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Research Reports

The Ontological Foundation of Religious Praxis in Yogācāra-Buddhism: The Ontological Significance of Madhyāntavibhāgakārikā I. 1

Paul HOORNAERT

If it be true that ontological statements in Buddhist texts are conceptualized and verbalized expressions of insights into the real gained in the course of the Path (*mārga*) and that there is no Buddhist ontology apart from Buddhist religion, it is also true that the Buddhist seeks to establish the ultimate significance of his religious endeavor (*mārgasatya*) and the possibility of attaining emancipation (*nirodhasatya*) by means of a logos about “the way things are,” i.e. by means of an ontology. In this paper I will argue that the Early Yogācāra-Buddhists, in developing their ontology, were mainly concerned about the foundation of Buddhism as a religion.

Madhyāntavibhāgakārikā (MVK) I. 1 expresses the basics of this ontology as follows: “The mind falsely appearing (as enduring subject and object) *exists*. In it the duality (of subject and object) *does not exist*. Emptiness however *exists* in it and it itself also *exists* in emptiness.”¹⁾ The ontological statements (*asti*, *na vidyate*, *vidyate*, *vidyate*) contained in this verse, which no doubt express insights into the real gained at an advanced stage of the Path, are at the same time so many ontological foundations of the ultimate

1) *abhūtaparikalpo 'sti dvayan tatra na vidyate/sūnyatā vidyate tv atra tasyām api sa vidyate*// (G.M. Nagao. *Madhyāntavibhāgabhāṣya. A Buddhist Philosophical Treatise edited for the first time from a Sanskrit Manuscript.* Suzuki Research Foundation, Tokyo 1964, p. 17).

significance of the religious endeavor itself. The following analysis, based on Vasubandhu's *bhāṣya* (MVB) and Sthiramati's *ṭīkā* (MVT),²⁾ shows that the Early Yogācāra-Buddhists summarized the ontological foundation of their religious praxis in this verse.

I. Abhūtaparikalpo 'sti.

The working proper to the defiled (*saṃkliṣṭa*) mind is to appear (*pratibhās*) in the form (*ākāra*) of what does not exist, i.e. in the form of a knowable object (*grāhya*) and a knowing subject (*grāhaka*).³⁾ This untrue (*abhūta*=*atattva*=*vitatha*=*viparita*=*apariniṣpanna*) or deceiving appearance (*abhūtaparikalpa*=*bhrānti*=*māyā*), although

2) S. Yamaguchi. *Sthiramati. Madhyāntavibhāgaṭīkā. Exposition Systématique du Yogācāravijñaptivāda*. Tome I. Texte, Nagoya 1934.

3) MVB and MVT (ad MVK I. 3ab and III. 22def) identify *grāhyapratibhāsa* with *ālayavijñāna* and *grāhakapratibhāsa* with the other 7 *vijñānas*. Sthiramati (MVT 18, 16-24) comments that *ālaya* is *anākāra* or *agrāhaka* because it does not grasp (*grahana*) its object as *anitya* etc. This does not contradict *Triṃśikābhāṣya* (ed. S. Lévi, p. 19, 3ff.), where the same author says that *ālaya*'s *ākāra* is a *vijñapti* which does not know its object in a clear-cut way (*paricchid*, *pratisamvid*) as being this or that. *Ālaya* is uninterrupted appearance of whatever is knowable or known (*grāhya*=*bhājanaloka* and *sattvaloka*) by the other 7 *vijñānas*. This is not to say that *ālaya* itself has no subjective form (*ākāra*), through which it knows its own object. In fact, the uninterrupted appearance of *bhājanaloka-sattvaloka* is precisely due to the uninterrupted awareness by *ālaya* of its own object. Only, this awareness is never *grāhaka*, never a clear-cut knowledge of its own object. The other 7 *vijñānas*, although each of them is really *grāhyagrāhakapratibhāsa* (cf. MVT 146, 6-9), are defined as *grāhakapratibhāsa* only. K'uei-chi remarks that MVB treats *ālaya* as *grāhyapratibhāsa* only, because *ālaya*'s object is easily known, whereas its subjective form is difficult to know. Conversely, the other 7 *vijñānas* are treated as *grāhakapratibhāsa* only, because their subjective form is easily known (辯中邊論述記, T. vol. 44, nr. 1835, 21b11-13). The *ākāra* proper to the defiled *manas* is uninterrupted (*nityam*) thinking (*manyana*) of the Self. The *ākāra* of the other 6 *vijñānas* is *vijñapti* or *viśayagrāhaka*. Among them the 5 sense-consciousnesses are *viśaya-udgraha* (that is, *avikalpaka*) and *manovijñāna* is *viśayavikalpa* (MVB 48, 10ff.; MVT 162, 13ff.; *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra*, ed. S. Lévi, XI. 40, p. 64-65).

nonexistent as to the way in which it appears, exists in as far as it appears. It is precisely because it exists as deceiving-appearance-only (*bhrāntimātra*) that it may deceive the ignorant. What is nonexistent cannot deceive.⁴⁾ This appearance has dependence-on-another as one of its existential modes (*paratantrasvabhāva*)⁵⁾ because it exists as the outcome of a process of mutual causality between *ālaya-vijñāna* and the 7 *pravṛttivijñānas*. As such it is momentary (*kṣaṇika*)⁶⁾ and therefore inexpressible (*anabhilāpya*).⁷⁾

The following problem concerns us here: why does MVK I. 1a attribute (a) existence (*asti*) and (b) more specifically, a dependent mode of existence to the working of the defiled mind?

(a) Existence must be attributed to *abhūtaparikalpa* for the following reason. If *abhūtaparikalpa* or the deceiving appearance as subject-object (*grāhyagrāhakapratibhāsa*) did not exist, discourse about (*grāhyagrāhakanīyama*, *jalpa*) or clinging to the real existence

4) According to the *Dharmadharmatāvibhaṅgavṛtti* two elements are indispensable for *bhrānti*: (a) a nonexistent (*med-pa*) and (b) an existent which appears (*snañ-ba*) in the form of the nonexistent (Tib. Ed. by J. Nozawa, in *Studies in Indology and Buddhology. Presented in Honour of Professor Susumu Yamaguchi on the Occasion of His Sixtieth Birthday*. Hōzōkan, Kyoto 1955, p. 23, 1ff.). Sthiramati defines *bhrānti* in the same way: what exists (*vidyamāna*) as appearance (*yat khyāti*) does not exist (*avidyamāna*) in the way it appears (*yathā khyāti*) (MVT 113, 12-16; cf. also MVT 13, 5-6 and 231, 17-18; *Trisvabhāvanirdeśa*, Tōh. Nr. 4058, vv. 2-3). The defiled 8 *vijñānas* are all *bhrānti*. *Ālaya* is *bhrānti* because it continually lets the nonexistent *bhājanaloka-sattvaloka* appear as existent. The other 7 *vijñānas* are *bhrānti* because they appear as if the mind really existed as *grāhaka*.

5) MVB 19, 19-20 (ad MVK I. 5); MVT 18, 3-4 (ad MVK I. 3). I translate *svabhāva* as "existential mode" in the sense that the three *svabhāvas* are three modes proper to all existents or *dharma*s.

6) MVT 117, 5-7. Whatever is *paratantra* cannot subsist by its own power for more than one moment (cf. *Mahāyānasamgraha*, T. vol. 31, nr. 1594, 139a28-29).

7) MVT 22, 14-15.

of subject and object (*grāhyagrāhakagrāha*) by the ignorant would not exist either.⁸⁾ In fact, clinging to *grāhyagrāhaka* depends on the appearance as *grāhyagrāhaka*.⁹⁾ The ignorant, deceived by the appearance as *grāhyagrāhaka*, cling to the real existence of *grāhya-grāhaka*. If this clinging were not real, defilement (*saṃkleśa*, corresponding to the *duḥkha*- and *samudayasatya*) would not be real. In that case there would be no need for emancipation and religious praxis (*mārgasatya*) together with its goal (*nirodhasatya*) would be meaningless.¹⁰⁾

8) *avaśyaṃ cārthākāraṃ vijñānam abhyupagantavyam, anākāre hi tasmin grāhyagrāhakaniyama eva na syāt* (MVT 26, 1-2); *tasmin grāhyagrāhakaprakhyānalakṣaṇe 'rthe 'yaṃ grāhya 'yaṃ grāhaka iti vāñmanobhyāṃ yad abhilapanam sa jalpa ity ucyate* (MVT 218, 18-20).

9) *sa eva grāhyagrāhakābhiniveśo 'rthasattvādipratibhāsanibandhanaḥ* (MVT 17, 10-11). Cf. also *Dharmadharmatāvibhaṅgavṛtti* (Tib. Ed. by J. Nozawa, p. 23, 5-6): the three kinds of defilement (*kleśa*, *karman*, *janma*) arise because of clinging to the real existence of what appears in *bhṛānti*.

Strictly speaking, *abhūtaparikalpa* refers to both *grāhyagrāhakapratibhāsa* and *grāhyagrāhakagrāha*. In the former sense it is a *karmadhāraya*-compound, meaning "untrue, false, deceiving (*abhūta*) appearance." All defiled 8 *vijñānas* are *abhūtaparikalpa* in this sense because all of them appear as *grāhyagrāhaka*. In the second sense it is a *tatpuruṣa*-compound, meaning "discrimination of and clinging to what does not exist (*abhūtam*)" (Cf. MVT 22, 10-11 where *grāhyagrāhaka* are called *abhūtam*). Sthiramati includes both meanings in the following definition: *abhūtam asmin dvayaṃ parikalpyate 'nena vety abhūtaparikalpaḥ* (MVT 13, 18-19). *Abhūtaparikalpa* is the mind in which (*asmin*) or by which (*anena*) subject and object are imagined to exist. The former (*asmin*) corresponds to the 8 *vijñānas* as *grāhyagrāhakapratibhāsa* while the latter (*anena*) corresponds to the defiled *manas* and *manovijñāna* as *grāhyagrāhakagrāha* (the 5 sense-consciousnesses and *ālayavijñāna* are free from *grāha*). MVK III. 16cd and its comments (MVB 44, 16-18 and MVT 138, 16ff.) express the same idea: the mind appearing as *rūpa* (*rūpakhyātavijñāna*) is that in which *rūpa* is discriminated (*vikalpitarūpa*) by the mind which discriminates *rūpa* (*rūpavikalpa*=*grāha*). The result or that which is discriminated is the *parikalpitasvabhāva* of *rūpa* (*parikalpitarūpa*). *Mahāyānasamgraha* (T. nr. 1594, 139b10ff.) employs the same distinction.

10) MVT 21, 5ff.

A similar passage occurs in Asaṅga's *Mahāyānasamgraha*.¹¹⁾ The mind operates deceptively because, although in reality it arises and perishes moment after moment as a new *dharmā*, it appears in the form of nonexisting substances enduring throughout a large number of moments such as *rūpa*. The problem is why this kind of operation needs to exist. Asaṅga answers that this deceiving operation of the mind should exist because it acts as support (*āśraya*) for perverted views (*viparyāsa* such as *samāropa*) which constitute defilement. If defilement did not exist, purification (*vyavadāna*) would not exist either. Briefly, if the working of the defiled mind did not exist, religious praxis would become meaningless.

(b) Why should the existential mode proper to the mind as deceiving appearance be the dependent (*paratantra*) mode? In other words, why should *abhūtaparikalpa* be essentially perishable? The answer is that, if it were not essentially perishable, there would be no possibility of emancipation. In fact, emancipation is attained only when the deceptive working of the mind has perished completely.¹²⁾

II. *Dvayan tatra na vidyate.*

How does the nonexistence of duality (*grāhyagrāhaka*) constitute an ontological condition of the significance of religious praxis? In other words, why is it necessary that the mind, although it exists as deceiving-appearance-only (*abhūtaparikalpo 'sti*), do not exist in the way it appears? Sthiramati answers that, if duality really existed, defilement would be permanent (*nitya*). Emancipation would then be impossible and all efforts to attain it would be fruitless.¹³⁾

11) T. vol. 31, nr. 1594, 138b23-c4; nr. 1597, 339a25-b6; nr. 1598, 401a14-b4; parallel in nr. 1585, 39b20-26.

12) *tatkṣayān muktir iṣyate* (MVK I. 4d).

13) MVT 21, 20-22.

The same idea may be formulated in another way. If the mind really existed in the way it appears (i.e. if duality existed in it), it would not be untrue (*abhūta*), but true (*bhūta*) or perfect (*pariniṣpanna*=*aviparīta*). In that case, defilement would not exist, the mind would perfectly intuit the real, and there would be no need for emancipation.

To summarize: if *grāhyagrāhaka* really existed, emancipation would be either impossible or needless. Therefore, the nonexistence of *grāhyagrāhaka* or of the imagined existential mode (*parikalpitasvabhāva*) is an ontological requisite of the meaningfulness of religious praxis.

III. Śūnyatā vidyate tv atra.

What exactly is the meaning of existence (*vidyate*) attributed to emptiness by this *pāda*? According to Vasubandhu both *abhūtaparikalpa* and *śūnyatā* are existent (*sat*, *yod-pa*, MVB 18, 5). Since this *pāda* establishes a relation of immanence between *śūnyatā* and *abhūtaparikalpa*, it follows that the way in which each of them exists is different. Let us consider (a) in what sense emptiness is said to exist and (b) why it is said to exist in this way.

(a) Emptiness is synonymous with the unconditioned or perfect existential mode (*pariniṣpannasvabhāva*) of dharmas. Each *dharma* as a conditioned existent, although it appears in the form of the imagined mode (*parikalpitasvabhāvākāra*) or although the imagined mode is superimposed (*samāruḥ*) on it, is always already (*sadā sarva-kālaṃ*) free from this imagined mode.¹⁴⁾ This "always already being free from" (*śūnyatā*, *virahitatā*) is the unconditioned (*asaṃskṛta*), unoriginated and unperishable (*prakṛti*), unchangeable (*avikāra*, *tatha-*

14) For definitions of *śūnyatā* or *pariniṣpannasvabhāva* cf. MVB 18, 2-3; MVT 11, 2-3 and 22, 16; *Triṃśikākārikā* 21cd; *Triṃśikābhāṣyā* 40, 4-5; *Trisvabrāvanirdeśa*, verse 3.

tā) mode inherent in all conditioned existents. *Pariniṣpannasvabhāva* or *śūnyatā* refers to the existential mode in virtue of which dependent (*paratantra*) dharmas are always already merely dependent, i.e. are never existing in the imagined self-dependent or substantial mode. Only, this mode of being-merely-dependent is itself not dependent but unconditioned. In other words, the nonexistence of the imagined mode is never a dependent nonexistence (such as nonexistence after having existed) but an absolute nonexistence (*atyanta-abhāva*).¹⁵⁾ Existing as merely dependent-on-another or never existing as self-dependent is the emptiness of dharmas, their always-already-established existential mode (*pariniṣpannasvabhāva*).

Further, emptiness is not mere nonexistence of the imagined mode but the existence of this nonexistence (*abhāvasya bhāva*, MVK I. 13ab) in the dependent mode. According to Sthiramati (MVT 47, 22), to say that emptiness exists as existence of nonexistence is not to say that it exists as *vastu*. Textual analysis shows that *vastu* or *dravya* refer to the dependent existential mode of dharmas.¹⁶⁾ To draw a clear distinction we could say that the ontological concept of existence applies to the dependent mode only. Ontologically speaking, dharmas as dependent (*paratantra*) exist while they do not exist as imagined (*parikalpita*). *Śūnyatā* or *pariniṣpannasvabhāva* is ontologically speaking neither existence like the *paratantrasvabhāva*, nor nonexistence like the *parikalpitasvabhāva*. It is neither existence nor nonexistence (*nā bhāvo nāpi cābhāvaḥ*, MVK I. 13c: *bhāvā-bhāvavimuktasvabhāva*, MVT 115, 13) but a mode beyond the ontological “is” (*bhāva* = *paratantra*) and “is not” (*abhāva* = *parikalpita*).

Sthiramati comments that, if emptiness were mere nonexistence

15) Cf. MVT 47, 13-20.

16) Cf. MVT 11, 13 (*abhūtaparikalpa* exists as *dravya*) and *Trimśikā-bhāṣya* 16, 11-12 and 16, 15-17 (*vijñānapariṇāma* exists as *vastu* or *dravya*).

and not existence of nonexistence, it would be equal to nothingness. In that case dharmas would not be empty, and duality would exist.¹⁷⁾ Emancipation would then be either impossible or needless (cf. II). Consequently, emptiness is a positive existential mode to be defined as existence of nonexistence.

(b) That all dharmas are empty in the sense explained above is a requisite of the possibility of emancipation. Sthiramati, commenting on MVK I. 1c, says: "In fact, emptiness is the pure object (that is, the object of pure knowledge—*nirvikalpajñāna*). This mode of being free from *grāhyagrāhaka* exists in the defiled mind. Therefore it is not true that there is no emancipation."¹⁸⁾ If dharmas were not always already intrinsically (that is, independent of the fact whether man realizes this or not) free from the imagined mode, any effort towards emancipation would be in vain. This is not to say, however, that the mode of being empty as such is emancipation. If it were so, all dharmas would be naturally emancipated and again there would be no need for religious praxis. I therefore used the expression "requisite of the *possibility* of emancipation." The fourth *pāda* is closely related to this problem.

IV. Tasyām api sa vidyate.

Under this heading three items will be discussed. For religious praxis to be meaningful and fruitful it is necessary that (a) emptiness get defiled (*samala*) by the immanence of the defiled mind in it and that (b) it get purified (*nirmala*) through religious praxis which eradicates the seeds of defilement. For emancipation to be possible it is also necessary that (c) emptiness, in spite of this change from a defiled to a pure state, do never relinquish its original purity

17) *anyathā dvayabhāvavyāstitvam eva syāt, tadbhāvasya sūnyatā avidyamānatvāt* (MVT 47, 2-3).

18) *sūnyatā hi viśuddhyālambanā, sā ca grāhyagrāhakarāhitatā 'bhūta-parikalpe 'stīti na mokṣābhāvaḥ* (MVT 12, 2-3).

(*prakṛtiviśuddhatva*, *prakṛtiprabhāsvaratā*). In other words, it is necessary that both the *samala* and *nirmala* stages and the change from *samala* to *nirmala* itself be extrinsic or adventitious (*āgantuka*, *kṛtrima*). Let us consider these three requisites in detail.¹⁹⁾

(a) Sthiramati raises the following problem.²⁰⁾ It emptiness always already exists in the defiled mind (*śūnyatā vidyate tv atra*), why is it that we do not always already realize this, so that we are emancipated naturally without making any effort? He answers that this is because the defiled mind in its turn exists in emptiness (*tasyām api sa vidyate*). As long as the defiled mind (*abhūtaparikalpa = kleśajñeyāvaraṇāni*) continues to exist, emptiness gets defiled (*upakliṣṭa*, *aviśuddha*, *samala*) and covered up (*āvṛta*) by it. That emptiness thus gets covered up is necessary for the meaningfulness of religion. If it were not so, every existent would be naturally emancipated without there being any need for religious praxis.²¹⁾

(b) It is also necessary that the Path eradicates the two veils (*āvaraṇa*) and uncovers or purifies emptiness.²²⁾ If religious praxis did not purify emptiness, it would be fruitless (*niṣphala*). Emancipation is the complete eradication of *abhūtaparikalpa* and the entire purification of emptiness.²³⁾

19) On *samala-nirmala*, *prakṛti-āgantuka* see MVB and MVT ad MVK I. 16, I. 21, II. 15a and 15c, V. 20-22.

20) MVT 11, 3-9; 12, 4-7 and 12, 21-25.

21) Cf. MVB 26, 17ff. and MVT 59, 15ff. ad MVK I. 21ab.

22) *na hy aviśodhitāyām śūnyatāyām mokṣo 'sti* (MVT 12, 24; cf. also MVB 27, 2-3 and MVT 60, 4-11 ad MVK I. 21cd). On the gradual eradication of *jñeyāvaraṇa*, paralleled by the gradual uncovering of *tathatā* cf. MVT 98, 11ff.

23) Cf. MVT 125, 19 (*nirvāṇa* defined as *ekāntanirmalatathatā*).

One problem: does the mind in its dependent mode continue to exist in *nirvāṇa*, or does the eradication of *abhūtaparikalpa* ipso facto mean the eradication of the mind in its dependent or conditioned mode? The text identifies *abhūtaparikalpa* with the dependent (MVK I. 5) or conditioned

(Continued on next page)

(c) If emptiness is first defiled (cf. a) and gets purified later (cf. b) in the course of the Path, how can it be the unchangeable, always-already-accomplished (*pariniṣpanna*) existential mode of dharmas? The distinction between adventitiousness (*āgantukatva*) and intrinsic nature (*prakṛti*) provides the answer to this problem.

First, *abhūtaparikalpa* is not the intrinsic nature of dharmas but their adventitious or extrinsic appearance.²⁴⁾ The intrinsic nature of dharmas is their emptiness as always pure (*prakṛtiviśuddha*). Any defilement, caused by the existence of *abhūtaparikalpa* in emptiness (*tasyām api sa vidyate*) is extrinsic (*āgantuka*) and does in no way affect the original purity of dharmas. If this defilement were intrinsic, all efforts to eradicate it would be in vain. In fact, it is by definition impossible to eradicate the original or intrinsic nature of dharmas.

Second, if dharmas never get defiled intrinsically, it follows that

(Continued from p. 46)

(MVB 18,11-12) mode. K'uei-chi, however, remarks that *abhūtaparikalpa* refers *only* to the *defiled* aspect of the dependent mode (T. vol. 44, nr. 1835, 2b12-14 ad MVK I. 1; cf. also 成唯識論, T. vol. 31, nr. 1585, 39b2-8). The pure aspect of the dependent mode corresponds to the working of *prṣṭhalabdhajñāna* or *śuddhalaukikajñāna*, which remains active in *nirvāṇa*. MVK, MVB and MVT do not distinguish these two aspects in the dependent mode, but the idea of a pure dependent mode is not absent (cf. e.g. MVT 22,14-15 and 118,14-17). *Nirvāṇa* is complete eradication of the defiled *paratantra* only. On the realization of emptiness (= *pariniṣpannasvabhāva*) through *nirvikalpajñāna* follows a necessary return to the *paratantrasvabhāva*. In fact, the purpose of the Path is to know the dependent mode as dependent. This knowledge is impossible if not preceded by knowledge of the *pariniṣpannasvabhāva* (*na-adṛṣṭe 'smin [pariniṣpannasvabhāve] sa [paratantrasvabhāva] dṛśyate*, Trīmśikākārikā 22d). *Prṣṭhalabdhajñāna* is the dependent mode knowing itself as dependent. It is the working of the mind in its pure *paratantra* mode. It knows *paratantra* dharmas as *māyā*, as empty of the imagined mode appearing in them.

24) Not the dependent mode as such, but only the *defiled* dependent mode (*abhūtaparikalpa*) is *āgantuka* (cf. note 23, p. [46]).

they never get purified intrinsically either. Because dharmas are intrinsically pure, the change from the defiled (*samala*) to the pure (*nirmala*) state never results in an intrinsic purification. Both the defiled and pure states are adventitious.²⁵⁾

Third, if both the defiled and pure states are adventitious, it follows that also the change from defilement to purity is adventitious. This is expressed by saying that this change is only a *re*-turn (*parāvṛtti*) to, a *re*-covering of an original purity which was always already there.

That dharmas get extrinsically defiled and purified is a requisite of the meaningfulness of religious praxis (cf. IV. (a) and (b)). It is, however, all the more necessary that dharmas be originally pure, lest the extrinsic change from defilement to purity as a *re*-turn be impossible. Precisely because dharmas are intrinsically always already “turned” (*parāvṛtta*) or purified, does the change from defilement to purity as a *re*-turn (*parāvṛtti*) become possible.²⁶⁾ This return is attained by the realization (*adhigam*, MVT 242, 20) that, intrinsically, the “turn” is always already accomplished.

25) *tena yadi dharmmadhātuh saṃkliṣyate vā viśuddhyate veti kalpayaty ayam antaḥ, prakṛtyasaṃkliṣṭasya saṃkleśaviśuddhyabhāvād* (MVB 71, 15-17). Cf. also MVK V. 21 (both *aviśuddhi* and *viśuddhi* are *āgantuka*); *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra*, ed. S. Lévi, XI. 27-29, p. 61-62 (both *vipakṣa* and *pṛatipakṣa* are like *māyā*); MVT 239, 19-20 (*avidyā* is not to be eradicated, *vidyā* not to be produced); MVK V. 22 (there is no real perishing of impure dharmas and no real growth of pure dharmas, no intrinsic eradication of *samsāra* and no intrinsic growth of *nirvāṇa*).

26) The *Dharmadharmatāvibhaṅgavṛtti* clearly states that the *āśraya-parāvṛtti* has always already taken place and is permanent (*rtaḥ-pa*) (Tib. Ed. by J. Nozawa, p. 44, 2-45, 5).

Here we come across the *fait primitif* of religion: absolute reality (the fully accomplished mode of dharmas) is always already. Religion finds its *raison d'être* in the *re*-turn to, the *re*-covering of an ultimate reality, which always already is, albeit in the mode of coveredness and forgottenness.

Conclusion

1. I have shown that MVK I. 1 gives an ontological foundation to the Buddhist religion. Religious praxis is meaningful because the defiled mind exists (*abhūtaparikalpo 'sti*). Religious praxis can eradicate defilement and is fruitful because *abhūtaparikalpa* is essentially perishable (*paratantra*) and adventitious (*āgantuka*).

Next, if duality really existed, religious praxis would be in vain and emancipation impossible or needless. Therefore, the intrinsic nature of the mind as always already empty, intrinsically pure, and always already "turned" (*dvayam tatra na vidyate, śūnyatā vidyate tv atra*) is a requisite of the possibility of emancipation. MVK I. 1 establishes the significance of religion by affirming both the intrinsic nature (*dvayam tatra na vidyate, śūnyatā vidyate tv atra*) and the adventitious character (*abhūtaparikalpo 'sti, tasyām api sa vidyate*) of the mind.

2. The Early Yogācāra-Buddhists developed a new ontological foundation of the Four Truths: defilement (*duḥkhasatya*) and its cause (*samudayasatya*, the mutual causality between *ālayavijñāna* and *pravṛttivijñānas*) exist. But there is a Path (*mārgasatya*) which, when followed, will lead to emancipation (*nirodhasatya*). In developing their ontology (its main features are e. g. attribution of existence to the *paratantrasvabhāva*, definition of emptiness as existence of nonexistence) they opposed the Mādhyamikas. They must have been dissatisfied with the Mādhyamika-ontology because it did not seem to provide a sufficient basis of religious praxis.

3. The title of this paper says: "the ontological foundation of religious praxis." It should be remembered, however, that in Buddhism there is not first ontology and then religion, but that ontology is rather a postulate of religion. What I mean is that MVK I. 1 reflects the following pattern of reasoning: "For my religion to be meaningful and emancipation to be possible, it is necessary that

ahūtaparikalpa exists, duality does not exist etc.”. In other words, the existence of *abhūtaparikalpa*, emptiness etc. are not proven, but simply postulated as ontological requisites of the meaningfulness of religion.

Finally, the relation ontology-religion involves the following circle. Only the saint engaged in the Buddhist Path will be able to see things the way they are, and reach the insights laid down in Buddhist ontology. On the other hand, the Buddhist Path itself owes its meaningfulness to this ontology. And again, for the enlightened who has reached insight into the way things are, religion itself has ceased. Seen from the level of the highest truth (*paramārthasatya*) religion itself becomes *āgantuka*.