

The Principles of Buddhist Psychology

David J. Kalupahana

State University of New York Press

Published by
State University of New York Press, Albany

©1987 State University of New York

All rights reserved

Printed in the United States of America

No part of this book may be used or reproduced
in any manner whatsoever without written permission
except in the case of brief quotations embodied in
critical articles and reviews.

For information, address State University of New York
Press, State University Plaza, Albany, N.Y., 12246

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Kalupahana, David J., 1933-
The principles of Buddhist psychology.

(SUNY series in Buddhist studies)

Bibliography: p.

Includes index.

1. Buddhism—Psychology.	I. Title.	II. Series.
BQ4570.P76K35	1987	150'.882943
ISBN 0-88706-404-3		86-14583
ISBN 0-88706-403-5 (pbk.)		

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Contents

Abbreviations	ix
Preface	xi
PART ONE: THE BUDDHA'S PSYCHOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS	1
History of Buddhist Philosophy — An Interpretation	3
Epistemology and Psychology	6
The Indian Background	12
The Buddha's Conception of Personhood	15
Stream of Consciousness and the Consciousness of Self	22
Perception	28
The Selfless Self	38
Emotions and the Foundation of the Moral Life	44
Conception	52
Analytic Yoga	61
Suffering	79
The Dilemma of Freedom	88
The Psychology of Freedom	93
PART TWO: REVISIONS AND RESURRECTIONS	103
Psychology in the Abhidharma	105
Rational Psychology	111
Nāgārjuna and the Mādhyamika School	116
Transcendental Psychology in the <i>Laṅkāvatāra</i>	122
Psychology in the Yogācāra	126
Conclusion: Philosophical Implications	144

APPENDIX I:	149
Maitreya's <i>Madhyāntavibhāga</i> (Chapter 1, Sanskrit text, translation, and annotation)	
APPENDIX II:	173
Vasubandhu's <i>Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi</i> (Sanskrit text, translation, and annotation)	
Notes	215
Index	225

Appendix I
Maitreya's *Madhyāntavibhāga*
Lakṣaṇa-pariccheda

(The text is based upon Gadjin M. Nagao's edition,
and retains the dialectical peculiarities preserved in it.)

Analysis of Characteristics
(*Lakṣaṇa-pariccheda*)

1. *Abhūta-parikalpo 'sti dvayan tatra na vidyate,*
śūnyatā vidyate tv atra tasyām api sa vidyate.

There is unfounded conceptualization. Therein no duality is evident. However, emptiness is evident in that context. That (emptiness) is evident even in relation to itself.

(*MVB* p. 17.)

The duality referred to here is (i) that which is to be grasped or is graspable (*grāhya*) and (ii) the grasper (*grāhaka*). Maitreya begins with the rejection of one of the primary epistemological assertions of the substantialist thinkers, namely, that every act of perception necessarily involves either a transcendental apperception or consciousness of self or a substantial object. With such an assertion of a self, the perception turns out to be something grasped and that something is independent of the grasper. There is here no denial of perception, but merely of the involvement of two independent metaphysical entities in producing such a perception. Vasubandhu is very

specific in his explanation of "emptiness." It is related to the unfounded conceptualization (*abhūta-parikalpa*). The emptiness in the unfounded conceptualization is the absence of the grasper and the grasped. It is, therefore, not an absolute emptiness. In fact, such an absoluteness is immediately rejected in the last *pāda* of the quatrain.

Taking the unfounded conceptualization, where what is assumed to exist is not existent (*yad yatra nāsti*) and, therefore, is empty of it (*tat tena śūnyam*), one perceives it (i.e., the conceptualization) as it "has come to be" (*yathābhūtam*). Whatever is left over (*avaśiṣṭam*) in that context, namely, conceptualization, that indeed is present (*tat sad ihāsti*). This, undoubtedly, is the recognition of the inevitability of conceptualization in any act of knowing (i.e. *prajñāna*). It is a rejection of the view that the so-called emptiness is beyond any form of conceptualization. It is the non-perverse (*aviparīta*) characteristic of emptiness.

In other words, emptiness (*śūnyatā*) is a conceptualization (*parikalpa*) founded upon the perception of "the empty" (*śūnya*). As such, it is not unfounded (*abhūta*), but founded on the stream of experience upon which no metaphysical subject or object is superimposed.

It may be noted that *parikalpa* need not necessarily be imagination, for it is used synonymously with *kalpa* (see I.5, *abhūta-kalpa*). What makes it an imagination is the fact that it is *abhūta* (unfounded). Thus, both *parikalpa* and *kalpa* can be translated as conception, and it turns out to be an imagination only when that concept is assumed to be of *something* that belongs to *someone*, this latter being a "perfectly wanton assumption" (James, *PP*. I.274).

In spite of Vasubandhu's above analysis, the most recent examination of this treatise begins with a basic pre-supposition that he recognizes two levels of reality: the phenomenal and the absolute (see Thomas A. Kochumuttom, *A Buddhist Doctrine of Experience*, p. 29), a supposition that is popular among most modern interpreters of Buddhism. For this reason, we propose to ignore all modern commentaries (except when it becomes necessary to point out continuing misinterpretations), both on Maitreya and Vasubandhu and analyse their treatment of the Buddhist notion of experience in the light of the tradition starting with the Buddha as preserved in the early discourses where no *such* doctrine of two realities is to be found.

2. *Na śūnyam nāpi cāśūnyam tasmāt sarvaṃ vidhīyate,
satvād asatvād satvāc ca madhyamā pratīpac ca sā.*

Being neither empty nor non-empty, everything is, therefore, defined in terms of existence, non-existence and existence. That itself is the middle path.

(MVB p. 18.)

If there is any reality, it is not empty in the way the Sautrāntikas explained emptiness, that is, as momentary destruction (*kṣaṇa-bhaṅga*). Nor is it non-empty in the manner in which the Sarvāstivādins envisaged change and impermanence, that is by assuming a permanent and eternal substance. The metaphysical speculations of these two schools created innumerable difficulties for Buddhist discourse. Their forms of conceptualization left no room for the explanation of change and continuity. If something were to change, that change had to be absolute change. If something were to continue, that continuity should be in terms of something that is permanent and eternal.

While the metaphysics of permanence was adequately dealt with by the Buddha, as it was the predominant view of the *Upaniṣads*, the notion of momentary destruction (*kṣaṇa-bhaṅga*) was unknown to him. Interestingly, in rejecting permanence, the Buddha did not resort to an equally metaphysical theory of momentary destruction. Even though he criticized the Upaniṣadic notions of existence (*astitva*) and identity (*ekatva*), as well as the materialist conception of non-existence (*nāstitva*) and difference (*nānatva*), he did not insist upon a theory of momentary destruction either of phenomena or of the experience of such phenomena. The Sautrāntika failure to understand this position led them to a nihilistic view, compelling some of the later Buddhists, like the authors of the early *Prajñāpāramitā* literature, to adopt a discourse that is slightly different from that of the Buddha, yet retaining the spirit of the Buddha's doctrine of non-substantiality. Thus, Vasubandhu quotes the *Prajñāpāramitā* statement: "All this is neither empty nor non-empty," as the motivation for Maitreya's explanation. In fact, the language utilized in the *Prajñāpāramitā* is summarized here as "existence (*sat*), non-existence (*asat*) and existence (*sat*)." When reading this statement, one cannot ignore the constant refrain in the *Prajñāpāramitā*, especially the *Vajracchedikā*, (p. 36) which reads:

"Personal existence, personal existence," as no personal existence . . . that has been taught by the Tathāgata. Therefore, it is called "personal existence!"

According to Vasubandhu, the first *sat* refers to the existence of the unfounded conceptualization (*abhūta-parikalpa*); *asat* implies the non-existence of the metaphysical twins (*dvayasya*, i.e., the graspable and the grasper). The second *sat* signifies the Buddha's own understanding of existence, namely, the middle path (*madhyamā pratīpat*) of emptiness in relation to the unfounded conceptualization (*abhūtaparikalpe śūnyatayā*).

The first pair of *sat* and *asat* cancels each other, leaving the second *sat*. The first *sat* being an unfounded conceptualization, the second *sat* is regarded as a well-founded conceptualization (*yathābhūta-parikalpa*). This distinction would be made clear later on. Having explained what sort of existence and non-existence are involved in the unfounded conceptualizations, Maitreya proceeds to examine its "own characteristics" (*svalakṣaṇa*).

3. *Artha-satvātma-vijñapti-pratibhāsam prajāyate,
vijñānaṃ nāsti cāsyarthas tad abhāvāt tad apy asat.*

Consciousness arises reflecting the object, being, self and concept. However, its object does not exist. Because that [object] does not exist, that [i.e., the perceiving consciousness] too is non-existent.

(*MVB* pp. 18–19.)

Why certain conceptualizations are unfounded (*abhūta*) is explained in this verse. They are assumed to have their own characteristics (*svalakṣaṇa*) which are not founded in experience. Four such conceptualizations are mentioned:

- i *artha* (real self-existing object),
- ii *sattva* (real self-existing being),
- iii *ātma* (real self-existing self), and
- iv *vijñapti* (ultimately real concepts).

None of them, in truth, are self-existing entities. (i) The experience that appears (*pratibhāsat*) in the form of material elements give rise to the appearance of a real object (*artha*) that exists independent of experience. (ii) The appearance of a real being (*sattva*) is occasioned by the existence of the five sensory faculties on the basis of which a real distinction is made between one's own stream of existence (*sva-saṃtāna*) and that of another (*para-saṃtāna*). It is interesting to note that Vasubandhu utilizes the five sensory

faculties, instead of the sixth (i.e., the mind) to identify one's own personality and that of another. This may be taken to imply that the sharp dichotomy between oneself and another is generally made on the basis of the perception of the physical personality, rather than the psychic personality. (iii) The appearance of self (*ātma*) is the activity of the defiled mind (*kliṣṭaṃ manaḥ*). It is the mind defiled by self-love, self-esteem, etc. (see *Trīṃś* 6) that gives rise to the unfounded conceptualization relating to a metaphysical self existing independently of the flux of experience. (iv) Finally, all the concepts (*viññapti*) are based upon the six types of consciousness (*ṣaḍ-viññānāni*). However, they do not represent any substantial objects existing independently.

Thus, what is denied is not any and every form of consciousness. Vasubandhu's commentary makes this very clear. The denial pertains to four types of entities envisaged. In the absence of four such graspable objects (*grāhyasyārthasya*), the grasping consciousness (*grāhakam viññānam*) that is supposed to perceive such entities, namely, the exaggerated function of *manas*, also becomes meaningless.

4. *Abhūtaparikalpatvaṃ siddham asya bhavaty atah,
na tathā sarvathā 'bhāvāt tat kṣayān muktir isyate*

Such is the manner in which its [i.e., the concept's] unfounded nature comes to be established. Because such absence is not universal, through its cessation release is expected.

(*MVB* p. 19.)

The unfounded conceptualizations do occur, giving rise to false impressions about the existence of metaphysical entities. Yet such unfounded conceptualizations are not universal phenomena, for if they were to be universal, then, as Vasubandhu insists, there would be "mere illusion" (*bhrānti-mātra*). If all conceptualizations are unfounded, there would be no way in which one can attain release. It is only through the waning of unfounded conceptualizations that one can attain release.

This is a clear recognition of the fact that a person who has attained freedom (*nirvṛta*) can continue to perceive and conceptualize without having to fall away from freedom. He can not only have experience, but also can

engage in intellectual activity without being involved in any notion of self or other, grasper and the graspable. He does not use a different kind of language. While utilizing the same language, he refrains from all metaphysical involvements or assumptions.

5. *Kalpitaḥ paratantraś ca pariniṣpanna eva ca,
arthād abhūtakalpāc ca dvayābhāvāc ca deśitaḥ.*

The conceptualized, the dependent and also the achieved are spoken of in relation to the real object, the unfounded conceptualization and the absence of the twofold [respectively].

(*MVB* p. 19.)

Vasubandhu takes *kalpita* as *parikalpita*, distinguishing it from *abhūtaparikalpa*. What is conceptualized is the object. Unless it is assumed that all conceptualizations are false, which would contradict the statement in the previous verse, it is possible to recognize that a concept is a translation of the thought relating to the object and, therefore, its nature. However, when unjustified assertions are made, as in the case of the "psychologist's fallacy," (see section on "Selfless Self"), the nature of the object as *the* thought disappears, making it the object of thought. The thought thus becomes the cognizer of the object. This, in its turn, leads to a further complication.

When thought becomes the cognizer *of* the object, the object could be independent of the thought. But thought itself changes and, even if the unity of the object is preserved by its independence, there is no unity on the part of the thought that is supposed to cognize it. This function of uniting the thought or thoughts is performed by the so-called self, adding one more metaphysical entity to the one that was previously posited, namely, the object. For the Buddhist psychologist, the *parikalpita*, through the assumption of an independent object (which makes it an *abhūtaparikalpa*), leads to the assertion of an equally independent subject, and the thought process that is dependently arisen (*paratantra*) thus produces a doubly unfounded conceptualization. The absence of the conceptualization of a metaphysical object

(*grāhya*) and an equally metaphysical subject (*grāhaka*) constitutes the achievement or accomplishment in freedom (*pariṇiṣpanna*).

This is an explanation of how the unfounded conceptualization (*abhūta-parikalpa*), whose own nature (*svalakṣaṇa*) was examined previously, comes to be treated under the three natures. These are not mutually distinct natures, but merely the manner in which the stream of experience comes to be dichotomized and trichotomized contributing to unfounded conceptualizations.

6. *Upalabdhiṃ samāśritya nopalabdhiḥ prajāyate,*
nopalabdhiṃ samāśritya nopalabdhiḥ prajāyate.

**Perception does not necessarily arise depending upon perception.
 Perception does not necessarily arise depending upon non-perception.**

(*MVB* p. 20.)

Upalabdhi can mean "perception" in the sense of "grasping of an object." Whether it means perception or grasping, the argument presented here is that our perception or grasping does not necessarily imply the independent existence of an object that is perceived or grasped. There is always the possibility of perceiving or grasping after what is non-existent (*asat*). However, if the latter possibility is universalized, one can easily end up with the view that all perceptions are mere illusions (*bhrānti-mātra*). Vasubandhu had already rejected such a position (p. 19). For this reason, perception does not necessarily depend upon non-perception.

Vasubandhu's explanation makes this point very clear. "Depending upon the perception of or grasping after what is a mere concept (*vijñapti-mātra*), the perception of an object can arise." It means that where there is a mere conceptualization one can assume the existence of an independent object. However, "depending upon the non-perception of the object, there is the non-perception of the mere concept," (*arthānupalabdhiṃ samāśritya vijñaptimātrasyāpy anupalabdhir jāyate*). This means that "mere concept" cannot occur unless there is an experience of an object, even though the belief in a substantial object can arise depending upon a "mere concept."

7. *Upalabdhes tataḥ siddhā nopalabdhī-svabhāvatā,
tasmāc ca samatā jñeyā nopalambhōpalambhayoh.*

Of the perception so established, there is no perceptual self-nature. Through this the similarity of perception and non-perception should be known.

(MVB p. 20.)

The most important aspect of perceptual experience that is highlighted by the previous analysis is dependence. Maitreya is, therefore, insisting that the experience so established possesses no self-nature or substance (*svabhāva*). Perceptual experience translated into conceptualization can be either founded (*bhūta*) or unfounded (*abhūta*). The common denominator is that they are both concepts (*vijñapti-mātra*) conditioned by various factors, hence empty of any substance.

8. *Abhūtaparikalpaś ca citta-caittās tridhātukāḥ,
tatārtha-dṛṣṭir vijñānaṃ tad viśeṣe tu caitasāḥ.*

The unfounded conceptualization as well as thought and elements of thought belong to the three spheres. Herein, the perception of the object is consciousness, and its distinctions constitute the elements of thought.

(MVB p. 20.)

Kochumuttom takes both *citta* (thought) and *caitta* (elements of thought) as being “the imagination of the unreal” (*abhūtaparikalpa*) (p. 64). This would contradict everything that has been said in *MV* I.6–7. Neither Maitreya nor Vasubandhu are drawing any such implication. Even though Vasubandhu, in introducing this section, says: “Now the variegated character of the unfounded conceptualization is explained,” (*tasyaivedānīm abhūtaparikalpasya prabheda-lakṣaṇaṃ khyāpayati*), this should not be taken to mean that both *citta* and *caittas* are necessarily unfounded conceptualizations. If they are to be taken as such, then his explanation of I.5 which is preceded by a similar

statement: *abhūtaparikalpaysa . . . saṃgraha-lakṣaṇaṃ khyāpayati*, would make both *paratantra* and *pariniṣpanna* varieties of *abhūtaparikalpa*.

Furthermore, *citta* is here defined as *viññāna*, and to consider it as an *abhūtaparikalpa* would be to undermine the very foundation of the psychology he was attempting to explicate. It is one thing to assume that a variety of unfounded conceptualizations can occur in relation to *citta* and *caittas*, and completely another to maintain that *citta* and *caitta* are unfounded conceptualizations. Indeed, it is the transcendentalist Sthiramati who reads *ca* as *tu* (MVB p. 20, note 5) and identifies the *abhūtaparikalpa* with *citta* and *caittas*. As pointed out by Maitreya himself, it is not impossible for someone to interpret a perception (*upalabdhi*) or thought (*citta*) in a metaphysical way. That does not mean that it is the only way.

Viññāna is defined as the perception of "mere object" (*artha-mātra*), i.e., an object without any substantial existence (*svabhāva*). The distinction (*viśeṣa*) relating to that "mere object" gives rise to the elements of thought (*caitta*) and these are further defined as sensation, etc.

The recognition of varieties of thought (*citta*) represented by the elements of thought (*caitta*) need not be unfounded (*abhūta*), so long as they are not distinguished in an absolute way (see section on "Perception"). Thought and its elements become metaphysical when they are analysed into exclusive categories, the former representing the container and the latter the contained. However, thought considered as the stream or the flux and elements as the fluctuations can constitute a non-substantialist explanation of the stream of experience. It is only the search for an Absolute that could render all forms of distinction meaningless, whether they be metaphysical or non-metaphysical.

9. *Ekam pratyaya-viññānaṃ dvitīyaṃ aupabhogikam,
upabhoga-pariccheda-prerakāḥ tatra caitasāḥ.*

One is consciousness that serves as condition. The second represents the function of enjoyment. Therein, the functions of enjoyment, determination and motivation are the elements of thought.

(MVB p. 21.)

Citta and *caittas* are not independent entities. Nor are they comparable to the two birds referred to in the *Upaniṣads* (see section on "Indian

Background”), one representing the eternal and permanent self with no function, and the other enjoying the fruit. *Citta* is not known without the *caittas* and the *caittas* are not known without the *citta*. *Citta*, as mentioned earlier, is the stream of experience with flights and perchings. Hence Vasubandhu identifies it with *ālaya-vijñāna*. The *caittas* are specific activities (*pravṛtti*) that occur in the *ālaya-vijñāna* such as sensation, perception and dispositions (*MVB* p. 21, compare *Trīṃś* 3, *sadā sparsa-manaskāra-vit-samjñā-cetanānvitam*).

Sthiramati’s interpretation of the nature of the causal process in this context reintroduces the metaphysics that Vasubandhu abandoned when he renounced his Sautrāntika leanings. Neither the *ālaya-vijñāna* nor the various elements operative there imply any causation where momentary succession is involved (*MVBT* 1.10). Kochumuttom’s explanation of this verse based upon Sthiramati seems completely inappropriate (see section on “Psychology in the Yogācāra”).

10. *Chādanād ropanāc caiva nayanāt saṃparigrahāt,
pūraṇāt tri-paricchedād upabhogāc ca karṣaṇāt.*
11. *nibandhanād ābhimukhyād duḥkhanāt kliśyate jagat,
tredhā dvedhā ca saṃkleśaḥ saptadhā bhūtakaḥ paṇāt.*

Through the functions of concealing, implanting, leading, receiving, fulfilling, trichotomizing, enjoying and attracting, through binding, confronting and suffering the universe is defiled. As a result of unfounded conceptualizations arise the threefold, twofold and sevenfold defilements.

(*MVB* p. 21)

These represent an explanation of the twelvefold factors constituting the human personality as it continues to wander along from existence to existence. Interestingly, instead of the normal twelve factors, we have a description of the functions relating to each factor, and how the so-called universe (*jagat*) comes to be defiled as a result of such activity. This being an explanation of the normal life process, it is also the *ālaya-vijñāna* with the operation of the various transformations that produce bondage. the

twofold, threefold and sevenfold defiling tendencies that emerge in this life process are the results of unfounded conceptualization (*abhūta-parikalpa*), namely, the recognition of real objects and self.

12. *Lakṣaṇam cātha paryāyas tad artho bheda eva ca,
sādhanaṁ ceti vijñeyam śūnyatāyāḥ samāsataḥ.*

The characteristic, synonym, meaning, variety and establishment of emptiness should be known in brief.

(*MVB*, p. 22.)

Maitreya here proposes five aspects through which emptiness could be properly understood.

13. *Dvayābhāvo hy abhāvasya bhāvaḥ śūnyasya lakṣaṇam,
na bhāvo nāpi cābhāvaḥ na prthaktvaika-lakṣaṇam.*

The absence of the [metaphysical] duo is indeed the nature of non-existence, the characteristic of emptiness. It is neither existence nor non-existence. Neither has it the characteristic of difference nor of identity.

(*MVB* pp. 22-23.)

As at 1-2, Maitreya was emphasizing the fact that emptiness is not spoken of in a vacuum. It is merely the denial of the metaphysical object and its perceiving self. Even though emptiness implies the *absence* of the metaphysical entities, it could be interpreted as “pure emptiness or negation.” Such an interpretation is countered by Maitreya when he insists that it is neither pure existence nor pure non-existence.

Vasubandhu takes up for elaboration the statement that emptiness is neither difference nor identity. If there were to be difference, then one has to recognize “the nature of the elements of existence” (*dharmatā*) as being

different from the elements of existence (*dharmā*). This is not appropriate because such natures as impermanence and unsatisfactoriness are not found independently of things that are impermanent and unsatisfactory. The universal is not independent of the particular. If there were to be identity, there could not be knowledge pertaining to purity, for that knowledge would be identical with defiled knowledge. Furthermore, even the universal would not be evident, as it would be identical with the particular.

Vasubandhu utilizes a phrase employed by Nāgārjuna in order to reject the metaphysics of identity and difference, namely, *tattvānyaiva* (*Kārikā* XX-II.8), implying that this is an explanation free from the metaphysical notions of "difference or change of identity."

14. *Tathatā bhūta-koṭiś cānimittam paramārthatā,
dharma-dhātuś ca paryāyāḥ śūnyatāyāḥ samāsataḥ.*

In brief, suchness, the limit of existence, absence of a mysterious cause, ultimate fruit and the constitution of elements are synonyms for emptiness.

(*MVB* p. 23.)

This verse undoubtedly would enthuse the Absolutist to read all his ideas into the philosophical and psychological speculations of Maitreya and Vasubandhu, and from there to the Buddha himself. In many ways, it is comparable to Nāgārjuna's statement at *Kārikā* XVIII.9 which, when analysed independent of the Buddha's discourse to Kaccāyana (*S* 2.16-17), provided a way of reading the metaphysics of Absolutism in Nāgārjuna's philosophy. Our reading of Nāgārjuna's statement in the light of the Buddha's discourse has, in fact, enabled us to present Nāgārjuna as a non-Absolutist and a non-substantialist who faithfully followed his teacher, the Buddha (of the Nikāyas and the Āgamas) without being led by his Brahmanical counterparts. The same can be done with the present verse of Maitreya and Vasubandhu's commentary upon it. Maitreya's definition of each one of these synonyms that appear in the following verse can be traced back to early Buddhism.

15. *Ananyathā viparyāsa-tan-nirodhārya-gocaraiḥ,
hetutvāc cārya-dharmmāṇāṃ paryāyārtho yathākramam.*

Not otherwise, non-perverse, cessation of it [i.e., *nimitta*], being the sphere of the noble ones, the cause of the noble doctrine – such, respectively, are the meaning of the synonyms.

(*MVB* pp. 23–24.)

Keeping in mind that these are five synonyms for emptiness which was defined earlier as “the absence of metaphysical entities” and not pure negation, it is possible to trace all these concepts in the teaching of early Buddhism.

Tathatā: This term occurs for the first time in the Buddha’s discourse on “Conditions” (*Paccaya*, *S* 2.25). It appears in that context along with three other terms: *avithatā*, *anaññathatā*, and *idappaccayatā*, to explain the causal process. Thus, Maitreya’s synonym for *tathatā* as *ananyathā* reflects the Buddha’s own *anaññathatā*. The significance of the four characteristics in the Buddha’s discourse have been discussed in my *Causality* (pp. 91–94). In that context, the term *tathatā* was understood as “objectivity” primarily because, in the *Upaniṣads* causality or dependent arising had no reality, being completely subordinated to the permanent and immutable ultimate reality, the *ātman*. Causality was a mere imagination on the part of the ignorant, with no objectivity at all. Explaining this in terms of the metaphysic of experience, the Upaniṣadic thinkers perceived whatever causal process that exists involving change as representing the empirical self, the bird enjoying the fruit, in contrast to the pure and “do-nothing” eternal self. The Buddha, on the contrary, made this empirical self, and along with it the stream of experience, the reality (see section on “Selfless Self”). As such, he considered causality as more than a mere mental construct, or according to the terminology of Maitreya and Vasubandhu, more than a “mere unfounded conceptualization” (*abhūtaparikalpa-mātra*). While it is true that experience reveals an objective reality, it is not possible to go beyond that experience and assume that this causal process is permanent and eternal. Hence, the Buddha confined himself to what is already given in experience as a means

to the understanding of the future. This is clearly indicated by the Buddha when he confined the *experience* of causality to the past and present saying: "This causal status has remained" (*S* 2. 25, *ṭhiṭṭā va sā dhātu*; *MKV* p. 40 *sthitaivaissā dharmāṇaṃ dharmatā*), and proceeded to recognize its future validity on the basis of conceptualization or inference. Thus, not being enthusiastic in defining it as a permanent and eternal process, he utilized the negative terms *avītathatā* (lit. not-different-such-ness, or not-otherwise-ness, hence "necessity") and *anānāthata* (Sk. *ananyathā*, lit. not-other-wise, implying "invariability"). The Buddha seems to have been well aware of the fact that moving from the effect to the cause empirically, one can have a better chance of asserting necessity or invariability. However, proceeding from the cause to the effect, that is, in the attempt to predict the effect, one has to be satisfied with sufficiency (cp. Donald Davidson, *The Logic of Grammar*, Encino, California: Dickinson Publishing Company, 1975, pp. 250-251). This latter aspect is clearly expressed by the term *idappaccayatā*. As such, Vasubandhu's use of the term *nitya* (eternal) should be taken rather cautiously as he himself suggests, i.e., "taking it in the sense of such" (*tathā eveti kṛtvā*) implying constancy.

Bhūta-koṭi: The above understanding of *tathatā* leads us directly to the conception of *bhūta-koṭi*, sometimes referred to as *bhūta-tathatā*. The important part of this compound is *bhūta*, which is a past participle like *sthita* or *ṭhiṭṭa* discussed above. If experience is confined to what is given in the so-called "specious present," then there is a limit (*koṭi*) and this limit should not be transgressed when making knowledge-claims. The belief in a permanent and independent object and an eternal self transcends such limits of experience and is, therefore, negated by emptiness (*śūnyatā*). Thus, *bhūta-koṭi* turns out to be not only a synonym, but a clear explanation of *śūnyatā*.

Maitreya's explanation of *bhūta-koṭi* as *aviparyāsa* is prompted by the statements of both the Buddha and Nāgārjuna. For the Buddha, the belief in permanence (*nicca*) where there is impermanence (*anicca*) is a perversion (*vipallāsa*, *A* 2.52). Similarly for Nāgārjuna, the grasping after permanence in the impermanent is a perversion (*Kārikā* XXIII.13, *anitye nityam ity evaṃ yadi grāho viparyayaḥ*).

Animitta: This is sometimes interpreted to mean the absence of the object in experience, an idea that is supportive of the Absolutist claim regarding a transcendental consciousness free from subject-object duality. Sometimes it is rendered as "signless" (see section on "Emotions and the Foundation of the Moral Life") or as "never admitting a cause" (Kochumuttom, p. 75).

This would mean that *śūnyatā*, for which *animitta* is suggested as a synonym, represents an uncaused, unconditioned and, therefore, absolute reality. These interpretations have no basis in the teachings of the Buddha. As explained earlier, the term *nimitta* has a very specific meaning in the context of early Buddhism. That meaning is compatible with the philosophical speculation of Nāgārjuna, as well as the psychological reflections of Maitreya and Vasubandhu. *Nimitta* is that hidden *something* (*kiñci*, *kiṃcī*), a substance or a mysterious cause one looks for "having perceived an object with the sense organ" (e.g. *cakkhunā rūpaṃ disvā*). Indeed, here there is no denial of any one of the perceivable objects of sense, but only of a mysterious substance or cause behind such experience of the object. *Animitta* is, therefore, a negation of a substantial entity, which is also the function of emptiness (*śūnyatā*).

Paramārtha: Without doubt this is the most significant term in Buddhism that enabled that Absolutist to confirm his belief in an "ultimate reality" which he attributes to the Buddha. Our analysis of the contexts in which the term occurs in the early discourses as well as in Nāgārjuna's treatise has already brought out its moral sense, rather than a metaphysical implication (see Introduction to *Nāgārjuna. The Philosophy of the Middle Way*). *Paramārtha* as the "ultimate fruit" is what serves as the sphere of the noble wisdom (*ārya-jñāna*), contrasted with that of the ignoble wisdom (*anārya-jñāna*) that makes a person an individualist (*prthagjana*). The relation of *paramārtha* to emptiness consists of the fact that this ultimate fruit is the result of not adhering to an absolute moral law thereby relinquishing one's own happiness as well as the happiness of the others. In other words, *paramārtha* is empty of any absoluteness.

Dharma-dhātu: Like many other conceptions discussed above, this too has received the same metaphysical interpretation at the hands of modern scholars. In the eyes of the Absolutist, it represents the *source* of the universe, comparable to the *ātman* of the Brahmanical thinkers or the *tao* of the Taoists. However, for the Buddha, it was "dependent arising" (*paṭi-casamuppāda*), sometimes referred to simply as *dhātu* or more specifically as *dhammatthitātā* or *dhammaniyāmatā*, providing a foundation for the ultimate fruit of *nibbāna* (see section on "Psychology of Freedom"). Hence, Maitreya's and Vasubandhu's explanation of it as the cause of the "noble way of life" (*ārya-dharma-hetutva*). It is not the source of everything, but only of the noble life, i.e., the moral life that contributes to the happiness of oneself and others. The fact that these five concepts can be interpreted in

terms of the Buddha's own teaching, instead of depending upon the metaphysics of the Brahmanical thinkers, of some of the Taoists, or of some modern interpreters, leaves us with the strong encouragement that, like Nāgārjuna, both Maitreya and Vasubandhu are true disciples of the Buddha.

16. *Samkiliṣṭā ca viśuddhā ca samatā nirmatā ca sā,
ābdhātu-kanakākāśa-śuddhivac chuddhir isyate.*

It is defiled as well as pure, tainted and free from taint. The purity intended is like the purity of the element of light, gold or space.

(*MVB* p. 24.)

This is an extremely important notion in Buddhist psychology treated with utmost care in the early discourses as well as in Nāgārjuna. The *Laṅkāvatāra* as well as the commentaries of Buddhaghosa (as explained in the sections on "Rational Psychology," and "Transcendental Psychology in the *Laṅkāvatāra*") seem to have produced a metaphysical monster out of this notion by formulating it as an "originally pure thought" (*prakṛti-prabhāsvara-citta*, or *pakati-mano*). Both Maitreya and Vasubandhu seem to be avoiding this notion of original purity. They also have realized that such a notion of original purity was made necessary by an equally metaphysical analysis that leaves absolute difference (*prthaktva*, see *MV* I.3) requiring the conception of absolute identity as a means of connecting up such differences. The originally pure mind thus turns out to be no more than a substance that provides a unity to the discrete sense impressions.

In the context of such a metaphysical notion of difference, both Maitreya and Vasubandhu are compelled to raise the question as to how a defiled phenomenon (in the present case, *śūnyatā*) becomes purified; how a tainted phenomenon becomes free from taint. The question that is merely implied in Maitreya is openly raised by Vasubandhu. "If something were to be tainted and subsequently become taintless, how is it that it [taintlessness], being of the nature of change, remains constant?" In other words, a freed person can fall away from his freedom or a purified mind can once again become defiled.

In the present work, it was pointed out that without going back to absolute origins, the Buddha explained thought as being luminous, even though not absolutely pure, and how it is continuously defiled by adventitious defilements (*āgantukehi upakkilesehi upakkiliṭṭham*). The term "adven-

titious" (*āgantuka*) is used, not in the sense of an absolute alien, but defiling tendencies within and which are inspired by objects of experience. For example, desire (*kāma*) or aversion (*dosa*) are not *necessary* parts of experience or thought whereas pleasant and unpleasant sensations are. The pleasant and unpleasant sensations generated by things in the world are not necessarily defilements in the same way as desire and aversion are. It is, indeed, the waning of the latter that constitutes freedom and purity. The change of nature (*svabhāvānyatva*), according to Vasubandhu, is the disappearance of such *un-necessary* taints (*āgantuka-malāpagamana*).

17. *Bhokṭṛ-bhōjana-tad-deha-pratiṣṭhā-vastu-śūnyaṭā,
tac ca yena yathā dṛṣṭam yad artham tasya śūnyaṭā.*

Emptiness is of the enjoyer, the enjoyed, that personality, that support and that object. Emptiness is also of that by which it is perceived as such and the fruit of that perception.

(*MVB* pp. 24–25.)

Before commenting on Maitreya's statement, Vasubandhu lists sixteen varieties of emptiness. Emptiness pertains to:

- 1 subjectivity,
- 2 objectivity,
- 3 subjectivity-objectivity,
- 4 the universal,
- 5 emptiness,
- 6 ultimate fruit,
- 7 the dispositionally conditioned,
- 8 the dispositionally unconditioned,
- 9 the pervasive,
- 10 the beginningless,
- 11 the formless,
- 12 the primordial nature,
- 13 the characteristics,
- 14 all things,
- 15 non-existence, and
- 16 the nature of non-existence.

The first three may be taken as a reference to the emptiness of perceptual experience; 4 and 5 include conceptual thinking; 6–8 relate to the moral life; 9–13 pertain to specific metaphysical issues; 14 represents an assertion of the non-substantiality of all phenomena; while 15 and 16 are intended to eliminate the possible assertion of a negation as representing a substantial entity.

After listing these different forms of emptiness, Vasubandhu proceeds to identify the types of emptiness referred to by Maitreya. *Bhokṭṛ-śūnyatā* is the emptiness relating to the six internal spheres, namely, eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind. These are faculties that function without being “agents of enjoyment” (*bhokṭṛ*). Nāgārjuna’s treatment of *indriya* clearly demonstrated that though experience takes place depending upon sense organ and sense object (*Kārikā* III.7), it would not be appropriate to assume the existence either of an agent or of a mysterious capacity within them that produces sense experience, as the scholastics did. As pointed out in the present work, there is no need to look for a mysterious substance (*nimitta*) when an object is perceived through the eye (*cakkhunā rūpaṃ disvā*). *Bhōjana-śūnyatā* represents the similar absence of metaphysical causes in the objects so perceived, that is, the six external spheres (*bāhyāni āyatanāni*). These consist of material form, sound, smell, taste, tangibles and concepts.

The psychophysical personality (*śarīra*) that serves as the foundation for the beliefs in “the agent as well as the object of enjoyment” (*bhokṭṛ-bhōjana*) is equally empty. Vasubandhu identifies this with that he previously called the emptiness of both subjectivity and objectivity (*adhyātma-bahirdhā*). The external world (*bhājana-loka*) that serves as the objective support (*pratiṣṭhā vastu*) is rather pervasive (*vistṛṇa*); hence emptiness becomes pervasive or great (*mahā-śūnyatā*).

The subjective sense spheres (*adhyātmika-āyatana*), etc. are perceived as “the empty” (*śūnyam*). Knowledge of it is the knowledge of emptiness (*śūnyatā-jñāna*). However, the knowledge of emptiness could provide room for the belief that the content of that knowledge, namely, “emptiness,” is itself substantial. The emptiness of emptiness (*śūnyatā-śūnyatā*) is intended to eliminate such a belief.

The realization that everything is empty is said to contribute to the ultimate fruit of the moral life. The career of a *bodhisattva* is directed toward the attainment of that ultimate fruit. However, the recognition of a fruit also can give the wrong impression that, in contrast to all other changing phenomena in the world, the *bodhisattva* is able to achieve something (*kimcī*) that is permanent and eternal. The *paramārtha-śūnyatā* is, therefore, intended to abandon any transcendentalist or absolutist notion of the ultimate fruit.

The question naturally arises in the ordinary person as to the purpose of leading a moral life if it were not to bring about a fruit that is not totally different from the fruits of ordinary life characterized by emptiness. If the so-called ultimate fruit is also empty, what incentive is there to lead a moral life? Maitreya's answer is embodied in the verse that follows.

18. *Śubha-dvayasya prāpty arthaṃ sadā satva-hitāya ca,
saṃsārātyajanārthaṃ ca kuśalasyākṣayāya ca.*

For the purpose of attaining the two forms of the auspicious, and also for the sake of the everlasting welfare of beings, for the purpose of not abandoning the life-process as well as for the sake of the non-cessation of the good,

19. *Gotrasya ca viśuddhy arthaṃ lakṣaṇa-vyañjanāptaye,
śuddhaye buddha-dharmmāṇāṃ bodhisattvaḥ prapadyate.*

For the purity of lineage and also for the attainment of noble qualities and attributes, and [finally] for maintaining the purity of the Buddha's teachings—does a *bodhisattva* conduct himself.

(MVB pp. 25–26.)

Maitreya sets up a sevenfold goal for the *bodhisattva*:

1. The two types of the auspicious (*śubha*) consists of (a) the conventional forms of good, referred to by Nāgārjuna as *vyavahāra* (*Kārikā* XVII.24; XXIV.10), which Vasubandhu defines as the good that is dispositionally conditioned (*saṃskṛta-kuśala*), and (b) the ultimate form of good, comparable to the "ultimate fruit" (*paramārtha*), defined by Vasubandhu as the "dispositionally unconditioned good" (*asaṃskṛta-kuśala*). These are the conventional notions of good as well as the ultimate moral ideal.
2. The twofold auspicious activities mentioned above contribute to the lasting happiness of beings. The absence of any specific reference to "the welfare of others" (*para-hita*) is

significant. Maitreya is not inculcating a life of self-immolation. It is a life devoted to the welfare of beings (*sattva*), oneself not excluded.

3. *Samṣāra*, if understood as the life-process, is not one to be abandoned. The metaphysical notions of *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa* resulting from the metaphysics of the scholastics were explained in our analysis of Nāgārjuna's famous chapter on "The Examination of Freedom" (*Nirvāṇa-parīkṣā*, *Kārikā* XXV). Concluding the chapter on "Bondage and Release" (*Bandhana-mokṣa-parīkṣā*), Nāgārjuna argued:

"Wherein there is neither the attribution of freedom nor the elimination of the life-process, what is it that is discriminated as life-process or freedom."

Attribution of freedom (*nirvāṇa-samāropa*) and the elimination of the life-process (*saṃsāra-pakarṣaṇa*) are the results of metaphysical assertions regarding bondage and freedom (*Kārikā* XVI.10). Avoiding such metaphysics where *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa* come to be considered totally different existences, a *bodhisattva* need not think of eliminating *saṃsāra*.

4. The non-cessation of good (*kuśalasyāḥśaya*) takes the nihilistic sting out of the conception of "freedom without substrate" (*nirupādīśeṣa-nirvāṇa*). Buddhism recognizes the inevitability of death, even of a person who is freed. The search for an eternal life on the part of ordinary man was responsible for various questions that he raises regarding a freed one after death (*tathāgato parammaraṇā*). The Buddha left such questions unanswered. Yet, sooner or later, even among the Buddhists, the question as to what happens to a freed one after death continued to be raised. Popular Mahāyāna came up with two solutions, both of which contradict the Buddha's own standpoint. The first is for the *bodhisattva* to abandon the hope of attaining freedom (*nirvāṇa*) until he was able to help every human being to the other shore. This is contradicted by the Buddha's own way of life, as well as by some of his statements (*Dh* 158). The second is the idea that a *Tathāgata* never dies, and that his *parinirvāṇa* is a mere illusion. This, of course, is not justified by what can be read in the *Mahā-parinibbāna-suttanta*.

Vasubandhu, commenting upon "the non-cessation of good" provides a more appropriate solution when he says that the good achieved by the *bodhisattva* is neither dissipated nor abandoned even if he were to attain *nirvāṇa* without substrate. In other words, the moral impact of such a person does not cease with his death. If the *dharma-kāya* means no more than this "moral scent that pervades even

among the gods" (*Dh* 54, 56), the *bodhisattva* need not have any hesitation to attain freedom. Even though it is pervasive, it is not a substantial entity; hence Vasubandhu's attempt to explain it as being empty.

5. The purity of lineage (*gotrasya viśuddhi*) is not intended to justify the purity of a particular caste or race, but of humanity. Rebirth (*punarbhava*) being recognized as a distinct possibility, a person who has not attained freedom could be reborn. In order to improve one's personality in a future life, it would be necessary to see that no evil aspect of one's personality is carried over to the next. Even Nāgārjuna had no difficulty recognizing the possibility of survival when he claimed that "of all the actions, whether similar or dissimilar, belonging to certain realms, only one would arise at the moment of birth [of a being]," (*Kārikā* XVII.17). It is the need to maintain the purity of that surviving thought that is emphasised by Maitreya.
6. The attainment of noble qualities and attributes (*lakṣaṇa-vyañjanāptaye*) include the thirty-two marks of a great person (*mahā-puruṣa*) as well as the minor attributes sometimes counted as eighty (*aśītyanuvyañjana*). The *Lakṣaṇa-sūttanta* of the *Dīgha-nikāya* (3.142-179) provides the earliest source for the doctrine of qualities and attributes. The theme emphasized there is that these qualities and attributes, even though physical in nature, are the results of leading a morally good life in the past. It is indeed an incentive to follow the moral life.
7. Finally, one of the most important aspects of a *bodhisattva*'s career consists in perpetuating the purity of the Buddha's teachings, instead of allowing it to degenerate into a system of futile metaphysics.

20. *Pudgalasyātha dharmmāṇām abhāvah śūnyatā 'tra hi,
tad abhāvasya sadbhāvas tasmin sā śūnyatā 'parā.*

Herein the absence of the person as well as elements is, indeed, the emptiness. Another form of emptiness pertains to the presence of that non-existence in that context.

(*MVB* p. 26.)

As stated earlier, the negation could turn out to be absolute if it is left unqualified. Non-existence can replace existence and this non-existence

would be considered ultimately real. In order to eliminate such a conceptualization, Maitreya is insisting that emptiness applies even to the presence of that absence. In other words, neither existence nor non-existence should be conceived as absolutes. Thus non-absolutism is highlighted by the doctrine of emptiness.

21. *Samkṣiptā ced bhaven nāsau muktāḥ syuḥ sarva-dehināḥ,
viśuddhā ced bhaven nāsau vyāyāmo nīphalo bhavet.*

If this were not defiled, then in the case of all human beings, these will remain liberated. If this were not purified, then effort would be rendered fruitless.

(MVB pp. 26–27.)

The pronoun *asau* refers to “emptiness” (*śūnyatā*). *MV* I.16 mentioned a twofold emptiness: the defiled and the purified. However, a substantialist explanation would imply that they are naturally or inherently (*svabhāvataḥ*) defiled and purified. Maitreya did not want to convey any such impression when he spoke of the two types of emptiness. If it is naturally purified and the adventitious defilements have no influence whatsoever on it, then that emptiness would remain pure and liberated in the case of all beings. If it is not purified, then it can never be purified and any effort in that direction would be in vain. This indeed is an argument that Nāgārjuna himself adduced against any substantialist notion of enlightenment or non-enlightenment (*Kārikā* XXIV.32). Like Nāgārjuna’s, Maitreya’s argument is a deadly weapon against the assumption of an “inherently pure thought or enlightenment.”

22. *Na kṣiptā nāpi vākṣiptā śuddhā ’śuddhā na caiva sā,
prabhāsvaratvāc cittasya kleśasyāgantukatvataḥ.*

It is neither defiled nor non-defiled, neither purified nor non-purified because of the luminosity of thought and the adventitiousness of the defilements.

(MVB p. 27.)

This is a rather brave attempt on the part of Maitreya to resurrect the Buddha's interpretation of purity and impurity. The *Laṅkāvatāra* fell into the substantialist trap in prefixing the term *prakṛti* to the phrase *prabhāsvaracitta*, thus giving the impression that thought is by *nature* pure and that it is defiled by adventitious elements. Thought in such a context is not different from the *ātman* of the Brahmanical thinkers. Maitreya seems to be implying that luminosity need not be confused with purity. It merely represents the amenability of thought to refinement, unlike the gross and rough matter that is the source of the experience of resistance (*paṭigha-samphassa*). Any thought of its original purity will involve speculation relating to the inconceivable beginning of things. Malleable thought is easily defiled as a result of the sense data that continue to impress upon it. As explained earlier (see section on "Emotion and the Foundation of the Moral Life"), human emotion that can easily convert itself to a defilement is not a mere response of the human organism to external stimulation. It represents the bodily changes that follow directly the perception of the exciting fact and our feeling of the same changes as they occur. With this, the adventitiousness (*āgantukatva*) is better explained.