaṇa*). These three self natures are:

(1) The purely imagined nature (*kalpita*, *parikalpita*). This is the nature of the supposed external objects. According to the Vijñānavādins, these are entirely non-existent (*abhāva*).

(2) The other-dependent nature (*paratantra-svabhāva*). This is another name for the mind (*viññāna*) and the false imagination (*abhūta-parikalpa*). It is essentially what appears as the external objects, or what causes the appearance of the external objects. Although it appears to be something that it is not (i.e. an external object) it is not itself unreal.

(3) The perfected nature (*pariniṣpanna*). This is identified by MV 1.14 — at least by implication — with emptiness (*śūnyatā*), suchness (*tathatā*), the reality limit (*bhūta-koṭi*), the signless and the causeless (*animitta*), the absolute reality (*paramārtha*) and the fundamental reality (*dharma-dhātu*).

The text and a translation of the first chapter (*lakṣaṇa-pariccheda*) of the *Madhyānta-vibhāga* are given below:

## THE DISCRIMINATION BETWEEN THE MIDDLE AND THE EXTREMES

### FALSE IDEATION (ABHŪTA-PARIKALPA)

1. False ideation (*abhūta-parikalpa*) exists. Duality does not exist in it. However emptiness (*śūnyatā*) does exist in the false ideation, and false ideation also exists in emptiness.

*abhūta-parikalpo 'sti dvayaṃ tatra na vidyate /  
śūnyatā vidyate tv-atra tasyām-api sa vidyate //*

2. Because of existence, non-existence and again existence [i.e. because of the existence of the false ideation, the non-existence of duality in the false ideation, and the existence of that non-existence] everything is said in the *Mahāyāna* to be neither void (*śūnya*) nor non-void. This is the middle path (*madhyamā pratipad*).

*na śūnyaṃ nāpi cāśūnyaṃ tasmāt sarvaṃ vidhīyate /  
sattvād-asattvāt sattvāc-ca madhyamā-pratipac-ca sā //*



3. Consciousness (*viññāna*) arises in the appearance of things, sentient beings, self (*ātman*) and ideas (*viññapti*); its external object (*artha*) does not exist, and because of the non-existence of the external object, mind itself is false (*asat*).

*artha-sattvātma-viññapti-pratibhāsaṃ prajāyate /  
viññānaṃ nāsti cāsyārthas-tad-abhāvāt-tad-apy-asat //*

4. Hence the nature of the false ideation is established. Because the mind is not, in this way, totally non-existent, liberation (*mukti*) is said to be from the destruction of the mind.

*abhūta-parikalpatvaṃ siddham-asya bhavaty-ataḥ /  
na tathā sarvathābhāvāt tat-kṣayān-muktir-īṣyate //*

5. The imagined (*kalpita*), the dependent (*paratantra*) and the perfected (*pariniṣpanna*) are taught on account of external things, false ideation and the non-existence of duality (*dvayābhāva*).

*kalpitaḥ paratantraś-ca pariniṣpanna eva ca /  
arthād-abhūtakalpāc-ca dvayābhāvāc-ca deśitaḥ //*

6. On the basis of perception of mind only, non-perception of external objects arises. Based on the non-perception of external objects, non-perception of mind only arises.

*upalabdhiṃ samāśritya nopalabdhiḥ prajāyate /  
nopalabdhiṃ samāśritya nopalabdhiḥ prajāyate //*

7. Hence it is established that perception has the nature of non-perception. Hence the identity (*samatā*) of perception and non-perception is known.

*upalabdhdes-tataḥ siddhā nopalabdhi-svabhāvatā /  
tasmāc-ca samatā jñeyā nopalambhopalambhayoh //*

8. The three realms (*dhātus*) are false ideation and the mental associates (*citta-caittas*). Mind is perception (*dṛṣṭi*) with respect to the external object; the mental associates are the perception of what is different from the external object.

*abhūta-parikalpaś-ca citta-caittās-tridhātukāḥ /  
tatrārtha-dṛṣṭir-vijñānaṃ tad-viśeṣe tu caitasāḥ //*

9. The mind is consciousness as condition (*pratyaya-vijñāna*) and the second (the mental associates) is the experiencing or enjoying consciousness. In it the mental phenomena are experience, discrimination and volition.

*ekaṃ pratyaya-vijñānaṃ dvitīyaṃ caupabhogikam /  
upabhoga-pariccheda-prerakās-tatra caitasāḥ //*

- 10,11. Because of completing, because of the definite perception caused by the three, because of enjoyment, projection, fitting, confronting with and suffering, the world is defiled. Because of the false ideation, there is the three-fold, the two-fold and the seven-fold defilement.

*chādanād-ropaṇāc-caiva nayanāt-saṃparigrahāt /  
pūraṇāt tri-paricchedād-upabhogāc-ca karṣaṇāt //*

*nibandhanād-ābhimukhyād duḥkhanāt kliśyate jagat /  
tredhā dvedhā ca saṃkleśaḥ saptadhābhūta-kalpanāt //*

## EMPTINESS

12. Now the characteristics (*lakṣaṇa*), the synonyms (*paryāya*), the meaning (*artha*) of the synonyms, the discrimination (*bheda*) and the realization (*sādhana*) of emptiness (*śūnyatā*) are to be fully understood.

*lakṣaṇaṃ cātha paryāyas-tad-artha bheda eva ca /  
sādhanaṃ ceti vijñeyaṃ śūnyatāyāḥ samāsataḥ //*

(the characteristics of emptiness) (*lakṣaṇa*):

13. The essence of emptiness (*śūnyam*) is the non-existence of duality (*dvayābhāva*) and the existence of this non-existence (*abhāvasya bhāva*). Neither existence nor non-existence (*na bhāvo nāpi vābhāvaḥ*), emptiness has neither the nature of being different (*prthaktva*) nor the nature of being the same (*eka-lakṣaṇa*).

*dvayābhāvo hy-abhāvasya bhāvaḥ śūnyasya lakṣaṇam /  
na bhāvo nāpi vābhāvaḥ na prthaktvaika-lakṣaṇam //*

(the synonyms of emptiness: *śūnyatā-paryāya*):

14. Summarily, the synonyms of emptiness are: suchness (*tathatā*), the reality limit (*bhūta-koṭi*), the signless (*animitta*), the absolute reality (*paramārtha*) and the fundamental reality (*dharma-dhātu*).

*tathatā bhūta-koṭiś-cānimittam paramārthatā /  
dharma-dhātuś-ca paryāyāḥ śūnyatāyāḥ samāsataḥ //*

(the meaning of the synonyms: *paryāyārtha*):

15. Immutability, non-erroneousness, the destruction (*nirodha*) of the sign or cause, the field of activity of the noble (*ārya-gocara*) and the cause of the noble *dharma*s (*ārya-dharma*s): these are the meanings of the synonyms of emptiness which follow in due order.

*ananyathāviparyāsa-tan-nirodhārya-gocaraiḥ /  
hetutvāc-cārya-dharmānām paryāyārtho yathā-kramam //*

(the discrimination of emptiness: *prabheda*):

16. Emptiness is defiled and purified, and it is pure and impure. Its purity is said to be like the purity of water, gold and space.

*saṃkliṣṭā ca viśuddhā ca samalā nirmalā ca sā /  
ab-dhātu-kanakākāśa-śuddhivac-chuddhir-iṣyate //*

17. The emptiness of the enjoyer, the emptiness of the enjoyed, the emptiness of the body thereof, the emptiness of any thing (*vastu*), and that by which emptiness is perceived, the way in which it is perceived and the object which is perceived: all these are just emptiness.

*bhokṭṛ-bhojana tad-deha-pratiṣṭhā-vastu-śūnyatā /  
tac-ca yena yathā dṛṣṭam yad-arthaṃ tasya śūnyatā //*

18. Emptiness is the object (*artha*) of attaining the two purifications, in order to help all sentient beings, in order to not renounce *saṃsāra*, and in order to attain the inexhaustible goodness (*akṣaya-kuśala*).

*śubha-dvayasya prāpty-arthaṃ sadā sattva-hītāya ca /  
saṃsārātyajanārthaṃ ca kuśalasyākṣayāya ca //*

19. In order to purify the lineage of the Buddha, in order to attain the principal and the secondary marks, and in order to purify the *buddha-dharmas*, the Bodhisattva practices.

*gotrasya ca viśuddhy-arthaṃ lakṣaṇa-vyañjanāptaye /  
śuddhaye buddha-dharmāṇām bodhisattvaḥ prapadyate //*

20. The non-existence of the self (*pudgala*) and the non-existence of all *dharmas* is one emptiness. The real existence (*sad-bhāva*) of that non-existence is the other emptiness (*sā śūnyatāparā*).

*pudgalasyātha dharmāṇām-abhāvaḥ śūnyatātra hi /  
tad-abhāvasya sad-bhāvas-tasmin sā śūnyatāparā //*

(the realization of emptiness: *sādhana*):

21. If defilement did not exist, all creatures would be liberated.  
If purity did not exist, all effort would be in vain.

*saṃkliṣṭā ced-bhaven-nāsau muktāḥ syuḥ sarva-dehinaḥ /  
viśuddhā ced-bhaven-nāsau hy-āyāso niṣphalo bhavet //*

22. Emptiness is neither defiled nor non-defiled, neither pure  
nor impure, because the mind (*citta*) is innately pure and  
the defilements are adventitious.

*na kliṣṭā nāpi cākliṣṭā śuddhāśuddhā na caiva sā /  
prabhāsvaratvāc-cittasya kleśasyāgantukatvataḥ //*

Even without the reference to the non-renunciation of *saṃsāra* in MV 1.18 it would be clear that the above verses are from a Mahāyāna text. In the early, canonical Buddhist texts, the highest state of attainment (*nirvāṇa*) was not identified with reality or the nature of things (*paramārtha*) or the way things really are (*yathā-bhūtam*). It was simply the state of extinction and peace which ensues — at least at death — for the individual who has *realized* the way things really are. *Nirvāṇa* in the early Buddhist texts is pure void (*śūnyatā*, *śūnyam*), as in the Cūḷa-suññata-sutta, where it is described as the supreme, ultimate void (*paramānuttarā suññatā*), and in the Vacchagotta-sutta, where it is conceived as the mere going out of a fire. Since the world is certainly real in the original teachings, there is no question in early Buddhism of identifying the *saṃsāric* world of dependent co-origination (*pratitya-samutpāda*) with the void (*śūnyam*, *śūnyatā*), which would entail that it was somehow unreal.

In the Madhyānta-vibhāga, however, some identification of this kind is made. Here, the concept of emptiness is linked with the concept of reality. As a corollary, the text wishes to show that



emptiness (*śūnyam*, *śūnyatā*) is not mere non-existence or negation, but is itself a reality (*abhāvasya bhāva*, *sad-bhāva*), as in MV 1.13 and 1.20. Even more strikingly, it wants to argue that emptiness is in some sense both existence *and* non-existence.

Note that there is one thing in these verses that clearly corresponds to emptiness in the sense in which “*śūnya*,” “*śūnyatā*” etc. were used in Sanskrit and in the early Buddhist texts, and that is the imagined nature (*parikalpita*). MV 1.5 identifies the imagined nature with the external object (*artha*), and MV 1.3 says that this external object does not exist (*nāsti cāsyārtha*). Since “*x* is non-existent” is one of the possible meanings of “*x* is *śūnya*,” and since the imagined nature (i.e. the external object) is said to be non-existent, it would be perfectly natural on purely semantic grounds to identify the non-existent external object or *parikalpita* with emptiness (*śūnyatā*). This, however, the MV does not do.

The question whether the *dependent* nature is void (*śūnya*) is more complicated. According to one meaning, “*śūnya*” is a two-place predicate (i.e. a relation), and according to another meaning it is a one-place predicate. Thus, one could say that a purported entity is entirely non-existent and void; it is in this sense that a married bachelor or the son of a barren woman or the horn of a hare is *śūnya*. In this use, “*x* is *śūnya*” is a one-place predicate. On the other hand, one could say that a jar is *śūnya*, in the sense that the jar is empty of water. This would use “*x* is *śūnya*” as a two-place predicate, i.e. as a relation.

The MV says that the mind is empty in the second sense because it is *devoid of* the non-existent external object. It holds that everything is mind only, and that the appearance of external objects is just an illusory appearance of the mind. In other words, what does exist (i.e. mind) is devoid of external objects, just as one might say that a jar is empty of water. As in the case of the jar example, the mind only teachings of the MV do not mean that mind is empty in the sense that mind is unreal, as the Mādhyamikas contended. MV 1.1, for example, says that the false imagination exists, and since the text takes “false imagination” to be one of the synonyms of mind (*vijñāna*), the MV is committed to the view that mind itself is not unreal.

MV 1.4 appears to qualify MV 1.1 somewhat, for it says that the false imagination (i.e. the mind) is not totally non-existent (*na tathā sarvathābhāva*). However, the point of this qualification appears to be that the mind is unreal in the sense that *it appears to be something that it is not*. According to the Vijñānavāda, it is an essential characteristic of the mind that it *appears* as external objects, hence the mind is *deceptive* in the sense that it appears to be something that it is not. The MV concludes that one must say that the mind itself is “not totally unreal,” presumably because what is real about the mind is not the same thing as what is *thought* to be real about it.

Thus, two senses of “*śūnya*” are involved in the MV’s use of the word “*asat*.” In Sanskrit the word “*asat*” can mean “false” in the sense of “deceptive,” or it can mean “non-existent.” If something does not exist as what it appears to be, it may be said to be *asat* in the first sense but not the second, i.e. it may be said to be deceptive but it is not itself non-existent.

Consider, for example, the rope-snake illusion — one of the most common examples in Indian epistemology. If a person is walking along in the dusk and takes a rope in the path to be a snake, then the snake as such is *asat* in the sense that it is unreal or non-existent. It would make no sense to ask of this “snake” questions like: How and when was it born, where did it come from, where did it go, how much did it weigh? etc. In this example, however, something really does exist, i.e. the rope which is misperceived. Therefore the rope may be said to be *asat* (in the sense of “false” or “deceptive”) in the conditions in which it is perceived. Something real is “false” or “unreal” in this sense when it is the basis for an illusory appearance. According to the Vijñānavādins, mind is *asat* in the sense of this twilight-rope: i.e. it appears as an external object, but this object, according to the Vijñānavāda, is totally unreal. Nevertheless, mind is still *śūnya* — at least in one sense — for it is empty of the thing it appears to be, just as a desert is empty of the water that appears to exist when we see a mirage.

Note, however, that the notion of “other emptiness” which is applied to the mind does not give us what the MV regards as emptiness (*śūnyatā*) itself, any more than the imagined nature (*parikalpita*) does. Even if the Vijñānavāda is right in maintaining

that the mind is nondual in the sense that it appears as external objects which are non-existent, this nondual mind would still not give us the *śūnyatā* which is identified by MV 1.14 with suchness (*tathatā*), the reality limit (*bhūta-koṭi*), the signless (*animitta*), the absolute reality (*paramārtha*) and the fundamental reality (*dharma-dhātu*). Emptiness is invested by the MV, and the Mahāyāna generally, with religious significance, and is equated with *nirvāṇa*, enlightenment, the true nature of things, or all of these simultaneously. All these are connected, not with the other dependent nature (*paratantra*) or the imagined nature (*parikalpita*), but with the perfected nature (*pariniṣpanna*).

MV 1.13 defines *śūnyatā* in the following way:

The essence or characteristic of *śūnya* is the non-existence of duality and the existence of this non-existence. Neither existence (*bhāva*) nor non-existence (*abhāva*), it has neither the nature of being different nor the nature of being the same.<sup>16</sup>

A closely related definition of *śūnyatā* is given in MV 1.20, which says:

The non-existence of self and *dharma*s is one emptiness; the real existence (*sad-bhāva*) of that non-existence there [i.e. in the self and *dharma*s] is the other emptiness (*sā śūnyatāparā*).

Note that there are two parts to these definitions. First, *śūnyatā* is said to be the non-existence of duality or the external objects, i.e., as the non-existence of the self and the *dharma*s.<sup>17</sup> Secondly, emptiness is said to be the existence of this non-existence. I shall refer to the two parts of these definitions of *śūnyatā* in MV 1.13 and 1.20 as D1 and D2:

- D1      Emptiness is the non-existence of duality (i.e. the non-existence of the external object, either self or *dharma*s).
- D2      Emptiness is the existence of this non-existence (i.e. the existence of the non-existence of the external objects).



Since the perfected nature (*pariniṣpanna*) is defined in MV 1.5 as the non-existence of duality, D1 of MV 1.13 and MV 1.20 (and presumably D2 as well) must be intended as definitions of the perfected nature, as well as definitions of emptiness. Nevertheless, MV 1.13 and MV 1.20, and D1 and D2, will not do as definitions of *śūnyatā* and the perfected nature.

Consider the following three notions:

- (a) The external objects, also called duality (*dvaya*).
- (b) The non-existence of the external objects.
- (c) The existence of the non-existence of the external objects.

The MV's definitions presuppose that it is meaningful to assume that each of (a) - (c) refers to something different, but this is surely incorrect. First of all, no distinction can be drawn (at least in the actual world) between a non-existent object and its non-existence; consequently, no distinction can be drawn between (a) and (b). For similar reasons, it doesn't make any sense to speak of the existence of the nonexistence of something, either.

To get a clearer view of the philosophical point that is involved here, consider the following two sentences:

- (1) The present king of France exists.
- (2) The present king of France is bald.

If (1) and (2) are uttered when there is a king of France, (1) will be true, and (2) will be true if he is bald. Both these sentences have the grammatical structure of subject-predicate sentences, i.e. from a purely grammatical point of view (1) attributes the predicate "x exists" to the king of France, and (2) attributes the property "x is bald" to the king of France. However, the view that the grammatical structure of these sentences actually gives the meaning or logical structure of the sentences leads to difficulties which emerge as soon as we try to analyze the meaning of these sentences or the meaning of the sentence

(3) The king of France does not exist.

when (as in 1990) there is no king of France.

Like (1) and (2), (3) has the grammatical form of a subject-predicate sentence, i.e. grammatically speaking it predicates the expression "does not exist" of the king of France, or at least denies that the predicate " $x$  exists" is true of the king of France. But what is the *logical* meaning of the sentence? For example, what makes the sentence true when it is true? It would be odd to suppose that when the sentence is true it is true because there is a property Non-existence which is true of the king of France, and also odd to suppose that when the sentence is true it is true because the property Existence does *not* apply to the king of France — for the simple reason that if the sentence is true there *is* no king of France.

Bertrand Russell (1905) pointed out that this kind of problem dissolves under analysis as soon as one recognizes that " $x$  exists" — unlike, for example, " $x$  is bald" — is not a genuine predicate.<sup>18</sup> Russell argued persuasively that (3), despite its grammatical appearance, is not a subject-predicate statement about the king of France at all; instead, it simply denies that there is an entity  $x$  such that  $x$  is the king of France. In Russell's analysis of the sentence, the referring expression "the king of France" and the predicate " $x$  does not exist" no longer appear. The predicate " $x$  does not exist" is replaced by the expression "It is not the case that there is an  $x$ " and the referential expression "the king of France" is replaced by the predicate expression "is a king of France."

When (3) is interpreted in the way Russell suggested — i.e. as meaning that there is no  $x$  such that  $x$  is the king of France — it is quite easy to see how it could be true. Similarly, it is easy to see why (2) is false when it is uttered when there is no king of France, for according to Russell (2) simply means (roughly):

(4) There is an  $x$  (and only one  $x$ ) such that  $x$  is the king of France and  $x$  is bald.

and this assertion is simply false.

According to Russell's analysis, it clearly makes no sense to speak (as MV 1.13 does) of the "existence of the non-existence" of something. What would the phrase "the existence of the non-existence of the present king of France" mean? Note that this phrase cannot even be translated à la Russell. Perhaps the closest thing we can get (and it is definitely *not* a Russellian analysis) is something like: "It is the case that it is not the case that there is an entity  $x$  such that  $x$  is the present king of France." If this is what the words "the existence of the non-existence of  $x$ " mean, then they simply entail the non-existence of  $x$ . In other words, the phrase "the existence of the non-existence of  $x$ " can only mean the non-existence of  $x$ . But if *this* is what the phrase means, it makes no sense to say, as MV 1.20 does, that the existence of the non-existence of  $x$  is a reality in its own right (*sad-bhāva*).

Suppose, on the other hand, that one treats the expression "the present king of France" as a referring expression and the expression " $x$  exists" as a predicate (as some philosophers in the Western analytic tradition after Russell have continued to do). This actually makes matters worse, for MV 1.13's definition of the perfected nature then turns out to be contradictory.

Consider first the following three sentences:

- (5) The jar is blue.
- (6) The blueness of the jar is beautiful.
- (7) The beauty of the jar's blueness was noted by Devadatta.

It is natural to analyze these sentences grammatically in the following way. In (5) "the jar" is the grammatical subject of the sentence, and refers to an entity which possesses the property Blue. In (6) this property Blueness is itself referred to by the grammatical subject of the sentence, and this property is said to be beautiful. In (7) the property Beauty is made the grammatical subject of the sentence. It therefore corresponds grammatically to the first-order property Blue in (6), and in (7), therefore, it could be said that it is referred to as a second-order property.

Now consider the following three phrases:

8. the present king of France (uttered when, as in 1990, there is no king of France)
9. the non-existence of the present king of France
10. the existence of the non-existence of the present king of France.

Analyzing (10) along the lines of (5)-(7), the property Existence of (10) becomes a second-order property, and the corresponding first-order property is Non-existence. Now we must ask: Does it make any sense to apply the second-order property Existence to the first-order property Non-existence? One would think not. Clearly, (10) is unacceptable in a way that (7) is not, for while it is perfectly natural to speak of the beauty of the color Blue, it is patently senseless to speak of the "existence of the non-existence" of something. There is no reason to think that this phrase makes any more sense than it does to speak of the non-blueness (or the redness) of the color Blue or the non-circularity (or triangularity) of a circle.

What the MV seems to imply is that there is a real thing (*sadbhāva*) called *śūnyatā* which is in some way an Absolute and the true nature (*paramārtha*) of things. The problem is that the assertion that emptiness is itself a thing contradicts the plain meaning of "*śūnya*," "*śūnyatā*" etc. in ordinary Sanskrit and in the Buddhist texts themselves. If *śūnyatā* were a positive entity (i.e. an existent thing) then *śūnyatā* would be a counter-example to the plain meaning of the early Buddhist texts, all of which assert that everything that exists is suffering. The MV attempts to evade these difficulties by speaking of emptiness as the non-existence of duality and as the existence of the non-existence of this duality, but as we have just seen, this apparently makes no sense.

What about the other dependent nature (*paratantra*)? Is there a way of construing *it* as the true nature of things (*paramārtha*), the reality limit, the immutable suchness (*tathatā*) etc.? In one respect it would be natural to expect such an identification, for the Vijñānavādins asserted that everything is mind only. Nevertheless, it is clear, on examination, that mind cannot be the same thing as *śūnyatā* either.



The Madhyānta-vibhāga's doctrines on the nature of the mind are not very clear, and perhaps not even consistent. Consider MV 1.21 and 1.22. The first part of MV 1.21 says that the defiled, false imagination exists because otherwise all sentient beings would be liberated by nature and there would be no *saṃsāra*. (This assertion is directed against the Mādhyamikas, who held that everything — even the mind — is totally void.) The MV's assertion that the defiled, false imagination exists is consistent with the traditional Buddhist teachings, according to which what we call mind or consciousness is in fact just an aggregate (*skandha*) of *dharma*s, and as such one of the essential links in the cycle of suffering and rebirth. However, MV 1.22 and the second part of MV 1.21, which asserts that *purity* exists, are more problematic.

MV 1.22 says that the essential nature of the mind is purity. A very natural way of interpreting the doctrine of the innately pure mind is to say that mind, or at least the dualistic mind which distinguishes between subject and object, is defiled (and is therefore different from emptiness), but that the pure mind, or the nondual mind, is not defiled and is not different from emptiness. However, this would imply that mind in its true nature is not *saṃsāric*, and as I have just pointed out, this contradicts fundamental Buddhist doctrines. Furthermore, there are at least two passages in the Vijñānavāda literature which show that passages like MV 1.22 were not taken by the Vijñānavādins to mean what they might seem to mean. One of these is Xuan Zang's commentary (CWSL) on *Triṃśikā* 2, and another is Sthiramati's commentary on MV 1.22 (MVBT 1.22).

(a) Xuan Zang was a member of the Dharmapāla school of the Vijñānavāda. According to Dharmapāla, impure *dharma*s cannot give rise to pure *dharma*s; consequently, if pure "seeds" or "potentialities" (*bījas*) were not innate in the mind from the beginning the very thought of enlightenment (*bodhi-citta*) could not occur. After Xuan Zang has endorsed this view in CWSL 2, he has an opponent suggest another possibility: that the mind is by its very nature pure. Xuan Zang characterizes his opponent's view in the following way: "They believe," he says, "that the nature of the mind is 'essentially immaculate' (*prakṛti-viśuddha*); but, being defiled by impurities, the

adventitious (*āgantuka*) dusts, the mind is said to be defiled; when it is separated from the defilements, it becomes pure (*anāsrava*).” He then launches into a criticism of this doctrine:

[Xuan Zang]: “We ask: what is the meaning of the expression ‘the nature of the mind’? Is it a question of voidness (*śūnyatā*), i.e. of the true nature of things or *bhūta-tathatā*? This is not the *cause* of mind; being unconditioned (*asaṃskṛta*) and immutable, it cannot be the seed of the pure *dharma*s, because it is always the same in the future as it was in the past.”<sup>19, 20</sup>

Xuan Zang then raises the following additional objections to the idea that the mind itself is innately pure:

1. The view that the mind is immutable and unique in its nature, but that it nevertheless evolves with respect to its characteristics, is the view of the non-Buddhist school of the Sāṃkhya, and is therefore heretical and false.

2. If the mind were essentially pure, then the bad mind and the mind which is non-defined (i.e. neither good nor bad) would also be good, which is absurd.

3. If the impure mind were pure, then the pure mind would also be impure, and this is not the result that is desired.

The question is then raised by the opponent: “What, then, is the meaning of the *sūtras* (e.g. the *Vimalakīrti*, the *Śrīmālā* etc.) that speak of the immaculate nature of the mind?” Xuan Zang’s reply is as follows:

The *sūtra* refers to the true nature of things (*bhūta-tathatā*) which the voidness (*śūnyatā*) of the mind manifests, because the true nature of things (*bhūta-tathatā*) is the true nature of the mind. Or else, what the *sūtra* says is that ‘the nature essentially immaculate’ (*prakṛti-viśuddha*) is the principle of the substance of the mind, because the principle or the substance of the mind is free from the impurities (*kleśas*). The nature of the impure mind is not called ‘essentially immaculate’ because it would then be pure (*anāsrava*).

In other words, Xuan Zang rejects the idea that the mind as such could be essentially immaculate, and allows only that the

*śūnyatā* or *bhūta-tathatā*, or something he calls the “principle” or the “substance” of the mind (Ch. *dī*) could be innately pure.

When one looks carefully at this passage, it is clear that Xuan Zang is saying that mind and purity, or mind and emptiness, are *necessarily* two different things. According to Xuan Zang, therefore, mind cannot really be pure; only the essence of what is *not* mind can be pure.<sup>21</sup> To be sure, Xuan Zang’s interpretation of the doctrine of the innately pure mind leaves that doctrine rather mysterious. This, however, is probably inevitable, since this doctrine contradicts other Buddhist teachings about the nature of *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa* which are absolutely fundamental. For example, the traditional Buddhist teachings clearly assert that the mind itself (and not just its defilements) is *saṃsāric*, defiled and involved in suffering. Otherwise passages like Udāna III (cited above) would presumably have asserted that only the mind’s *defilements* are extinguished in *nirvāṇa*; instead, the texts plainly assert that it is mind *itself* that is extinguished. Furthermore, the very distinction between the essence of mind and its (defiled) properties is a distinction which cannot be made within Mahāyānist philosophy, for the Mahāyānists rejected the distinction between substance and properties.

(b) Like Xuan Zang, Sthiramati (MVBT 1.22) denies that mind is innately pure; instead, he interprets MV 1.22 to mean that the *essence* of mind (*citta-dharmatā*) is innately pure. Here it is important to note that MV 1.22 occurs in the second set of verses of the chapter, i.e., it occurs in the set of verses that is concerned *principally* with the subject of emptiness (*śūnyatā*). Hence when Sthiramati says that it is the essence of mind (*citta-dharmatā*) that is innately pure, what he undoubtedly means is that the essence of mind is just emptiness, and therefore that *emptiness* is innately pure. This is in fact what we might have expected from the meaning of “*śūnya*” in ordinary Sanskrit, for non-existence (*abhāvatva*) can in a sense be said to be “pure.” This interpretation, furthermore, is supported by all the early texts that were regarded by canonical by all of the Buddhist schools. According to the earliest teachings, the only state that is free from defilement is *nirvāṇa*. This is defined, as we have seen, as the cessation or extinction (*nirodha*) of *all* states of existence, since all states of existence are necessarily implicated in



suffering. In one sense, therefore, it is natural for Sthiramati to argue that the essence of mind, interpreted as *śūnyatā*, is pure. However, Sthiramati's interpretation of MV 1.22, like Xuan Zang's interpretation of Trīṃś. 2, is problematic, because it appears to equate the emptiness/non-emptiness distinction with the substance/property distinction. If emptiness is construed as the essence or substance of mind, then both mind and the essence of mind should be non-existent, and this not the result that the Vijñānavādins wanted.<sup>22</sup>

The fundamental problem that Sthiramati and Xuan Zang faced in interpreting verses like MV 1.22 is that in traditional Buddhist teachings mind is *intrinsically* bound up in *saṃsāra*. The Vijñānavāda teaching that matter and external objects are entirely unreal, and that everything is mind only, should not in itself be taken as a denial of these fundamental teachings. To the traditional teachings the Vijñānavāda simply added the assertion that all *dharma*s are mental *dharma*s (i.e. that the *rūpa-skandha* as such does not exist). It also taught that the *saṃsāric* aspect of the mind — the one that keeps the whole *saṃsāric* process going — is the tendency for the mind to project itself in the form of non-existent objects (i.e. the self and *dharma*s). This teaching of the nonduality of mind does not make the mind itself intrinsically pure.<sup>23</sup> According to fundamental Buddhist principles one could say that mind is pure (*anāsrava*, *prabhāsvara*) only to the extent that it is true that the mind is literally void. The "other emptiness" interpretation of the mind does not show that the mind is void in this sense. (For example, the proposition that a jar is empty of water asserts that there is no *water* in the jar, and not that the jar is itself void.) To show that the mind is itself characterized by emptiness, the Vijñānavādins would have had to show that the mind is *śūnya* in the sense in which "*śūnya*" is a one-place predicate. This is the sense in which the Mādhyamikas used the word, and when the word in this sense was applied to all the *dharma*s it entailed that *saṃsāra* was unreal. The author of the MV, however, evidently regarded this conclusion as absurd.

Has the MV found a viable interpretation of the Mahāyāna doctrine that all *dharma*s are void (*sarva-dharma-śūnyatā*)? Accord-



ing to MV 1.2, the doctrine of “other emptiness” shows that *dhar-mas* are void in a way that does not contradict the Buddhist teaching of a middle path between the extremes of existence and non-existence. However, all that is shown by the MV’s doctrine of other emptiness is that mind is *asat* in the sense that it is false or deceptive. Since something has to exist in order to be false and deceptive in this sense, and since MV 1.1 says categorically that the mind does exist, it seems to me that the MV fails to show (as it apparently claims to do) that the mind is neither existent nor non-existent.<sup>24</sup>

Finally, neither the Mādhyamika nor the Vijñānavādin view seems to correctly represent the doctrine of the middle path as it is found in the teachings of early Buddhism. In fact, I think that it can be seen that the attempt by the Mahāyānists to show that things are empty in themselves is a heresy according to the earliest accounts of the Buddhist teaching of the “middle path.”

Consider, for example, the Kaccāyana-sutta of the Pāli canon.<sup>25</sup> This *sutta* is concerned specifically with teaching a middle path between the extremes of existence and non-existence, and it undoubtedly represents a very early teaching of the Buddhist tradition. According to the Mahāyānists, at least *one* of the things asserted by this *sūtra* is that things cannot be said to really exist. If we look at the version of the *sūtra* which is found in the Pāli canon, however, it is clear that it does not assert this at all; in fact it quite explicitly *denies* it.

This *sutta* begins when a man by the name of Kaccāyana asks the Buddha to define what is the “right view.” The Buddha replies that the world usually bases its views on two things: existence and non-existence. But, the Buddha says, he who with right insight sees the uprising of the world as it really is does not adhere to the view that the world is non-existent. Similarly, he who with right insight sees the passing away of the world as it really is, does not adhere to the existence of the world. He then criticizes those philosophers who imprison themselves in dogmas and go in for system-building, all of which is based on the delusion of a self. The wise man, however, does not grasp at things or at a self; he simply thinks: “What arises is

suffering (*duḥkha*); what passes away is suffering." Then the Buddha says:

Everything exists: this is one extreme. Nothing exists: this is the other extreme. Not approaching either extreme the Tathāgata teaches you a doctrine of the middle way: Conditioned by ignorance activities come to pass, conditioned by activities consciousness; thus conditioned arises name-and-shape; and then sensation, contact, feeling, craving, grasping, becoming, birth, decay-and-death, grief and suffering...this is the uprising of this great mass of suffering. But from the utter fading away and ceasing of ignorance there is the cessation of activities, and thus there comes about the cessation of this entire mass of suffering.

Here it is quite clear that the view that nothing exists is held to be a false view. Furthermore, the view that things *exist* is held to be a false view *only* in the sense that things are not eternal. This is perfectly clear from the way the *sutta* ends, for the alternative to the view that "everything exists" is that things arise and perish according to the law of eternal co-origination. In other words, things come to be and exist, but they are impermanent — perhaps even momentary, although the *sutta* does not actually say this.

This teaching of a middle path between 1) "existence" and 2) "non-existence" is therefore a teaching that 1) things are impermanent (rather than eternal) and 2) that the world is not non-existent. In other words, what this middle path amounts to is simply a middle way between *eternalism* and *nihilism*.

This *sutta* indicates that both nihilism and eternalism must have been taught as philosophical doctrines in the Buddha's time. That there were philosophers at this time who were eternalists (*śāśvatavādins*) is not surprising, since eternalist doctrines are undoubtedly of great antiquity in India. The fact that there were philosophers in India who were nihilists, and who held that *nothing* exists, is perhaps more surprising, but even apart from the Kaccāyana-sutta there is evidence that nihilism was present as a philosophical alternative in India from a very early period. K. N. Jayatilleke (1963: 256) has pointed out, for example, that the Lokāyata philosopher Jayarāśi denied both the validity of all means

of knowledge and the reality of the world. The date of Jayarāśi, the author of the *Tattvopaplava-siṃha*, is uncertain, but he probably flourished around 650 C.E. This of course is much later than the time of the Buddha (by about a thousand years); nevertheless there is nothing intrinsically implausible in the suggestion that Jayarāśi is simply a medieval representative of a much older tradition of nihilism in India. In any case, one cannot make any sense of the *Kaccāyana-sutta* unless one supposes that there was such a school of nihilists in India even in the Buddha's time.

It is easy to see why the Buddha thought it important to teach a middle path between eternalism and nihilism. The very essence of his enlightenment is said to have been the insight that everything is suffering and that suffering arises depending upon causes and conditions (*pratītya-samutpāda*). Neither eternalism nor nihilism is compatible with this doctrine. Note, however, that the teaching of the Buddha implies that things *do* arise and perish, and this in turn implies that things *do* exist, even if they are impermanent or even momentary. This is the very proposition that the Mahāyānists, in one fashion or another, wished to deny. In so far as they denied it, however, they were embracing a doctrine which the *Kaccāyana-sutta* plainly condemns.<sup>26</sup>



## Notes to Chapter 1: Madhyānta-vibhāga (lakṣaṇa-pariccheda)

1. Cf. AKB ii.55 [DŚ ii. 326-327]. In this passage the Sarvāstivādin contends that the scriptural passages which speak of *nirvāṇa* as the destruction (*nirodha*) and absolute non-appearance (*aprādur-bhāva*) of suffering mean that in *nirvāṇa* suffering does not manifest (*nāsmiṇ prādur-bhāva iti*). The Sautrāntika, on the other hand, contends that such passages simply mean that *nirvāṇa* involves the deliverance of the mind-stuff, like the extinction of a flame (*pradyotasyeva nirvāṇam vimokṣas-tasya cetasaḥ*); consequently, *nirvāṇa* is simply non-existence, and it is thus that the deliverance of the mind-stuff of the Buddha is accomplished (*yathā pradyotasya nirvāṇam-abhāvaḥ; evaṃ bhagavato 'pi cetaso vimokṣa iti*). Yaśomitra's gloss (AKSV) specifies that in this passage "*nāsmiṇ prādur-bhāva iti*" means that *nirvāṇa* is what accomplishes the non-manifestation of suffering (*adhikaraṇa-sāadhanam-iti*) and that for the Sautrāntika "*aprādur-bhāva*" is a matter of sheer non-existence (*aprādur-bhāva = aprādhur-bhūti*), i.e., that for the Sautrāntika the non-appearance of pain is not a matter of what *nirvāṇa* effects, but of what it is.

Candrakīrti (MMKV 25.4-9) gives exactly the same analysis of the dispute between the Sarvāstivādin and the Sautrāntika. He characterizes the Sarvāstivādins (MMKV 25.4) as holding that *nirvāṇa* is a real thing (*bhāva, nirodhātmakaḥ padārthaḥ*). The Sarvāstivādin replies to the Sautrāntika, who holds that *nirvāṇa* is just simple extinction (like the going out of a light) by arguing that this simile must be understood to mean that *nirvāṇa* is the real element of existence (*dharma*) in which the release from suffering occurs (*asminn-iti nirvāṇākhye dharme sati bhavati ... tatrāpi yasmin sati cetaso vimokṣu bhavati veditavyam-iti*). On the other hand, Candrakīrti (MMKV 25.9) represents the Sautrāntika as holding that *nirvāṇa* is mere nothingness (*abhāva*).

The Sarvāstivādins also regarded space (*ākāśa*) as a real, uncompounded (*asaṃskṛta*) entity (*dharma, dravya*), like *nirvāṇa*. The Sautrāntikas, however, argued that space is not an independent reality like matter, sensation etc.; it is just that when we fail to encounter resistance we say that there is space (*ākāśa*). Hence,

according to the Sarvāstivādins, both *nirvāṇa* and space are real entities (*dravya*), whereas for the Sautrāntikas both are simply unreal (*adravya*).

2. Here I take it as a given of modern scholarly research that the earliest identifiable Buddhist teachings are contained in the extant *sūtras* which are the common property of the Pāli canon and the very incomplete canons which exist in Sanskrit, Tibetan and Chinese. (The extant Sanskrit fragments appear to belong to the Sarvāstivāda; the Chinese Āgamas appear to belong to a number of the other Hīnayāna schools as well.) For an introduction to this topic, see Warder (1980: 3-16) and Minh Chau (1964).

3. Cf. AKB i.7 (DŚ i.27): "The going out (*niḥsaraṇam* = *niḥsāraḥ*) is the extinction (*nirvāṇa*) of all the conditioned *dharma*s." (Yaśomitra specifies that this is the *nirupadhi-śeṣa-nirvāṇa*.) Note that this appears to be meant as a *definition* of *nirvāṇa*, as it is in many other similar passages.

4. Aggi-vacchagotta-sutta, Majjhima-nikāya, sutta 72. [I have used the Horner translation in Conze et. al. (1954: ¶107, p. 106).]

5. Ud. VIII says that there is (*atthi*) a condition which, among other things, is not "nothingness" (*ākiñcañña*). However, this cannot be read as a *denial* that the "end of ill" is mere nothingness, for "*ākiñcañña*" in the old texts is a technical term which refers to a state of unconsciousness rather than a state of nothingness pure and simple. This is clear even in this passage from the Udāna, for this "nothingness" is mentioned between the sphere of infinite consciousness and the condition of neither-consciousness-nor-unconsciousness. Since "*ākiñcañña*" in this passage must refer to unconsciousness or the consciousness of nothingness rather than nothingness per se, the passage cannot be construed as denying that *nirvāṇa* is simply a state of extinction or nothingness. (For more on "*ākiñcañña*," see H. G. A. Van Zeyst, "*ākiñcaññāyatana*," EB.)

6. In the following I have used the PTS translation.

7. Since the analogy of the forest plays an important role in the Cūḷa-suññata-sutta, it is of interest to note that Viṃśatikā 20 also uses the term "*śūnyatva*" (absence, devoidness, desolation) in speaking of a Purāṇic legend about the forest-dwelling sages; i.e.

"How else, indeed, did the wrath of the sage (*ṛṣi*) bring about the desolation (*śūnyatva*) of the Daṇḍaka forest?"

8. For example, Saṃyutta-nikāya IV, 54 says that the world is said to be empty because it is empty of self or what belongs to the self, and then it specifies that the eye, one's physical body, visual consciousness, and impressions of the eye are empty of self and of what belongs to the self. So, too, its says, are the ear, nose, tongue, body and mind (and their respective sense-data, consciousnesses and impressions) empty of self and of what belongs to the self. Likewise for all feelings which arise, conditioned by the impression on the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind, whether it be pleasant or painful or neither pleasant nor painful etc.

9. In Buddhism the term "*viññāna*" is used to refer to both mind (*citta*, *manas*) and consciousness (*cetanā*, *cit*). In this work I shall of course be following the Buddhist usage, and will therefore not distinguish between "*viññāna*" as "*cit*" (i.e. consciousness itself) and "*viññāna*" as "*citta*" (i.e. as mind), although this distinction is made in some other Indian schools (e.g. the Advaita Vedānta).

10. See Conze (1975: 177, 190, 209, 226, 249, and 278); Aṣṭa-sāhasrikā-prajñā-pāramitā-sūtra, ed. Rajendralal Mitra (1888: 273, 298, 341, 379-380, 424, 482).

11. According to the Yogācārins, the Mādhyamikas denied the existence of mind as well as the external world. The following passage from Xuan Zang's Cheng wei shilun is typical of such criticisms of the Mādhyamikas. Here Xuan Zang argues that the Mādhyamikas have misunderstood the Mahāyānist doctrine that all *dharma*s are void or without a self nature (*sarve dharmā niḥsvabhāvāḥ*):

Kārikās 23-25 [of the Triṃśikā] show that the dictum of the *sūtras* that all *dharma*s are devoid of self nature must not be taken literally. Intelligent people will guard against the mistake of interpreting this to mean that, in a sweeping manner, the *dharma*s are entirely unreal. [Poussin (1928-48): 561.]

Xuan Zang does not explicitly mention the Śūnyavādins or Mādhyamikas in this passage, but there can be no doubt that they were the object of his criticism in this and similar passages, for Kui



Ji, his immediate disciple and commentator, names them as such. [See Poussin (1928-48: 188, n. 1), where Bhāvaviveka is specified by Kui Ji as a nihilist who “denies the existence of mind (*viññāna*) and all the *dharma*s.”]

Harsh Narain (1963), in an important paper which does not seem to me to have received the attention that it deserves, has shown that this charge of nihilism was levelled against the Mādhyamikas by the Vijñānavādins and by all the other Buddhist and non-Buddhist schools in India as well. On this issue, see also de La Vallée Poussin (1917, 1932-33).

12. E.g. “All the three worlds are nothing but mind” (*citta-mātram idaṃ yad idaṃ traidhātukam*), Daśabhūmika-sūtra (Rahder, p. 49). This is cited almost verbatim by Vasubandhu at the outset of his autocommentary on the Viṃśatikā [S. Lévi (1925: 3)].

13. See, for example, Lindtner (1986: 240, 243, 245-48, 254), who discusses passages from some of the writings of Bhāvaviveka (and the Ratna-pradīpa, whose authorship is disputed) where it is maintained that the *cittamātra* doctrine is at best a provisional truth (*saṃvṛti-prajñā*).

14. In this connection it is important to note that the question whether the mind is empty or void is not the same thing as the question whether the mind is a material thing or object (*vastu, artha, viṣaya*).

Neither the Vijñānavādins nor any other Buddhist school held that mind is a *thing* like a physical object. Even according to the traditional Buddhist Abhidharma, for example, what we call “things” consist of constituent *dharma*s belonging to the *rūpa-skandha*. All the *dharma*s comprising the groups of feeling, perception, impulses and mind were thought to be different from these *rūpa-dharma*s. [Cf. AKB 44a-b (DŚ i.123): “Mind is formless and immaterial” (*manas-tv-amūrttivad*), and AKB 43 (DŚ i.118-119), which argues that there is no contradiction in vision being single even though one sees with two physical eyes because mind is not material and is not fixed in one place (*na cāśraya-vicchedād viccheda-prasaṅgaḥ; viññānasya deśāpratiṣṭhitatvād rūpavad-iti*).]

Most Indian philosophers were in agreement that mind is by its very nature (*svabhāva*) intangible, ungraspable, etc. Consequently,

the mere fact that the Vijñānavādins, like most of the other Indian schools, held that mind is intangible etc. does not mean that they, or the other Indian schools generally, held that the mind is non-existent. Of all the various schools of philosophy in India, it was only the Mādhyamikas and perhaps some of the materialists (Lokāyatas) who — for very different reasons — maintained that the mind is actually unreal and non-existent (*śūnya, abhāva*).

15. Thus Udāna VIII. ix describes *nibbāna* as follows:

The body is broken, perceiving is dissolved, all feelings are quiescent, impulses have ceased, and consciousness (*viññāṇa*) has reached its end.

This fundamental doctrine of the early *sūtras* and collected sayings is carried forward in the Abhidharma literature. Cf. AK ii.41b-c (DŚ ii. 233): "the trance state of unconsciousness is the cessation of the mind stuff and the associated mental factors (*āsaṃjñikam-asamjñiṣu nirodhaś-citta-caittānām*); AKB ii.43 (DŚ ii.237): the ordinary people cannot attain the state of cessation of consciousness (*nirodha-samāpatti*) because they fear annihilation; it is attained only by the force of the Buddhist path; it is the state of deliverance of the Ārya who has attained the *dharma* of *nirvāṇa* (*na hi prthag-janā nirodha-samāpattim-utpādayitum śaknuvanti; uccheda-bhīrutvād, ārya-mārga-balena cotpādanād, drṣṭa-dharma-nirvāṇasya tad-adhimuktiḥ*).

The Sarvāstivādins held that these *samāpattis* were real entities or *dharmas* (*dravyasat*), whereas the Sautrāntikas maintained that the cessation of consciousness was not a real entity, but only a verbal designation (*prajñaptisat*) (cf. AKB ii.44). Since the Sautrāntikas refused to regard negative concepts like the cessation of consciousness as denoting real entities, they held (unlike the Sarvāstivādins) that a subtle consciousness continued to exist in the trance states; hence they believed that in these states consciousness was attenuated rather than actually destroyed. [The Vijñānavādins were in agreement with the Sautrāntikas on this point, and identified the subtle consciousness that remained in the *samāpattis* with the store consciousness (*ālaya-viññāna*).] However, even the



Sautrāntikas agreed that this subtle consciousness is extinguished in the final *nirvāṇa* of total extinction (*nirupadhi-śeṣa-nirvāṇa*).

The cessation of *vijñāna* in *nirvāṇa* is a fundamental Buddhist tenet, and many other passages like the one from the Udāna could be cited. It was so orthodox a teaching, in fact, that even the Mādhyamikas could not deny it. For example, in MMKV 25.3 Candrakīrti says that in the pure state of *nirvāṇa* without any basis (*nivṛtau nirupadhi-śeṣe nirvāṇa-dhātau*) none of the three factors of existence like actions and defilements exist, and that this is the unanimous verdict of all the Buddhist schools (*evam ca sarvavādinām-abhimatam*). However, as a Mādhyamika Candrakīrti also believed that *dharma*s are literally void and non-existent; hence in the passage that follows this statement he says that *dharma*s are never real, just as the snake in the standard rope-snake illusion is never real. In other words, what the early Buddhist texts present as a state to be *attained* is taken by Candrakīrti to characterize the ultimate nature of things (*paramārtha*) even *now*. This radical view made the Mādhyamikas unique, since all the other schools maintained that *saṃsāra* is real and that it is extinguished in *nirvāṇa*, however much they might have disagreed about the nature of *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa* in other respects.

16. In ordinary Sanskrit and in the traditional Buddhist teachings, “*śūnya*” is associated with non-existence and devoidness. While the possibility cannot be dismissed on a priori grounds that the Mahāyānists used the terms “*śūnya*,” “*śūnyatā*” etc. in a non-standard sense, there are some telling considerations against this hypothesis. First of all, no ancient or medieval Buddhist writer, to my knowledge, ever stated that he, or Buddhist philosophers generally, used these terms in a sense which they did not have in ordinary language, nor to my knowledge did any of their opponents take the Buddhists to be using these terms in a special sense which they did not have in ordinary language. [In fact, the most common charge levelled against the Buddhists by the other schools was that they were nihilists (*vaināśikas*, *śūnyavādins*).] Secondly, I think that it can be shown that the Buddhist texts themselves — beginning with texts like the Cūḷa-suññata-sutta and continuing through to the

demise of Buddhism during the Muslim invasions — use these terms in their ordinary sense.

At first sight MV 1.13 might suggest that the Vijñānavādins used these terms in a non-standard way. This passage says (in effect) that emptiness is not existence (because it is the non-existence of duality), and that it is not non-existence (because it is the existence of the non-existence of that duality). However, it will be shown shortly that these latter kinds of assertions (e.g. that *śūnyatā* is existence because it is the existence of the nonexistence of duality) are actually the exceptions that prove the rule, for the existence of the non-existence of duality is surely *non-existence*, not existence.

17. Those who are unfamiliar with Buddhist doctrine might find it odd that the self (*ātman*) is described in the text as an external object, since in most philosophies the self is taken to be internal and private, and is contrasted with other minds and physical objects, which are taken to be external. However, it must not be forgotten that in Buddhist philosophy the self is held to be unreal. In holding that the self is an unreal appearance the Vijñānavādins were not departing from any of the other Buddhist schools (except possibly the non-orthodox Pudgalavādins). The Vijñānavādins' departure from the traditional Buddhist teachings lies instead in the assertion that external objects are *also* unreal appearances.

18. Actually, on Russell's view neither the expression "x is bald" in (2) nor "x exists" in (1) is treated as a predicate in a subject-predicate sentence. However, as I shall point out shortly, "x is bald" and "x exists" are treated very differently in Russell's analysis.

19. According to Buddhist philosophy, something that is strictly pure (*anāsrava*) and uncompounded (*asaṃskṛta*) cannot be the cause or effect of anything.

20. Xuan Zang's Cheng wei shilun (Vijñapti-mātratā-siddhi), a commentary on Vasubandhu's *Triṃśikā*, was written in Chinese. For all my citations from this important work I am wholly indebted to Poussin's translation (1928-48) from the Chinese into the French.

21. How, then is the principle of the mind (*dī*) and the nature of the mind (*citta-dharmatā*) related to mind? This puzzle will engage

our attention once again in chapter 3, where it will be discussed in some detail.

22. Furthermore, to equate the essence of mind with the non-existence of mind would involve committing the fallacy of “hypostasizing the negative.” Vide *supra*, p. 4.

23. It should be noted, however, that the doctrine of the innately pure mind is a very old teaching which can be traced back as far as the Aṅguttara-nikāya of the Pāli canon. For example, AN 1.6.1 says: “This mind is pure; it is soiled by impurities which are adventitious to it” (P. *pabhassaram idaṃ bhikkhave cittaṃ tañ ca kho āgantukehi upakkilesehi upakkiliṭṭhaṃ*). Later Buddhist schools, like the proto-Mahāyānist school of the Mahāsaṃghika-Ekavyāvahārika-Lokottaravādins, made much of this doctrine. The doctrine of the innately pure mind also appears in the Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-sūtra, the Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra and the Śrīmālādevī-sūtra. It also came to play an important role in Ch’an and Vajrayāna Buddhism.

24. Note that the “*asat*” of MV 1.3 must mean that the mind is deceptive or false, and not that it is non-existent. MV 1.7 is another verse that makes no sense unless it is interpreted according to the doctrine of *other* emptiness. MV 1.7 says that perception has the same nature as non-perception. This looks like a contradiction (and perhaps even like a nihilistic assertion), but the *kārikā* is only asserting that perception is in fact *deceptive*. In the waking state we think that there is something outside us when we “perceive” things. According to the Vijñānavādins, however, the objects which we “perceive” in the waking state are no more outside us than the things we see in dreams and hallucinations. In this sense, so-called perceptions are in fact objectless; hence they are really no different from “non-perceptions” like dreams and hallucinations.

25. This *sutta* is found in the Saṃyutta-nikāya of the Pāli canon (SN XI, 2, ¶20, PTS). (I have used the PTS English translation.) Interestingly, this *sutta* is the only one to be cited by name by Nāgārjuna in his Mūla-madhyamaka-kārikā (MMK 15.7). In his commentary on this verse Candrakīrti remarks that the *sūtra* is found in the *nikāyas* (*sūtra* collections) of all the Buddhist schools (*idaṃ ca sūtraṃ sarva nikāyeṣu paṭhyate*).



26. Cf. AK 1.8: "The impure *dharma*s comprise the aggregate of grasping; they are full of strife; they are also suffering, origination, the world, the abode of wrong views and *existence*" (*ye sāsraṇā upādāna-skandhās-te saraṇā api / duḥkhaṃ samudayo loko dṛṣṭi-sthānaṃ bhavaś-ca*).

### Notes to Chapter 2: Tri-svabhāva-nirdeśa

1. Although the TSN asserts in some places that the three natures are identical (TSN 10c; TSN 18-21), there are other passages which clearly imply that there are three *different* self natures. TSN 17, for example, says that the imagined nature and dependent nature are impure, whereas the perfected nature is pure. Obviously, if *a* has a property *P* that *b* does not have, then *a* cannot be identical with *b*; hence, because of TSN 17 alone, the perfected nature must be different from the other two natures. Similarly, in the Vijñānavāda the dependent nature is said to exist (cf. MV 1.1), whereas the imagined nature (i.e. the unreal external object) is said to be non-existent. Hence the dependent nature cannot be said to be the same thing as the imagined nature, on pain of contradiction. For such reasons the three natures cannot be identical just as a matter of simple logic.

2. Inconsistencies of a somewhat different kind will be noted in the next chapter, which discusses the Triṃśikā.

3. Note that the perfected nature cannot be identified with either of the other two natures. On the one hand, the perfected nature cannot be identified with the imagined nature, for the imagined nature is just the non-existent external object or duality. On the other hand, the perfected nature cannot be identified with the dependent nature, for the dependent nature is ever-changing, whereas the perfected nature must be unchanging. What, then, is the perfected nature?

4. This verse, or at least the part of it that says that the imagined nature (*kalpita-svabhāva*) has the characteristic of existence, contradicts Triṃśikā 20cd, which (for very good reasons) says that that which is purely imaginary has no self nature at all (*parikalpita evāsau svabhāvo na sa vidyate*), and Triṃś. 17, which