

THE CONTINUITY OF MADHYAMAKA AND
YOGĀCĀRA IN INDIAN MAHĀYĀNA
BUDDHISM

by IAN CHARLES HARRIS

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DESTRUAM ET AEDIFICABO

- Proudhon

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Author: Ian Charles Harris
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ABSTRACT

In the history of Buddhist scholarship it has been the convention to treat the Madhyamaka and Yogācārin strands of the Mahāyāna as separate and fundamentally opposed schools of thought. This thesis represents an attempt to explore the relationship between the two in some detail and comes to the conclusion that earlier assessments are not justified by either textual evidence, or by underlying trends in the history of the development of Buddhist thought as such.

The overall substance of the thesis is a general reappraisal of the ontological and epistemological doctrines contained in the writings of Nāgārjuna, Asāṅga and Vasubandhu with particular reference to the earliest Buddhist philosophical texts available. By turning to the texts themselves, and assigning a lesser significance to the commentarial literature of a later period, it is possible to show considerable overlap in all areas of doctrine, but particularly the treatment of the levels of truth, the understanding of the enlightened and the unenlightened states and their relation to an indeterminate existence realm, the nature of that realm; and finally the function and status of language and thought.

As a result of these investigations it is possible to erect a new theory to explain the proliferation of Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism which does not operate on a schismatic basis, but rather accounts for variety as the consequence of individual authors addressing new audiences, and specific contemporary problems, from a firm and consistent doctrinal bedrock.

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INTRODUCTION

VERITAS SEQUITUR ESSE RERUM - AQUINAS

In the first chapter the intention will be to demonstrate that Nāgārjuna accepts the distinction between the enlightened and the unenlightened state. These states may be understood implicitly in terms of states of mind. The former will then be represented by jñāna/prajñā, while the latter corresponds to viññāna. The essential difference between the two is that viññāna is contaminated by a variety of mental concomitants such as prapañca and vikalpa; jñāna is not. Conditioned by avidyā, viññāna is unable to reproduce a true picture of things. The world appears to be constructed of substantial entities. Jñāna results in the destruction of this erroneous world view. Through jñāna things are understood not as independent, but as interdependent (pratītyasamutpanna). However, and this is a discussion which is examined in more detail in Chapter 5, since language is itself a form of expression entirely implicated in the distorted world view, it follows that the truth about reality must be inexpressible.

Chapter 2 examines the logical stance taken by Nāgārjuna. This clearly shows that he does not adhere to the prasāṅga method often associated with him. His method is based on certain axioms common to Buddhist tradition as a whole, and one would be wrong, in consequence, in assigning him the status of seminal thinker. It is the view of this thesis that Nāgārjuna both adheres to the doctrine of the

inexpressibility of truth, and maintains the existence of an ontological truth realm, ie. he is not a nihilist. Truth is revealed beyond the borders of language. In a sense then it would be correct to say that for Nāgārjuna the true nature of things lies midway between the dichotomies of language - between existence and non-existence. The structure of language cannot exhaust the way things truly are. This being so one cannot deny the existence of reality nihilistically, and in consequence, one will be forced to admit an ontologically indeterminate realm, a realm which cannot be determined in terms of existence or non-existence. The doctrine of śūnyatā is intimately tied to this. The true nature of things is dependently originated (pratītyasamutpāda). This state is falsely cognised in the unenlightened state. Bodhi therefore represents the enlightened mind purged of avidyā, etc. Bodhi then is śūnyatā in the sense that it is empty of the defilements of ignorance. Śūnyatā is not an ontological state, but rather a state of mind in which there is a true identification of cogniser and cognised - a state incapable of articulation.

In Chapter 3 we analyse Nāgārjuna's connection with early Buddhism and find a general continuity of thought. We go on to contrast the nirvāṇa/saṃsāra dichotomy with what we have already discussed. As a result nirvāṇa can be clearly associated with bodhi - that state of mind in which the dichotomies generated by prapañca have been eradicated, while saṃsāra becomes identified with the world picture composed through the agency of viññāna. Both nirvāṇa and saṃsāra then do not represent ontological states. On the contrary, they are shown to be orientations to one ontological,

though unpredic-able realm, which is itself the base for the arising of both viññāna and jñāna/prajñā.

With chapter 4 we turn our attention to the Yogācāra. We question the view of the older generation of scholars who wished to establish radical differences between this school and the position of Nāgārjuna. We show that many of these attempts are based both on an interpretation of Nāgārjuna's teaching passed down through Candrakīrti, and on certain presuppositions inherited from the history of Western thought. Candrakīrti's understanding of Yogācāra was that it was preliminary to the study of Madhyamaka. We are able to show that this is simply not so. Candrakīrti misunderstands the basis of the Yogācāra teachings and attributes positions to them which they do not hold. In fact the axioms of the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra are common. The idea of an initiatory scheme of Buddhist teaching, with the Madhyamaka at the top is exposed as a very late development in the history of Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism.

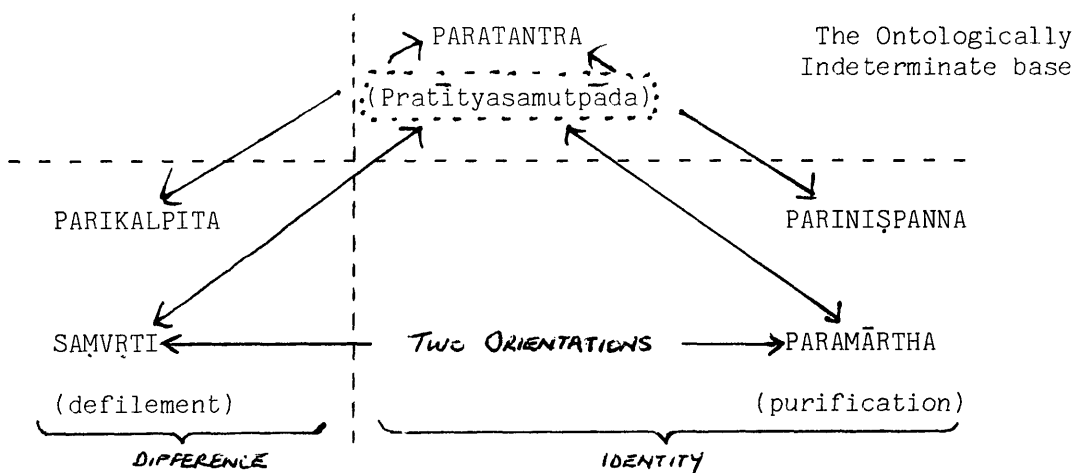
The important doctrine of the levels of truth as it crops up throughout the history of Buddhist thought is explored in Chapters 5 and 6. We discover a bewildering assortment of differing formulations which can however be simplified quite consistently. Two strands can be identified in the early material. Both are underpinned by a theory of language, though these theories are divergent. In the first two separate areas of discourse may be identified; implicit (nītattha) language about things, and that which is termed explicit (neyattha). The former is in accordance with conventional usage, while the latter reflects the Buddhist understanding of things. The latter is therefore

accurate and supplies a true picture of the world. This particular teaching is the forerunner of the dharma theory of the Abhidharma which seems to be refuted in the writings of the Mahāyāna. In the Abhidharma language which takes into account the dharmic constitution of things is said to be ultimately true (paramattha), while that which does not is only conventionally so (sammuti).

The theory of truths which is developed in the Mahāyāna can also be found in the early tradition. This theory is entirely consistent with the understanding of language discussed in Chapters 1 and 2 and accepted by both the Madhyamaka and the Yogācāra. According to this particular strand of thinking, whatever is expressed is essentially contaminated by viññāna and its mental concomitants, and as such constitutes a false picture of things. Ultimately truth, and hence the teaching of the Buddha, is equated with silence.

It may not be attained through the processes of thought, but rather through their elimination. The problem with this particular formulation is that by accepting it one must automatically hold to the corollary; that everything which is expressed is false. The doctrine of three natures (trisvabhāva) expounded in the Prajñāpāramitā and by the Yogācāra is an attempt to show that the two truth doctrine should not be taken in such a manner. There are no essential differences between the two and three nature formulations - the latter simply makes explicit what was implicit in the former. This takes us back to our distinction between an ontologically indeterminate realm and the two orientations towards it. In the Madhyamaka it is quite clear that the ultimate (paramārtha) and the conventional

(saṃvṛti) truths refer to the perspectives associated with jñāna and vijñāna respectively. Now, it has already been noted in Chapter 3, these viewpoints only have efficacy because they relate to the ontological realm identified with pratītyasamutpāda. The Madhyamaka clearly has a hidden central term therefore. Hidden of course because it cannot be articulated. The three nature theory consequently supplies this seeming missing term, while at the same time recognising its essential non-predic-ability. One cannot hold that the teachings of Madhyamaka and Yogācāra are at odds on this particular point therefore. The diagram below will show how this is so:



Chapter 7 looks at the nature of the base for the appearance of the defiled and purified visions of things in more detail and finds that the Buddhist tradition as a whole again supports the stance taken by the Madhyamaka and the Yogācāra. Pratītyasamutpāda is the key concept in the Buddhist systems. It is identical to the way things truly are and as such is inexpressible. It provides the rationale for the workings of the Four Noble Truths and hence for the attainments of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa. Two separate treatments of pratītyasamutpāda are actually found in Buddhist literature.

Firstly, the fundamental doctrine itself which was discovered by, though is seemingly independent of the Buddha, and secondly the 12-linked formula. While the former is itself identical^{with} the inexplicably true state of things, the 12 fold formula is a rationalisation of the two epistemic orientations and as such helps to explain the Four Noble Truths. The forward sequence corresponds to the first and second truths, while the reverse is connected with the third and fourth. These different treatments of pratītyasamutpāda exactly mirror the two and three-fold truth formulations as expounded in the previous two chapters.

The body of this thesis is an attempt to argue against the traditional, scholarly view that the Madhyamaka and Yogacāra present two radically opposed sets of doctrines. It is demonstrated that on a number of grounds the traditional view cannot be sustained. One further problem remains however. A great number of scholars believe that what distinguishes the Yogacāra from the rest of Buddhism is its idealistic tendencies. The final chapter represents an attempt to test such an attitude. By examining early materials associated with the notion of mind it is shown that, while taken out of context, certain sections of texts may seem idealistic, this is not so when seen against the proper background. From the earliest times Buddhism has recognised the distinction which was treated in the first chapter; namely the distinction between the defiled and the purified mind. Remembering the fact that ultimate truth is inarticulable, one may equate, from the conventional point of view, Bodhi with the purified mind, and the unenlightened state with defilement. Talk of a luminous mind (prabhāsvara citta) in the Nikāyas and at other places is a

clear reference to bodhi. However at various stages in its history Buddhism has found the need to explain to its critics how karma, and general mental continuity may be maintained, without falling into the trap of holding a permanent, unchanging mind. This is the function of terms like bhavāṅga, and in the Yogācāra, ālayavijñāna. Both of these concepts should not be confused with a Brahmanical absolute such as ātman. They both perform an explanatory function while at the same time avoiding the pit falls of absolutism, which all Buddhists must steer clear of. This being so, the charge of idealism does not stick. The sole difference between the Yogācāra and Madhyamaka on this point is that for the former questions of mental continuity are crucial in an attempt to argue against Brahmanic tendencies, while for the latter they are not. However the Yogācāra follows the traditional line on this matter, and does not in the case of the ālayavijñāna, introduce a novel concept. Chapter 8 then provides the final link in the thesis. There is a continuity of thought from the early period, through Madhyamaka to the Yogācāra. In the doctrine of ālayavijñāna there is no deviation from tradition, and in consequence no establishment of a novel position. In fact the only dissimilarities between these individual elements ^{of} tradition may be shown to be ones which are basically indicative of preoccupation and not of essential disunity.

Chapter One

A Preliminary Examination of Madhyamaka Ontology

In the past many assumptions have been made concerning the relationships between the Madhyamaka and Vijñānavāda schools of Mahāyāna Buddhism which on further analysis may prove to be unfounded. Typically the Vijñānavādin is seen as someone who wishes to hypostatise consciousness (viññāna, citta, viññapti) leading to the conclusion that consciousness is the sole reality (viññaptimātra), whereas on the other hand the Madhyamaka maintains a non-committal attitude towards ontology. It is very easy, particularly given the present nature of scholarship into the subject, to be led into adopting such an attitude but, on further reflection one is forced to ask a number of questions.

In the first place when we speak of the Madhyamaka school of thought we ordinarily think, mainly because of its dominant position in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, of the Madhyamaka-Prāsāngika school founded sometime in the 7th century A.D. by Candrakīrti⁽¹⁾. That Candrakīrti was an opponent of a particular point of view regarding the doctrine of consciousness only (cittamātra) and the existence of a store-consciousness ālayaviññāna both of which are generally associated with the Vijñānavādins, there can be no doubt⁽²⁾. However two questions follow from this statement;- (a) Has Candrakīrti faithfully reproduced the doctrines of his root texts which in this case are the writings of Nāgārjuna, and (b) in his argument with the Vijñānavāda has he adhered to his prasaṅga method of reasoning and therefore

not ascribed to his opponents' doctrines which they do not in fact hold?

The second major query concerns the doctrinal position of Nāgārjuna and in particular the range of Nāgārjuna's authorship. It has been paradigmatic among the older generation of scholars, when dealing with the works of Nāgārjuna to brush aside the evidence of the Buddhist tradition and treat only those works which deal exclusively with the doctrines of emptiness (sūnyatā) and the non-existence of the self nature of dharmas (dharmaniḥsvabhāvatā) as being exclusively authentic works of our author. T.R.V. Murti is a good case in point. In his study of the Madhyamaka he lists the works of Nāgārjuna ascribed by the Tibetan and Chinese tradition ⁽³⁾ and then abandons all but two, the Madhyamakakārikā ⁽⁴⁾ and the Vigrahavyāvartanī ⁽⁵⁾ in the elucidation of the distinctive Madhyamaka philosophy, irrespective of the fact that many of the other texts firmly held to be works of Nāgārjuna by the Buddhist tradition express ideas which in some respects would lead to an attenuation of the overall doctrine. Such a state of affairs could be compared to one in which for many years a group of researchers based all their knowledge of Shakespeare's work, life and times solely on the sonnets simply because as a corpus a certain underlying theme runs through them all. As a consequence the plays being formally different and treating disparate themes are relegated into being the works of others, fraudently ascribed to the bard.

There seems to be a number of objections to such judgements. In the first place why would someone having produced a major work of literature, and in our case elevating religious discourses, wish to deny authorship and in so doing pass this distinction on to someone whose output was meagre (2 works) and in any case died possibly hundreds of years before? In the second place the judgement of authenticity based on doctrinal accord with an axiomatically authentic text, such as the Madhyamakakārikā is really just as unsound as judgement based on other criteria, since we have no knowledge of Nāgārjuna's intentions when he embarked on his writing career. This situation has been noted by Buddhist scholars of the younger generation and the tide now seems to be turning in the field of Nāgārjuna studies. The recent publication of a book by Chr. Lindtner ⁽⁶⁾ perhaps exemplifies more than any others this change of thinking. Although he regards the authenticity of the kārikās as axiomatic he nevertheless applies a number of important criteria to arrive at his list of Nāgārjuna's works. Firstly a work may have been ascribed by a "trustworthy" witness such as Candrakīrti, Bhāvaviveka, Śāntarakṣita and the like. Secondly a work must have a place in a grand scheme which Lindtner wants to propose was really in Nāgārjuna's mind. In other words a comprehensive treatment of the doctrine and the path of the Buddhists of the Mahāyāna persuasion along the lines of Asaṅga's Mahāyānasamgraha ⁽⁷⁾. And thirdly throughout the corpus of texts there should be a general agreement in style, scope and doctrine. As a result of his deliberations Lindtner passes twelve works (in addition

to the kārikās) as being authentic. These are the Śūnyatāsaptati, Vigrahavyāvartanī, Vaidalyaprakaraṇa, Yuktiṣaṣṭikā, Catuhstava, Ratnāvalī, Pratītyasamutpādayakārikā, Sūtrasamuccaya, Bodhicittavivaraṇa, Suḥṛllekha and the Bodhisambhāra.

With the kārikās themselves the first five of the above works are held by the Tibetan tradition to belong to the theoretical/scholastic works of Nāgārjuna otherwise known as the logical (yukti; tib:- rigs tshogs) corpus. P. Williams ⁽⁸⁾ has subjected Lindtner's method to scrutiny and points out various defects. To start with the first of Lindtner's trustworthy witnesses, Bhāvaviveka, lived approximately 350 years after Nāgārjuna ⁽⁹⁾, and the others lived a considerable time after that. With regard to the consistency in style, scope and doctrine Williams ⁽¹⁰⁾ points out that to be convincing when working from Tibetan and Chinese translations from the original Sanskrit is in itself a highly dubious enterprise. Williams' most severe criticism is very much in conformity however with the views expressed by older scholars mentioned above. He believes that if we hold the authenticity of the kārikās as axiomatic then a putative work of Nāgārjuna concerning a topic not dealt with in the kārikās is difficult to ascribe since we have left the safety of comparison and have given first priority to witnesses etc. in our criteria of judgement. Williams therefore ends up in the position adopted by D. S. Ruegg who feels that because of the:-

"... opacity and confusion in the records as well as the uncertainty concerning the authorship of several works ascribed to Nāgārjuna, it will be convenient for the historians of the Madhyamaka to

take as his point of departure the treatise universally considered as the Madhyamakāśāstra par excellence - namely the MMK (Mūla-Madhyamakakārikā) - together with any other texts ascribable to the same author that are doctrinally related, and to regard this textual corpus as a standard of reference when describing Nāgārjuna's philosophy." (11)

As I have demonstrated that there are no good grounds for holding such a position it is my intention to adopt a modified version of Lindtner's list of authentic works bearing in mind the criticisms of Williams, who admits "... my caution is not damning. It is simply caution". (12) As both the Tibetan and Chinese tradition are unanimous and Lindtner's analysis confirms tradition I intend to work on the basis that the texts of the logical (yukti) corpus are original works of Nāgārjuna.

Before turning therefore to an examination of the doctrines of the Kārikās, which must nevertheless still be considered the most important of the texts from the point of view of the development of the latter Madhyamaka tradition, let us look briefly at the other works mentioned to find any evidence which can confirm the often expressed opinion that the Madhyamaka and the Vijñānavāda are doctrinally irreconcilable systems of thought.

Ontological Speculation in Nāgārjuna's subsidiary works

In the first place it must be quite clearly stated that nowhere in the corpus of works which we accept are authentically those of Nāgārjuna, is there to be found an explicit condemnation

of the notion that prajñā represents a state of awareness in which things are seen as they are (yathābhūtam). This is a very surprising fact given Nāgārjuna's insistence that all phenomena (dharma) are empty (śūnya) since they lack own-being (svabhāva) because they occur only in mutual dependence (pratītyasamutpanna).

"That which has arisen dependently on this and that, that has not arisen substantially (svabhāvataḥ). That which has not arisen substantially, how can it literally (nāma) be called arisen?" (13)

The nearest we find Nāgārjuna coming to a specific criticism of consciousness is his demonstration that viññāna, as a member of the group of skandhas, is dependent and hence empty which may be found in chapter 4 of the Madhyamakakārikās. However viññāna in this treatment is always considered as a thing dependent on internal and external sensefields (āyatana) and can therefore not be equated with the notion of an abiding consciousness such as the bhavāṅga put forward in the Nikāyas and subsequently elaborated by the Yogācāra. These particular doctrines will be examined in detail in Chapter 8 of this thesis. However it should be noted that Nāgārjuna's understanding of viññānaskandha is totally in accord with that of the earliest Buddhist writings. Of equal importance is the fact that the Vijñānavādins too adopt such a position. For them the six evolved consciousnesses (pravṛttiviññāna), since they arise in dependence, must from ultimate point of view be considered to be empty (śūnya). This seems to be all that Nāgārjuna means when he says:-

"Consciousness (viññāna) occurs dependent upon the internal and external sensefields (āyatana). There consciousness is empty (śūnya), like mirages and illusions (marīcimāyāvāt). Since consciousness (viññāna) arises dependent on a discernible object (viññeya), the discernible does not exist (in itself)" (14)

Both consciousness and the external object then are dependent, and hence devoid of ownbeing (svabhāva).

It is a curious fact that the Bodhicittavivaraṇa is the only work attributed by tradition to Nāgārjuna which features an obvious critique of a position similar to that adopted by the Vijñānavādins. However this work is never mentioned by Candrakīrti, the only trustworthy witness for its authenticity being Bhāvaviveka in his Ratnapradīpa (15). This does not encourage one to incorporate the text in the Nāgārjuna corpus, quite apart from the fact that the standard of argument is not what one would expect from the Ācārya himself. Not only is the refutation sophistical it is also contradictory. (16) Two examples of sophistry will suffice to prove the low degree of argumentation. Firstly with reference to the three natures our author says:-

".. the imagined (parikalpita), the dependent (paratantra) and the absolute (pariniṣpanna) have only one nature of their own : emptiness. They are the imaginations (kalpanā) of mind (citta)" (17)

He does not attempt to follow this statement up. It is a condemnation without support. Similarly we are blandly told that:-

"Mind (citta) is but a name (nāmamātra). It is nothing apart from (its) name. Consciousness must be regarded as but a name. The name has no own-being (Svabhāva)". (18)

This second statement is clearly an untenable position if it raises the objection outlined at the beginning of the Vigrahavyāvartanī, an objective^{on} we will discuss in more depth in Chapter 2. The opponent in this text asks how it is possible for Nāgārjuna to maintain the truth if he also allows that all things are empty. Since emptiness applies to words themselves, how can they be used for the purpose of demonstrating such truth? Applying ourselves to the statement that since mind (citta) is merely a name and hence has no ownbeing, we are in fact met by incoherence. In the first place the logic of the claim is confused and in the second, even if we were to accept that names have no svabhāva, we must not make the assumption that the object denoted by the name, ie. mind (citta) is also devoid of its svabhāva.

Actually reading through the Bodhicittavivarāṇa carefully, one is struck by many inconsistencies. The author at one point reverses his critique of the Vijñānavāda by affirming a central doctrine of the school.

Thus: "The (Buddha's) instruction about the aggregates, elements etc (merely) aims at dispelling the belief in a self (ātmagraha). By establishing (themselves) in consciousness only (citta-mātra) the greatly blessed (bodhisattvas) also abandon that (instruction)". (19)

Returning to our theme let us ask ourselves a question. If

Nāgārjuna is totally opposed to the existence of a mind, would he not also be concerned to refute the notion of terms which rely for their existence and efficaciousness on such a mental substratum? I am in particular thinking of terms which are derived from the verbal root jñā. We can answer this question to the contrary. Nāgārjuna uses many terms of this type that indicate the fact that knowledge (jñāna) seems to exist from the ultimate point of view. Thus we are told in the Yuktiṣaṣṭikā-kārikā:-

"Just as the Buddhas have spoken of "my" and "I" for pragmatic reasons, thus they have also spoken of the aggregates skandha, the sense-fields (āyatana) and the elements (dhātu) for pragmatic reasons. The great elements etc. (mahabhūta) are absorbed in consciousness (viñāna). They are dissolved by understanding them. Certainly they are falsely imagined (mithyā vikalpita)". (20)

Here then two separate domains of knowledge are being explicated. The first, with referents such as the notion of "I" and mine, has a pragmatic truth value which on a higher level is seen as characterised by false imagination. A higher form of knowledge appears to be born when the notions of the pragmatic level are dissolved in understanding (tajjñāne vigamaṃ). (21) It does seem difficult to believe how Nāgārjuna would refute the notion of mind while at the same time adhering to this distinction between forms of knowledge. Knowledge seems to presuppose some mental apparatus by which the former gains efficacy.

In the above quotation from the Yuktiṣaṣṭikā-kārikā we have the classical distinction between a mundane form of consciousness usually

associated with the term viññāna, and a higher level form of consciousness which, as we shall see below, Nāgārjuna gives the name jñāna or prajñā. These two forms of consciousness reflect the two level of truth doctrine held by all the Madhyamakas and, as we shall see in Chapters 5 and 6, by all the Buddhist schools, would appear to represent the mechanisms by which the world view of an ordinary person (prthagjana) and a saint (ārya) differ. However this point of view is not peculiar to the Madhyamakas. The distinction is made in Abhidharmakośa:-

"En effect la connaissance spéculative (prajñā) par laquelle on pénètre et comprend, a le même domaine (viśaya) que la connaissance vulgaire (viññāna) . (22)

and de la Vallée Poussin goes on to say:-

"D'après les Vibhajyavādins, le jñāna est bon en soi; le viññāna est bon quand il est associé à jñāna (Kosa iv 8b, p33 n.3): ce qui peut s'entendre que le jñāna est le "savoir supramondain", et que le viññāna savoir mondain, est bon lorsqu'il est consécutif au savoir supramondain". (23)

The precise definition of these various psychological terms, all of which are derived from the root jñā is a matter of some debate among scholars and will be left to a more suitable occasion for detailed discussion, but at least one point is already clear.

This is the distinction between the mundane form of knowledge designated by the term viññāna and the knowledge or knowledges of a higher order termed jñāna or prajñā. It seems in fact that prajñā and jñāna are more or less interchangeable terms. J. May

tells us that:-

"... il existe entre citta et prajñā la même opposition qu'entre viñāna et jñāna, connaissance empirique discursive et connaissance métaphysique intuitive". (24)

In Nāgārjuna's system one of the fundamental features is the emphasis on the development of higher order forms of knowledge.

This is stated again and again. Thus:-

"When one sees that which arises conditioned by ignorance (avidyāpratyaya) with a correct knowledge (samyagjñāna), no origination (utpāda) or destruction (nirodha) whatsoever is perceived (upalabhyate)". (25)

When someone has developed this correct knowledge (samyagjñāna) then reality (tattva) is seen clearly and ignorance (avidyā) is destroyed. It follows that since avidyā is the first link in the twelve fold chain of mutual dependence (dvādasāṅgika-pratītya-samutpāda), it is the cause of viñāna (the third member in the series) and hence when avidyā is destroyed by jñāna then so too is viñāna. We will examine this in detail in Chapter 7. However this is the meaning of MMK, xxvi, 11. One who has arrived at such a realisation possesses a mind (citta) without a standpoint (sthāna)⁽²⁶⁾, has produced an eye of knowledge (jñānacakṣuḥ)⁽²⁷⁾ and in consequence the errors of defilement (kleśadoṣa) that torment due to false knowledge (mithyājñāna) do not arise.⁽²⁸⁾

Now most scholars recognise that the task of Nāgārjuna was partly to bring about an integration of the thought contained in that

corpus of literature generally called Prajñāpāramitā. Murti typifies this notion:-

"The Mādhyamika philosophy is a systematisation of the Prajñāpāramitā treatises". (29)

A typical text of the P.P. corpus is the Aṣṭasāhasrikā. In this work the perfection (pāramitā) of prajñā is mentioned in a number of places as the chief of the other five perfect-ions (dāna - charity, śīla - morality, kṣānti - forbearance, dhyāna - meditation and vīrya - heroic energy) in the sense that it is a guiding and regulating factor by which the other five may operate effectively. To quote Murti again:-

"A mind swayed by passions and attached to the world cannot know the truth; the distracted mind (samāhita citta) is incapable of perceiving the truth for lack of steadiness in attention. All the other pāramitās are meant to purify the mind and make it fit to receive the intuition of the absolute (prajñā). It is prajñāpāramitā again that can complete them, make each of them a pāramitā ..." (30)

Given these facts we will have difficulty in disagreeing with Lindtner's contention that in all the works of Nāgārjuna that we are considering to be authentic, the notion and explication of one single pāramitā (ie prajñā) is central. (31)

This is because it is as the result of prajñā that a person embarked on a spiritual path is able to transcend the common-sense (vyavahāra) world view which sees things (dharmas) with respect to their characteristics (lakṣaṇa) and own-being (svabhāva) and enters a field of cognition where ultimately these things do not exist in the way they were formerly imputed

but rather, are empty (śūnya) of such defining marks as lakṣaṇa and svabhāva. If we did wish to make a clear distinction between prajñā and jñāna we could do no better than to endorse Lindtner's view that:-

"The culmination of prajñā ... is jñāna, or intuitive insight into reality (tattva) beyond the duality of (is) asti and (is not) nāsti. This jñāna is also the suspension of avidyā which, as we have seen, in the final analysis is based on the wrong assumption of existence and non-existence etc". (32)

In the texts we are dealing with, Nāgārjuna does not define either of these two terms but we may safely assume that while prajñā is a continually evolving faculty dependent on the path and involving analysis, jñāna is the end result of such a development, and in consequence, is entirely empty (śūnya) of the miscellaneous defilements.

One of the major features shared by both the Madhyamaka and the Vijñānavāda is the notion that ignorance (avidyā) has as its root characteristic, the dichotomosing tendencies of the common sense worldview. The Vijñānavādins place pride of place on the false distinction between a subject and an object (grāhyagrāhakakalpanā). For Vasubandhu therefore, when the mind is at work in an ordinary person a transformation takes place such that the distinction between being conscious of something (viñāna) and something of which one is conscious (viñeya) arises. This dichotomy is called a representation (viñapti). Of course this does not mean that the viñapti

is caused by viñāna. On the contrary, from the viñapti proceeds the viñāna/viñeya combination which itself produces the idea of subjects and objects (grāhya-grāhaka). This is the sense of the Vijñānavādin doctrine that everything is representation only (viñaptimātra). This of course does not imply the idealistic connotation that many authors have seen fit to put on it. For Vasubandhu reality is observed by the subject/object dichotomy:-

"This transformation of viñāna is a (falsely constructed) dichotomy (of subject and object). That which is falsely reconstructed is not real. Therefore this everthing is nothing but representation (viñaptimātra)" (33)

A doctrine of a quite similar style is also maintained by Nāgārjuna. The Śūnyatāsaptatikārikā for instance seeks to demonstrate that the reality of things lies between the two extremes of permanence (sāsvata) and annihilation (uccheda):

"If there is being (sat) there is permanence; if there is non-being (asat) there is necessarily annihilation ... To experience the two as mutually excluding (parasparaviparyaya) is a mistake (viparyaya) ... Therefore it is not logical that Nirvāna is being and non-being". (34)

Another way these dichotomously opposed principles lead to errors regarding the way the true state of things is presented, is described in the Yuktiṣaṣṭikā-kārikā where we are told that:-

"Those whose intelligence (buddhi) has transcended being and non-being (astināsti) and is unsupported have discovered the profound and inobjective meaning of condition (pratyaya).

Being and non-being are only one pair of opposites which are inappropriate for use when talking of reality. The mind addicted to discursive thought (vikalpa) automatically generates such sets in its doomed attempt to describe reality. However:-

"When (someone) cognizes (something) as born or unborn, present or gone, bound or liberated (then) he maintains duality (d_vaya) (and consequently) does not know the truth (tattva)."⁽³⁶⁾

That the Vijñānavāda prefer one pair of opposites over any other to demonstrate that the nature of things cannot be adequately shown by their application may be simply a matter of convenience. Any pair would do. The point is that knowledge devoid of thought construction (nirvikalpajñāna) is knowledge devoid of dichotomies (advayajñāna). Some authors, such as Kunst,⁽³⁷⁾ believe that by positing such a nondual knowledge, both of the schools of Buddhist philosophy we are examining are guilty of contradicting the law of the excluded middle. Ruegg⁽³⁸⁾ disagrees here. For him:-

"... to say that something is neither A nor non A (A) does not represent an attempt on the part of the Mādhyamika to define some entity (bhāva, ie a thing possessing svabhāva) that is neither A nor \bar{A} (indeterminate), but rather a way of stating the Buddhist theory of conditionship in terms of the Madhyamaka doctrine of emptiness of own being (svabhāvasūnyatā) and non-substantiality of all factors (dharmanairātmya).

This means that while complementary and extreme positions based on the dichotomizing activities of ordinary people are excluded

from the Mādhyamika conception of the Middle Way, Ruegg does not feel that the law of excluded middle or non-contradiction are being rejected since no entity is being posited. I do not accept Ruegg's reasoning here. Through the rejection of false dichotomies an entity or a state is being posited, though from an ontological point of view its status must be considered indeterminate. The Buddhist position is not fully defined by either Kunst or Ruegg. In a way one may agree that the law of excluded middle is being broken, but not in the Western sense since the middle term has a quite different ontological status from the two alternatives. The law of excluded middle is not really applicable here. Ruegg is equally guilty of adhering to Western forms of reasoning by maintaining that the law is being obeyed. Ruegg rejects Western conceptions when this suits him however:

"... ultimate reality ... is the domain of what Candrakīrti terms tattvalakṣaṇa proper, as accessible to the gnosis (jñāna) of the perfected saints (ārya)". (39)

This seems to be an acceptance of non-logical thought. As a matter of fact, when pressed by an opponent in his commentary on MMK XV 2 Candrakīrti gives a number of metaphorical designations (upadāya prajñapti) for this ontologically indeterminate reality. He calls it the essential nature (prakṛti), thusness (tathatā)⁽⁴⁰⁾, synonyms which are the common property of both Madhyamaka and Vijñāna-vāda. This refusal to see the ultimate from any position conditioned by dichotomous thought is taken up by virtually all Madhyamakas, Atiśa being a representative case. Thus:-

"... (absolute truth) cannot be the object of any kind of conceptual thinking (kalpanā) for reality (tattva) is not susceptible to various distinctions such as marks of being, non-being, own-being, other-being, truth, untruth, permanence, destruction, eternal, non-eternal, pleasure, pain, pure, impure, self, non-self, empty, non-empty, and unity, difference, origination, cessation etc., for they possess a relative nature." (41)

Among Nāgārjuna's works such statements are echoed in the Acintyastava of the Catuḥstava (42) and the maṅgalaśloka of the Mūlamādhyamakakārikās. (43)

If we now ask ourselves the reason why reality is conceived in an erroneous fashion by those who have not achieved arhatship, then the answer is because of vikalpa and prapañca. In the Yuktiṣaṣṭikā we are given to assume that discrimination (vikalpa) and a fickle (cala) mind (manah) mutually condition one another. In other words incorrect apprehension of reality is the indispensable concomitant of a particular state of mind. Now the term prapañca actually means something like "expansion". The Anguttara Nikāya (45) indicates that the fourteen unexplicated points (avyākṛtavastu) such as "Does the Tathāgata exist after death? Does he not exist after death? Does he both exist and not exist after death? Does he neither exist nor not exist after death? etc are imagined (prapañcitaṃ), and the Samyutta (46) gives as such examples of prapañca such statements as: "I am, "I shall be", "I shall not be", "I shall not be formed", "I shall be formless", etc. Prapañca then is that activity of consciousness that leads us to the belief that we are isolated beings at large in an extended world of plurality. At its root prapañca is a dichotomizing tendency which endlessly generates principles reliant on the relationship between identity (ekatva) and difference (anyatva). In other words because of prapañca categories such as self, other, being, non-being Nirvāṇa,

Samsāra, subject, object, etc. arise. J. May says:-

"Prapañca, littéralement "expansion", tib. spros pa, me parait designer non pas tout la fonction de pensée discursive, correspondant, sous divers aspects à vikalpa, vitarka, vicāra, que l'opération de cette fonction, et le resultat de cette opération, c'est-à-dire le monde constitué en objets et concepts distincts".(47)

The mode by which prapañca informs the world picture of the unenlightened is through discursive thought (vikalpa), reasoning (vicāra), and conjecture (vitarka). Vikalpa further differentiates the basically dichotomized world produced by prapañca until definite views or dogmas (drṣṭi) are formed. From vikalpas concerning being (bhāva) and non-being (abhāva) the twin heresies of eternalism (śāśvatadarśana) and nihilism (ucchedadarśana) are formed and such an attitude to the world, in turn, gives rise to suffering (duḥkha).

"Profane people (prthagjana) with their positivistic attitude (bhāvātmake) are ... deceived by their own mind (svacitta). Those who understand see that things have ... totally arisen as a result of ignorance (avidyāhetutaḥ) without beginning, middle or end." (48)

It is jñāna therefore that destroys the ignorance (avidyā) that arises in connection with prapañca. Prapañca is seen to be lacking in any real foundation. The activities of vikalpa which ^{reify} ontologize concepts of being (asti) and non-being (nāsti) are seen, through jñāna, as inappropriate to the ultimate understanding of reality (tattva). From the ultimate viewpoint everything has been imagined (kalpanāmātra):

"Therefore you have declared that all phenomena are merely imagined. Yes, even the imagination through which emptiness is conceived is said to be untrue." (49)

This sounds remarkably like a statement by Vasubaudhu or Asaṅga. The idea of dependent origination (pratītyasamutpāda) is central to the thought of Nāgārjuna. The centrality of this doctrine in the Buddhist tradition will be discussed in Chapter 7. However, in its general extended sense the twelve fold chain of dependent origination (dvādaśāṅgapratītyasamutpāda) is mentioned in Chapter XXVI of the Mūlamādhyamakakārikās. It may be the case that the term pratītyasamutpāda itself is a metaphorical designation for reality (tattva). It would be difficult simply to treat pratītyasamutpāda in its 12-fold form as a theory of causality or conditionally since Nāgārjuna does a thorough refutation of any possible conditions (pratyaya) in Ch1 of MMK. The two verses of the maṅgalaśloka seem to confirm this since they speak of a pratītyasamutpāda taught by the Buddha which is the equivalent of the shutting off of prapañca and is in consequence without destination, production, neither annihilated nor eternal, neither differentiated nor undifferentiated and without coming or going:

anirodhamanutpādamanucchedamaśśvataṃ anekārthamanānārthaman-
āgamamanirgaṃ yah pratītyasamutpādaṃ prapañcopaśamaṃ śivaṃ
deśayāmāsa sambuddhastam vande vadatāṃ varam

This sounds very much like the earlier discussed idea of reality (tattva) which is realised through jñāna to be free of all dichotomously constructed distinctions. The real must be indeterminate. Hence the Śūnyatāsaptati:-

"Without one (eka) there are not many (aneka). Without many one is not possible. Therefore things that rise dependently (pratītyasamutpanna) are indeterminable (animitta)." (50)

Having come to a realisation of pratītyasamutpāda all conventional view points (dr̥ṣṭi) concerning the nature of things are extinguished; ignorance (avidyā) ceases and one comes to understand reality (tattva^uvajñana):

"Those who have come to understand that dependent origination (pratītyasamutpāda) is devoid of origination (utpāda) and destruction (vināśa) have crossed the ocean of existence consisting of dogmas (dr̥ṣṭibhūtabhavārṇava)". (51)

When we turn to this doctrine as expounded in the MMK we shall be in a better position to judge its exact status in Nāgārjuna's system. However from what we have seen so far we can at least maintain that the tattva/pratītyasamutpāda group of concepts differ in many senses from most other ideas examined by Nāgārjuna. They are never, like other concepts, demonstrated to be totally devoid of own-nature (svabhāva) and hence empty (śūnya) in the sense of non-existent. How could they be since we are told frequently that they cannot be apprehended in terms of existence nor non-existence? On the contrary they have an ontological status which cannot be determined since all determination depends on the workings of an unenlightened mind i.e. one acted upon by prapañca. Like the 20th century European existentialists, Nāgārjuna holds that knowledge must always be conditioned by the stranglehold of the verb "to be" on the language we employ, and in consequence all speculation on the nature of things must resort to essentialist terminology. On this basis I cannot agree with Lindtner who says:-

"Instead of taking things in terms of asti and nāsti one should become aware that all entities are pratītyasamutpanna, without, however, committing the fallacy of conceiving pratītyasamutpāda

as a fact and by itself." (52)

It seems that by applying non-existence to pratītyasamutpāda Lindtner himself is guilty of the error of annihilationism (ucchedadarśana). The fact is that pratītyasamutpāda is ontologically indeterminate. In other words it cannot be determined with respect to exclusive categories.

To sum up then it is clear that the term pratītyasamutpāda is being used in two entirely distinct manners in the writings of this school of Buddhist philosophy. The first may almost be termed an exoteric teaching while the second will be esoteric. In the exoteric we are dealing with the traditional twelve nidānas. Using such a heuristical device Nāgārjuna is able to show that on the conventional level the basic teachings of the Buddha have a practical validity, and hence the danger of the higher truth doctrine (that by intellectually realising the truth of ^{emptiness} ~~empirical~~ (sūnyatāsatya) someone may decide that there is no point making an effort on the spiritual path since from an ultimate point of view there is no such thing as morality. Buddhahood, Nirvāṇa etc.) applied independently of the lower, is defused. The exoteric pratītyasamutpāda therefore is applied to demonstrate the mechanisms of the Four Noble Truths doctrine. Whether it is entirely successful in this will be left to a later discussion, particularly in Chapter 7 above, but we may safely say that the second and third truths are dealt with in this teaching. Thus the Arising of Suffering (duḥkhasamudaya) is shown to be a movement towards samsāra caused by ignorance (avidyā) whereas the Cessation of Suffering (duḥkhanirodha) is a movement backwards through the chain resulting in the extinction

of ignorance (avidyā) by the application of prajñā, leading to the direct understanding of reality (tattvajñāna) which is Nirvāṇa. This seems to be the sense of the Śūnyatāsaptati:-

"By understanding the truth (tattva), ignorance (avidyā), which arises from the four perverted ideas (viparyāsa), does not exist. When this is no more, the karma-formations (samskāra) do not arise. The remaining (ten members) likewise". (53)

"To imagine (kṛp-) that things (bhāva) born by causes and conditions (hetupratyaya) are real (samyak) is called ignorance (avidyā) by the Teacher (sāstr). From that the twelve members (dvādaśāṅga) arise. But when one, by seeing correctly, has understood that things (bhāva) are empty (śūnya) one is not infatuated (mūḍha). That is the cessation of ignorance (avidyā-nirodha). Thereupon the twelve members stop". (54)

It is interesting that this exoteric teaching is incapable of explaining the first Origin of suffering and the final end; in other words the first and fourth Noble Truths. When we turn to an examination of the esoteric teaching however this problem is cleared up. We are now dealing with a conception of pratītyasamutpāda which works as a metaphorical designation for reality uncontaminated by the working of prapañca. Now from our previous discussion we know that conceptions such as Origin and End are merely the result of discriminative thought (vikalpa) working on the fundamental distinction between identity (ekatva) and difference (anyatva) which is the feature of prapañca. From the ultimate point of view however tattva, and therefore pratītyasamutpāda, are free from prapañca (prapañcōpaśamaṃ) and therefore it is inappropriate at this level to speak of the beginning or the end of reality. This is traditional Buddhist doctrine which is reflected in the unexplicated points (avyākṛtavastu) such as "Is the world eternal, not eternal, both eternal and not eternal, or neither

eternal nor not eternal?" (55) It seems then that if we equate the exoteric teaching with the conventional level of truth (saṃvṛtisatya) and the esoteric teaching with the ultimate level of truth (para-mārthasatya) the use of limiting terms such as Beginning and End are inappropriate for both. This is rather a conundrum and one begins to wonder whether Nāgārjuna's theory of the two truths can really effectively deal with traditional Buddhist teachings since we have already identified an area in which a fundamental set of ideas ie. the First and Fourth Noble Truths, appear problematic.

To resolve such a problem the Madhyamaka ācaryas posit the idea of different types of disciples. On the initial stages of the path a practitioner is treated to positivistic teachings:-

"To begin with (a teacher) should say that everything exists to his truth-seeking (pupil). Later when he has understood the meaning he gains isolation (viviktatā) without being attached". (56)

Candrakīrti distinguishes three separate types of disciple; the lower type (hīna-vineya), the middling type (madhya-vineya) and the Superior type (utkrṣṭa-vineya). (57) The lower type is given positive descriptions of reality in which terms such as self (ātman) apply and serve to turn such a disciple away from unwholesome actions. The middling type is taught in a negative manner. In this way notions such as non-self (anātman) free the practitioner from the speculative view that there is such a thing as a real substantial self (satkāyadrṣṭi). The superior type of disciple is said to be able to penetrate the very kernel of the most profound teachings and in consequence, having attained to the stage of zealous attachment (adhimukti) with respect

to nirvāna, is taught in terms of neither ... nor type statements eg. there is neither a self nor a non-self. In other words the Buddhist spiritual path appears from the writings of Nāgārjuna and Candrakīrti to be a graded one, the development of prajñā leading to the understanding of reality (tattvajñāna) being a slow process.

Before turning to an examination of these same doctrines as presented in MMK it may be worthwhile to ponder a curious fact. Most scholars agree that the distinctive feature of the Madhyamaka teaching is the Two levels of Truth doctrine. It is the case however that in these subsidiary works of Nāgārjuna a distinction between the conventional (samvṛti) and the ultimate (paramārtha) is hardly ever explicitly stated, though of course a generalised appeal to such notions is very often implicit in many statements. It is interesting therefore that in one of the few verses I have been able to identify in which the two truths are both mentioned, ie. in the Acintyastava of the Catuḥstava, the formulation of the doctrine bears distinctly Vijñānavāda-like connotations. Thus:

"Convention (samvṛti) arises from causes and conditions and is relative (paratantra). Thus the relative has been spoken of (by You). The ultimate meaning, however is absolute (akṛtrima)". (58)

The relative (paratantra) is the middle term in the three nature (trisvabhāva) doctrine of the Vijñānavāda and is very often identified with pratītyasamutpāda. For instance the Mahāyānasamgraha gives nine essential meanings of paratantrasvabhāva (the relative nature). These are: (i) The base for the appearance of entities (sarvadharmapratibhāṣāśraya)

- (ii) Dependent origination (pratītyasamutpāda)
- (iii) Representation only (viññaptimātratā)
- (iv) Neither different nor non-different (from the other two svabhāvas) (na bhinno nāpy abhinnaḥ)
- (v) Like magical illusion, etc. (māyādivat)
- (vi) Pertaining to suffering and cleansing (samkleśāmsīko vyavadānāmsīkaś ca)
- (vii) The object apprehended by the knowledge realised in succession (to the wisdom) ālambanaṃ pr̥sthalabdhajñānasya)
- (viii) Nirvāna without any fixed abode (apraṭiṣṭhitanirvāna)
- (ix) The Buddha's body constituting entities (dharmakāya) (59)

As a provisional measure, then, we may say that the two truths should not be considered as ontological entities, but rather as epistemological orientations towards some undefined being, given a number of epithets such as pratītyasamutpāda, which nevertheless cannot be said to exist or not exist in the same way that it is possible to say cars or unicorns exist, or not, as the case may be. We must assume therefore that both truths can only be efficacious within some, as yet, indeterminate mental framework, though at this stage it may be possible to suggest that the perception of the conventional truth (samvṛtisatya) is in some sense tied up with the workings of viññāna while the ultimate truth (paramārthasatya) involves jñāna.

Nāgārjuna's use of the term relative (paratantra) for pratītyasamutpāda naturally allows us to speculate that there may be a great deal more connection between his 2 fold truth formulation and the three nature

notions of the Vijñānavādins than is generally recognised. This theme will be picked up and developed at a later stage in our argument. (60) However we must stay with Nāgārjuna himself a little longer to establish his position in the most prominent of his works.

Notes

- 1 D. S. Ruegg gives the date c.600-650 in his "Literature of the Madhyamaka School of Philosophy in India" which is Vol VII Fasc 1 of "A History of Indian Literature" Ed. Jan Gonda (1981) Wiesbaden (p 71)

A slightly earlier date (530-600) is given by Chr. Lindtner in Acta Orientalia 40 (1979) p 91
- 2 Candrakīrti's critique of Vijnānavāda is to be found in Ch. 6 of his Madhyamakāvatāra a partial translation of which was carried out by L. de la Vallée Poussin as Madhyamakāvatāra, Traduction apres la version tibetaine, Le Museon N.S. 8 (1907) 249-317; 11 (1910) 271-358; and 12 (1911) 235-328.

The Tibetan text is available (with autocommentary) as Madhyamakāvatāra par Candrakīrti edited by L. de la Vallée Pousson reprint (Osnabrück : Biblio Verlag 1970). A detailed investigation of Candrakīrti's argument will be found supra Ch. 8.
- 3 T. R. V. Murti The Central Philosophy of Buddhism London (1960) p 88-91
- 4 cf Mūlamadhyamakakārikāh ed. by J. W. de Jong, Adyar (1977) and Candrakīrti Prasannapadā Madhyamakavṛtti by J. May Paris (1959)
- 5 The Vīgrahavyāvartanī ed by E. H. Johnson & A. Kunst in Mélanges Chinois et Bouddhiques Vol IX (1951) p 108-51
- 6 Nagarjuniana : Studies in the Writings and Philosophy of Nāgārjuna by Chr. Lindtner; Copenhagen (1982)
- 7 La Somme du Grand Vehicule d'Asaṅga edited and translated by E. Lamotte; Louvain (1938) 2 volumes being the Mahāyānasamgraha of Asaṅga
- 8 Review Article by P. Williams on Chr. Lindtner : "Nāgārjuniana" in Journal of Indian Philosophy 12 (1984) p 73-104
- 9 For the dates of Nāgārjuna, vide D. S. Ruegg (op.cit.) p 4 n. 11 Ruegg places Nāgārjuna "early in the first millenium BC".
- 10 P. Williams op.cit. p 75
- 11 D. S. Ruegg op.cit. p 8-9
- 12 P. Williams op.cit. p 76
- 13 Yuktisastikā-kārika (Y.S.) p 102-119 Nagarjuniana, op.cit. YSv19 tat tat prapya yad utpannam notpannam tat svabhāvatah svabhāvana yan notpannam utpannam nāma tat katham

- 29 T. R. V. Murti "Central Philosophy of Buddhism" p 213
- 30 ibid p 267 My underlinging
cf Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā (Bibliothèque Indica) p 398
- 31 Nāgārjuniana p 268
- 32 ibid. p 270
- 33 Triṃśikā K.17
viññāna-pariñāmo 'yam vikalpo yad vikalpyate
tena tan nāsti, tenedam sarvam viññaptimātrakam
S. Levi (ed) Viññaptimātratāsiddhi:deux traites de Vasubandhu
Viṃśatikā etTriṃśikā Paris 1925
- 34 ŚS v 21-25
- 35 YṢ v 1
astināstiviyatikrāntā buddhir yeṣāṃ nirāśrayā
gambhīras tair niralambaḥ pratyayārtho vibhāvayate
- 36 Catuḥstava v 28 (Acintyastava)
jātam tathaiva no jātam āgatam gatam ity api
buddho muktas tathā jñāni dvayam icchen na tattvavit
cf Nāgārjuniana p 148-9
- 37 A. Kunst The Concept of the Principle of the Excluded Middle
in Buddhism Rocznik Orientalistyczny Vol 21 (1957) p. 141-7;
p. 144
- 38 D. S. Ruegg The Four Positions of the Catuskoti and the
Problem of the Description of Reality in Mahāyāna Buddhism
Journal of Indian Philosophy Vol 5 (1977-8) p 1-71; p 11
- 39 Ibid p. 11
- 40 Mūlamadhyamakakārikās of Nāgārjuna, with the Prasannapadā
of Candrakīrti (ed) L. de la Vallée Poussin, Bibliotheca
Buddhica (IV) reprint Osnabrück (1970) p 265-5
- 41 Bodhicaryāvatārapañjikā ad Bodhi (Sattva) caryāvatāra ed
L. de la Vallée Poussin p 367
quoted in Chr Lindtner - Atiśa's Introduction to the Two
Truths and its sources : Journal of Indian Philosophy Vol.
9 (1981) p. 161-214 : p. 188
- 42 CS III 37-36
- 43 MMK I 1
- 44 YṢ v 36-7
- 45 A iv 68f
- 46 S iv 203

- 47 J. May op.cit,p175 n 562
- 48 YS v 24-26
- 49 CS III 35
kalpanāmātram ity asmāt sarvadharmāḥ prakāśitaḥ
kalpanāpy asatī proktā yayā śūnyam vikalpyate
- 50 ŚS v 7
gcig med par ni mañ po dañ mañ po med par gcig mi 'jug
de phyir rten cin 'brel 'byun bai dños po mtshan ma med pa yin
gcig med par ni mañ po dañ mañ po med par gcig mi 'jug
de phyir brten nas dños po rnams byuñ ba mtshan ma med pa yin
- 51 YṢ v 23
gañ dag rten cin 'brel 'byuñ ba skye dañ 'jig pa rnam spañs par
śes par gyur pa de dag ni ltar gyur srid pa'i rgya mtsho brgal
- 52 Nagarjuniana p 273
- 53 ŚS v 62
- 54 ŚS v 64-5
- 55 A iv 68f
- 56 YṢ v. 30
sarvam astīti vaktavyam ādau tattvagaveśiṇaḥ
paścād avagatārthasya niḥsaṅgasya viviktatā
- 57 Prasannapadā (ed) de la Vallée Poussin 18 5-6 p 360-1
- 58 CS III 44
hetupratyayasambhūtā paratantrā ca samvṛtiḥ
paratantra iti proktaḥ paramārthas tv akṛtimaḥ
- 59 Quoted p. 954
Paratantrasvabhāva (I) - Diagrammatic Account by N. Aramaki
in Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies Vol XV (1967) p 955 -
941
- 60 v. this thesis Chapter 6

Chapter Two

Nāgārjuna & Logic

It will be our purpose in the following chapter to investigate the doctrines contained in Nāgārjuna's major works. We will examine the interpretation of some important scholars and attempt to show their various drawbacks. This will point the way to our own position with regard to his work, a position in which a specific solution with respect to pratītyasamutpāda becomes the key concept in the understanding of reality. Pratītyasamutpāda will be shown to be as positive a description of reality as is possible, given Nāgārjuna's, and the general Buddhist tradition's stance on the role of language. It will provide the rationale for the appearance of the enlightened and the unenlightened states. However before this exegesis is possible let us examine the contemporary views on those texts which are indisputably claimed, by all, to be authentically written by Nāgārjuna himself.

It has been customary among scholars of the past to read Nāgārjuna with the aid of a commentary, usually in Sanskrit. Indeed since the MMK itself was abstracted in the first place and in totality, from the commentary (Prasannapadā) of Candrakīrti ⁽¹⁾, it is hardly surprising that the views expressed in that commentary are strongly associated with the doctrines of the MMK. We are left then with a tradition of scholarship initiated by Stcherbatsky and in the present day represented by Murti that attempts an exposition of Nāgārjuna's doctrines based on commentarial literature written

approximately four centuries after the event and one would suppose, though here information is very sketchy, after significant developments in the use of logic, religio-philosophical debate and general intercourse of ideas leading to a somewhat modified world picture and philosophical inclination. Nevertheless scholars like Murti retain their position. They claim that the Mādhyamika:-

"... uses only one weapon. By drawing out the implications of any view he shows its self contradictory character. The dialectic is a series of REDUCTIO AD ABSURDUM arguments (prasaṅgāpādanam). Every thesis is turned against itself. The Madhyamika is a prāsaṅgika or vaitandika, a dialectician or free-lance debater. The Mādhyamika DISPROVES the opponent's thesis, and does not prove any thesis of his own." (2)

In fact, as we shall see in due course, not even Candrakīrti himself can realistically claim to simply turn an opponent's thesis upon itself and therefore reduce it to absurd conclusions without either introducing positions that the opponent does not hold himself, or more importantly disprove the opponent's thesis without proving any thesis of his own. When we turn to the case of Nāgārjuna we shall see that such a description of his method is impossible to uphold. In the first place Robinson ⁽³⁾ has attempted to demonstrate that in some instances Nāgārjuna seems to be explicitly using at least two of the three traditional Western "Laws of Thought" as axiomatic to his system, though there is little evidence that this position is agreed upon by his opponent. Thus we have a number of explicit statements of the principle of contradiction in the kārikās:-

"In truth, the cessation of a real existing entity is not possible. For indeed, it is not possible to have the nature of both existence and non-existence at the same time." (4)

or "A completed-incompleted doer cannot create a completed-incompleted deed. For how could the mutually conflicting completed and incompleted states co-exist as one?" (5)

These statements would seem to mirror the purport of the third position of the catuṣkoṭi or tetralemma employed by the Buddhists, that a thing cannot be both existent and non-existent, and in this general sense the third koṭi appears to conform to the principle of contradiction. Now, although the law of identity is nowhere found in any of the works we have ascribed to Nāgārjuna, Robinson certainly believes that the law of the excluded middle is held. In support of his contention he cites:-

"Indeed, a passing entity does not come to pass, and neither does a non-passing entity. Apart from these, how could there be a third (type of) entity coming to pass?" (6)

and "One who admits existence will necessarily perceive permanence and destruction. For, it necessarily flows that such an existence must either be permanent or impermanent." (7)

We may simply comment at this stage that such statements as the ones above do seem to support the view that a law of the excluded middle is invoked on occasions by Nāgārjuna. Robinson's conclusions, with regard to Nāgārjuna's putative adherence to such laws, are suitably vague. This is obviously advisable, particularly since at no point in his writings does Nāgārjuna exactly state the

laws of thought as such. It has been suggested more than once that Indian thought forms need not precisely mirror those adopted in the West; such a contention being tantamount to cultural imperialism.

Robinson seems to be bearing this in mind as he does not appear to press Nāgārjuna's adherence to the laws very far, contending in his summing up merely that:-

"Since Nāgārjuna's argumentation relies on numerous dichotomies, the principle of contradiction is necessary to most of his inferences." (8)

In another article Robinson (9) has again questioned how far the contention that Nāgārjuna adopted the prasaṅga method with his opponents can be upheld. He concludes that in fact it is possible to tease out a number of positions that are Nāgārjuna's alone and do not belong to any identifiable opponent. Using such a method Robinson is able to show that six positive positions are axiomatically held solely by Nāgārjuna in his MMK. These are as follows. (10)

(i) Whatever has extension is divisible, hence is composite and is therefore neither permanent nor real. In consequence an indivisible, infinitesimal thing cannot possess extension. Now all the schools of Buddhism together with the Mahāyānasūtras do in fact expound a category of non-composite, non-conditioned things (asamskṛtadharmas). Space (ākāśa) is a dharma of this category which is considered to have infinite extension, while at the same time being incapable of division. The Acintyastava of the Catuḥstava agrees with such a definition since we are told:

"That which arises not, disappears not, is not to be annihilated and is not permanent, that is (tattva) which is like space (ākāśa) (and) not within the range of words (or) knowledge (akṣarajñāna)". (11)

It seems strange then that in MMK ch. 5. Nāgārjuna should concentrate his attack on the notion of space (ākāśa) by picking the relation between ākāśa and its characteristics (lakṣaṇas) as a weak link, when it is clear that his opponents by regarding ākāśa as asaṃskṛta are saying that it is in fact devoid of attributes or characteristics (lakṣaṇa). If Nāgārjuna accepts his opponents' position space would be "not within the range of words or knowledge (akṣarajñāna)", and consequently would not be a legitimate target for his argument.

(ii) To exist means to be arisen and consequently existence is synonymous with manifestation and there can be no unmanifested existence. This axiom seems to contradict the doctrines of other Buddhists who hold that the real is that which has never arisen, has no beginning and no end and is permanent. This seems to be the meaning of the Udāna when we are told:-

"There is that sphere 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 either ideation nor non-ideation; where there is neither this world nor a world beyond nor both together nor moon and sun; this I say is free from coming and going, from duration and decay; there is no beginning and no establishment, no result and no cause; this indeed is the end of suffering". (12)

In other places Nāgārjuna holds to such as position, hence

"Where the functional realm of the mind ceases, the realm

words also ceases. For indeed, the essence of existence (dharmatā) is like nirvāṇa, without origination and destruction." (13)

and such a view is echoed in the māṅgalasloka of MMK. We may therefore conclude with Robinson that

"Nāgārjuna is not alone among the thinkers of classical India in promiscuously adhering now to one and now to another of these (two) axioms." (14)

(iii) A real thing would have to be an utterly simple individual which contains no diversity. If it had diversity, it would have extension and so would not be indivisible and real. This is a corollary of axiom (i).

(iv) The perception of arising and ceasing is illusory. Nāgārjuna makes such a point in the kārikās:-

"You may think that both occurrence and dissolution can be perceived but such a perception only comes about from a deluded mind." (15)

Very often the perception of origination and duration are compared with a dream, an illusion or a city of the Gandharvas

"Like an illusion, a dream or an illusory city in the sky. In such a way has origination, duration and cessation been described." (16)

On the basis of this axiom Robinson shows that Nāgārjuna's attempt to demonstrate all phenomena as illusory (māyā) is not arrived

at by a prasāṅga treatment of an opponent's position and neither is it arrived at by resort to an empirical examination of perception which shows that the senses always generate distorted information. On the contrary all that Nāgārjuna is doing here is dogmatically asserting that perception is always distorted by false thought constructions (vikalpa, prapañca etc.).

(v) Only transitive actions and relations are allowed. In other words, Robinson claims that in the case of MMK.VII.7-8:-

"(opponents contention) As light illuminates both itself and other entities, so does origination give rise both to itself and others."

"(Nāgārjuna's reply) There is no darkness in light or in its abode. What then does light illumine when, indeed, it destroys darkness?" (17)

What Nāgārjuna is doing when he denies that a lamp can illuminate itself, is merely disallowing the making of reflexive statements. Thus in the case of the statement "Light illuminates itself" Nāgārjuna will claim incoherence even though that same statement may be reformulated as "Light is inherently bright" which is perfectly coherent from a commonsense point of view. It seems then that axiom five becomes a special case of axiom three in which a real thing is defined as being utterly simple and hence without attributes. As we have already shown that axiom three is a corollary of axiom one and that no one except Nāgārjuna takes this axiom seriously one is left feeling that Nāgārjuna's method is on occasions specious to say the least.

(vi) It is claimed that the Buddhas teach:-

"... that the dharma is based on two truths; namely the relative (saṃvṛti) truth and the ultimate (paramārtha) truth." (18)

However in this chapter (24) of the kārikās Nāgārjuna's putative opponent is a Hīnayānist who argues that Nāgārjuna is denying the Buddha's teaching as contained in the Tripitaka. Nāgārjuna is not therefore in a position to invoke the Buddha's teaching on the two truths as contained in the Mahāyāna sūtras since his antagonistic will not accept such texts as authority.

We are now in a position to briefly summarise Nāgārjuna's method in the kārikās. As Robinson puts it:

"It consists (a) of reading into the opponent's views a few terms which one defines for him in a contradictory way, and (b) insisting on a small set of axioms which are at variance with common sense and not accepted in their entirety by any known philosophy." (19)

This is most definitely not the prasangā method as defined by Murti. Other authors have noted the inconsistencies between the reductio ad absurdum method extolled by Candrakīrti and Nāgārjuna's own particular orientation. Lamotte is a major scholar who, in his introduction to a translation of the Vimalakīrtinirdeśasūtra, is prepared to put down a further six positions or theses which he considers are held in a positive sense by the early Madhyamaka at least from the point of view of the conventional truth (saṃvṛti-satya). These are (i) All dharmas are without own-being (niḥsvabhāva),

empty of self-being (svabhāvaśūnya). (ii) All dharmas are non-produced (anutpanna) and non-destroyed (aniruddha). (iii) All dharmas are originally quiet (ādiśānta) and by nature in complete nirvāṇa (prakṛtiparinirvṛta). (iv) The dharmas are without a character (alakṣaṇa) and are consequently unutterable (anirvacanīya, anabhilāpya) and inconceivable (acintya). (v) all dharmas are equal (sama) and non-dual (advaya). (vi) Emptiness (śūnyatā) is not an entity (bhāva, dharma, padārtha). Although we may object **to** statement (vi), preferring to say that from the ultimate point of view śūnyatā neither exists (asti) nor does not exist (nāsti) nevertheless here again we have a respectable authority on Mahāyāna Buddhism admitting the fact that Nāgārjuna, far from following the prasaṅga method, is quite ready to make a number of statements which appear axiomatic for his own system and not held by any known opponent.

The pivotal point of the whole Madhyamaka system seems to be the term śūnyatā. Nāgārjuna's statement in MMK.XXIV.11, that a wrongly grasped śūnyatā is like a badly siezed snake appears to imply that an ontological existence value cannot easily be predicated of it. That it cannot be either an existent or a non-existent seems clear since the Mādhyamika would be guilty of the charge of eternalism (śāśvatavāda) if he endorsed the former position, and by condoning the second would be accused of nihilism (ucchedavāda). Since all Buddhist schools, and the Madhyamaka is no exception here, stress an avoidance of adopting any extreme position, and in consequence tread a Middle Path (madhyama pratipad) between them, there is a difficulty in accepting the idea of śūnyatā which itself avoids these two extremes. P. J. Raju (20) has a point in his association

of the term śūnya with the mathematical zero of Indian scientific thought. Zero is defined as a mathematically indeterminate number, being neither positive nor negative. This seems a reasonable interpretation and the only objection to Raju's position here is that of Ruegg whose argument seems more a quibble than anything else, since as we shall see, he is wholeheartedly opposed to any attempt to place a value on the notion of śūnyatā. He says:-

"... there is no evidence in the basic texts of the Madhyamaka school that a mathematical model (and place-value) had any immediate bearing on their theory of śūnyatā. In the Madhyamaka the term śūnya refers to the fact that any dharma is empty of own being (svabhāvaśūnya) in which notion there is no mathematical connotation." (21)

It seems to me that Raju has not been attempting to explicate the whole of the Madhyamaka philosophy using a mathematical model as Ruegg seems to suggest, but is simply saying that the concept of zero as an idea referring to an entity or entities which cannot be determined with regard to being or non-being, and which consequently have a problematic ontological value, may quite feasibly have been borrowed from mathematics.

Now MMK.xxiv.13 holds that emptiness (śūnyatā) may not be an object of refutation. This stands to reason. Something may only be refuted or affirmed if it is capable of being understood in terms of being or non-being. śūnyatā is clearly not capable of being understood in such a way, which is why it is reported to be like a snake wrongly grasped (MMK.xxiv.11). One can easily fall into the trap of assigning a definite value to it. This is what Lamotte is saying in his thesis (vi), ie. that śūnyatā is not an entity.

It does not follow from this that śūnyatā does not exist. It is not in a null class, along with mirages, etc., as Nakamura would have us believe (22).

Nagarjuna's statement that:-

"Whatever is in correspondence with emptiness (śūnyatā) all is in correspondence (ie, possible). Again whatever is not in correspondence with emptiness (śūnyatā), all is not in correspondence." (23)

shows how śūnyatā is to be properly interpreted. When things are not understood as being empty, substantiality or own-being (svabhāva) is imputed to them. Nāgārjuna shows in MMK.xv. that the concept of svabhāva, when associated with things, renders them incapable of cooperating in dependent origination (pratītyasamutpāda). An ignorant world-view then destroys the essentially causal characteristic of things. Emptiness (śūnyatā) simply signifies the abandonment of such a world-view. One comes to see how things actually cooperate.

Robinson confirms our supposition, while at the same time repudiating the position of Nakamura:-

"(All [sarvam]) means all mundane and transmundane dharmas (in MMK.XXIV.14), that is all true predicables in the Buddhist domain of discourse. It manifestly does not mean predications about rabbit horns and tortoise hairs ... Dependent co-arising is emptiness and therefore it is cogent. Emptiness is by definition 'absence of own being' (svabhāva). The entire point of Nāgārjuna's argument is that the class of entities that possess own-being is null. Thus the class of empty phenomena (pratītya-samutpāda) is the complement of the own-being or null class ... Thus the emptiness class is not null, but is co-extensive with the universal class." (24)

Things are not totally non-existence[†] but simply falsely imputed to have own-being (svabhāva). In fact these dharmas are svabhāvaśūnya and cannot be confused with any null class from a logical point of view. Actually, this second, non-null or universal class has cogency simply because it is linked to pratītyasamutpāda.

In another part of the kārikās we find that:-

"Dependent Origination (pratītyasamutpāda) we call emptiness (śūnyatā). This is a provisional name and indeed it is the middle path". (25)

In other words śūnyatā is a provisional name or metaphorical designation (upādāya prajñapti) for dependent origination (pratītyasamutpāda). It has already been noted (supra p.15f.) that the concept of pratītyasamutpāda occupied an important place in Nāgārjuna's system. Now we can see why. Pratītyasamutpāda and śūnyatā are synonymous. whatever is in correspondence with these is ultimately true.

Nāgārjuna's method then is to show that any of the alternatives supplied by discursive thought to characterise things, may be conventionally valid, but from the ultimate point of view do not apply. In presenting the conventional options he clearly, as Ruegg suggests, uses a logical method based on Aristotelean "two-valued logic founded on the dichotomously structured binary nature of discursive thinking in terms of alternatives." (26)

Or again:-

"... the exclusion of the middle, as an onto-logical principle ... is ... one of the very foundations of Madhyamaka thought. And if the logical principle of excluded middle ... is not accepted in the Mādhyamika's procedure based on the use of the prasaṅga, this is because he considers that the subject of such sentences is in fact null". (27)

However, since he rejects all alternatives from the ultimate point of view, one will be wary in applying Western logical concepts to interpret his system in toto. Ruegg again sums this up by stating:-

"That the principle involved in the TERTIUM NON DATUR is indeed fundamental in Madhyamika thought follows from the consideration that, if a third position or value really existed, the mind would cling to it as some kind of thing, albeit one beyond the two values of "classical" logic. But if this were to happen there could be no "stillness" or "tranquility" on the level of parāmartha, ie. no absence of vikalpa and prapañca. And this would be radically opposed to Madhyamaka theory". (26)

We can give a qualified support for such a view, the qualification being that at the level of parāmartha, ie. that state devoid of thought construction (nirvikalpajñāna), "stillness" does not imply the complete obliteration of mental processes. As we have seen viñāna is transformed into jñāna, and the jñāna of ^{a Buddha} has an object. This object paradoxically has no objectivity since at such a level of spiritual attainment objectivity and subjectivity have been transcended.

Of importance in connection with a discussion on Nāgārjuna's method is the question of where in his writings the two-valued logic, which he generally employs, breaks down. It seems, from what has already been observed, that it would most probably do so when a discussion turns away from the conventional and towards the ultimate nature of things. Now we know that a prāsaṅgika is supposed to avoid the characterisation of things from the ultimate point of view, but is this actually the case in the writings of Nāgārjuna? Ruegg certainly believes that it is:-

"... there appears to be no doubt that Nāgārjuna, and his successors in the Madhyamaka school, founded many of their analyses of concepts and entities and their arguments based on reasoning by undesired consequences (prasaṅga) on the twin principles of non-contradiction and the excluded middle, before going on to show that in fact none of the members of a conceptual pair or tetralemma in fact apply in reality." (29)

Staal (30) disagrees.

In his examination of the logical structure of the catuskoṭi he allows an interpretation of the fourth koṭi in which adherence to the law of the excluded middle is rejected:-

"When the Mādhyamika philosopher negates a proposition, it does not follow that he himself accepts the negation of that proposition. Accordingly, there are other alternatives than A and not-A, and the principle of the excluded middle does not hold." (31)

The point at issue here seems to be the aspect of Nāgārjuna's doctrine which most disturbs his opponents. We will agree with Fenner's characterisation of Nāgārjuna's overall approach to the conventional world such that:-

"The assumptions that undergird the Mādhyamika analysis are these (1) that conceptually depends on the consistent ascription of predicates to an entity, (2) that predicates arise in the context of their logical opposites, which in its strong interpretation, as is required by the Mādhyamikas, means that the presence of a predicate implies its absence (and vice versa). This principle assumes a status equal to the aristotelean principles and its significance is that analysis is effective to the extent that this principle is structurally formative (in its strong interpretation) for conceptuality. (3) the logical validity and formative influence and role of the three aristotelean principles of thought in structuring the development of conceptuality". (32)

However by totally negating the predicates which arise in the context of their logical opposites, is not Nāgārjuna opening himself to the charge of nihilism by appearing to suggest that such predicates in fact refer to nothing at all?

Now all Buddhists, including Nāgārjuna, are quick to reject the charge of nihilism. In fact the Vigrahavyāvartanī was written specifically with such a purpose in mind. Ruegg himself conducts such a defense when he comments:-

"... a thing may be said, following Mahāyānist theory to be like a magical projection (māyā) (not in a nihilistic sense but in the sense that it is imagined to be otherwise than it is in its true nature of dependent origination and emptiness)". (33)

Nāgārjuna must surely wish to negate the predicates without at the same time negating the ground to which they have been incorrectly applied. This may be the purport of Staal's aforementioned statement.

Let us now turn to an associated problem.

Of central importance in our study of Nāgārjuna's thought is the specific form of negation he employs. The Buddhist tradition accepts two alternative forms of the negation and we are now in the position to examine which of the two is most appropriate to Nāgārjuna's work, acknowledging beforehand that nowhere in those texts ascribed to him does he explicitly make the distinction himself. The two forms of negation of interest are the total negation (prasajya-pratiṣedha) and the limited or partial negation (paryudāsapratiṣedha). Put briefly the prasajyapratiṣedha is a total negation because it negates a thesis without at the same time affirming any contrapositive thesis. In other words the total negation signifies the total avoidance of any thesis formulation whatsoever. The paryudāsapratiṣedha or partial negation however is one in which, although an original thesis may be refuted, nevertheless this does not imply that the contrapositive thesis is also negated.

Reference to a typical neither ... nor (ie. fourth koti) statement from the kārikās will establish what is meant. In MMK. XXV 10 we have:-

"The teacher (Buddha) has taught the abandonment of the concepts of being and non-being. Therefore nirvāna is properly neither (in the realm) of existence nor non-existence". (34)

Now if we take this statement to be a prasajya type of negation then we are led to conclude that the twin ideas of being and non-being totally exhaust the ontological status of the concept which in this case is nirvāna.

In the prasajya negation of nirvāna no further position can arise once the negation is concluded which would lead to any proposition being tendered concerning the notion of nirvāna. The paryudāsa or limited negation on the other hand works in a different way. The initial negation here does not exhaust all that may be held concerning the concept to be negated. In our example of nirvāna therefore, even though on the surface one would accept the negation that it is neither being nor non-being, one would not, because of such acceptance, wish to state that these two concepts exhaust the modes in which nirvāna may be said to occur. On the contrary nirvāna as we have already noted, is empty (śūnya) rather than totally devoid of existence as Fenner makes clear:-

"... an entity is shown to be empty rather than non-existent through the exclusion of all possible predicates as being inapplicable to an entity. The entity A is neither a P nor a -P where P and not P exhaust the universal set of modalities. The nihilistic conclusion for the non-existence of something presupposes the applicability of predicates to an entity which are in actuality absent ... If A goes uncharacterized because all predicates are inapplicable to it, its existence or non-existence is unascertainable as the entity itself would be unidentifiable." (35)

If we make A= nirvāna, the total negation will indicate that P -P completely exhaust all the modes in which A can be said to occur. This would not however be the case for Nāgārjuna since we have established the likelihood that in his writings he implicitly holds the view that, while A "goes uncharacterised because all predicates are inapplicable to it", nevertheless there is some indeterminate sense in which A may be said to exist. We may suggest that a useful way of indicating such indeterminacy will be to say that A exists ultimately in its emptiness (śūnyatā) mode. This will be the equivalent of saying that it is ultimately uncontaminated by all attempts to define it existentially. This is what I mean when I talk about the ontologically indeterminate existence of an entity.

Most scholars who have treated this subject are again heavily in debt to Candrakīrti. Because he insists on the prasajya type of negation as the characteristic negation of the Prāsaṅgika-Mādhyamika it has been taken for granted that Nāgārjuna himself, even though he makes no specific reference to either, avoided the use of the limited paryudāsa type. There is in fact a diversity of thought amongst scholars on this particular issue. Fenner ⁽³⁶⁾ tells us that Candrakīrti distinguishes his school from the Svātantrika school of Bhāvaviveka on the basis that while Bhāvaviveka and his followers adopt the paryudāsa, the Prāsaṅgikas plump for the prasajya. However, he fails to tell us precisely where Candrakīrti says this. Ruegg is similarly vague and does not quote sources. Nevertheless he opts for a different interpretation. For him both the Prāsaṅgikas and the Svātantrikas use only the prasajya negation. He claims that:-

"In this form of negation (ie. prasajya) as used by the Mādhyamika denial of a position does not necessarily involve commitment to any other position ... The Mādhyamika is certainly not working towards some ontological or logical third value between contradictions any more than he is seeking a dialectical synthesis. Indeed, if there really existed such a dialectical synthesis or third value, there would be something on which conceptual thinking could base itself and cling, and the whole purpose of the Madhyamaka method could then no longer be achieved." (31)

Although such a statement may be said, with some reservations, to outline the position of an author such as Candrakīrti there does not seem to be any good justification to extend it to include Nāgārjuna and his earlier followers. Let us take as an example the eight (negated) epithets of pratītyasamutpāda in the maṅgalaśloka of MMK

anīrodham anutpādam anucchedam āśāsvatam
anekārtham anānārtham anāgamam anirgamam

Ruegg asks the question; do such epithets commit the Mādhyamika to a positive statement concerning pratītyasamutpāda equivalent to the contradictory of what is here negated? He answers "no".

However from what has already been said concerning the status of pratītyasamutpāda in Nāgārjuna's non-MMK works, and his general method which only follows logical principles up to the limit of the conventional, we must be more careful than to give such an unqualified "no". In fact Ruegg is being completely consistent here. He applies the total (prasajya) negation in the manner that he expects Nagarjuna would have done. Ultimately of course pratītyasamutpāda cannot be characterised and Ruegg is in this sense correct to say "no". However this is only half of

the truth for we have already seen that an entity may also exist in its emptiness mode even though an attempt at characterisation has failed. In other words it may exist in a state of ontological indeterminacy. Pratītyasamutpāda is exactly the type of thing we should expect to possess such indeterminacy. Being ontologically indeterminate pratītyasamutpāda will survive the partial (pariyudāsa) negation, and this is the point that Ruegg's "no" does not take account of. Pratītyasamutpāda is not therefore non-existent. From point of view of ultimate truth (paramārthasatya) it may not be presented as an object to consciousness. It is not the object of vi^ṃjñāna though it may be conceived in a transcendent emptiness mode as self and other intimately united in jñāna.

In other words there is such a thing as pratītya-samutpāda, though it may not be characterised in terms of the eight epithets mentioned and it is therefore ontologically indeterminate.

At another point in MMK we hear that the Buddha may not be determined with regard to existence or non-existence after both having attained nirvāṇa and died. This of course corresponds with the general unwillingness of the Buddha to ascribe an existence value to such a state in the unanswered questions of the Tripitaka. Nāgārjuna simply expands on what the Buddha has already said:-

"That image of nirvāṇa (in which) the Buddha either "is" or "is not"- by him who (so imagines nirvāṇa) the notion is crudely grasped. Concerning that which is empty by its own-nature (svabhāva), the thoughts do not arise that: the Buddha "exists" or "does not exist" after death." (38)

He does however make it perfectly clear that the Buddha, in his ultimate condition, does have an ontological value for:-

"Those who describe the Buddha in detail, who is unchanging and beyond all detailed description- Those, completely defeated by description, do not perceive the Tathāgata. The self-existence of the Tathāgata is the self-existence of the world. The Tathāgata is devoid of self-existence and the world is likewise." (39)

It would be much easier for Nāgārjuna, should he have so desired, to assert that neither the Buddha, nor the world exist, but this he pointedly refuses to do. We must assume therefore that this is not the position he wishes to adopt. Such a position would, as far as our researches lead us to believe, be the consequence of a total negation (prasajyapratishedha) of the predicates. The position here taken with regard to the Buddha, since it assigns some indeterminate ontological value to his ultimate existence, corresponds closely with the consequences of a partial negation (paryudāsapratishedha).

Now before turning to a textual analysis of MMK let us briefly look at some of the logical aspects of the Vigrahavyāvartanī (VV). Our point here will be to decide whether in this text Nāgārjuna applies

the prasaṅga approach prescribed by Candrakīrti. In other words, does he once again both make propositions not held by his opponents, and utilise a logic at odds in many places from that adopted by the so called prasaṅga method. In the first place the precise nature of his opponent in this text is an object of controversy. Bhattacharya (48) is of the opinion that Nāgārjuna's opponent is a Naiyāyika realist and in this he has his supporters, such as Tucci. (49) Lindtner (50) feels that this is incorrect. He gives five reasons to support his contention that the opponent is actually a Buddhist Abhidhārmika. Unfortunately at the present state of Buddhist studies the problem seems likely to be unsolved for some time, although if we do accept the opponent of MMK to be an Abhidhārmika, and that MMK and VV comprise a corpus with one specific end in view then one has some reason to come down in favour of holding the opponent in VV to be from an Abhidharmic school.

Now commenting on the function of the VV in the Madhyamaka scheme of things Ruegg tells us that in this text

"... a Mādhyamika restricts himself to a kind of philosophical destruction - and therapeutic dehabituating - with respect to dichotomizing conceptualization while refraining from propounding any propositional thesis (pratijñā) of his own, but any argument adduced to combat and refute the theory of śūnyatā is devoid of cogency, and falls into line with and reinforces the Madhyamaka theory, since all things can be shown to be equally non-substantial." (51)

This is simply not true for Nāgārjuna really never successfully answers his opponents first objection. However even if it is admitted that there is some substance to his replies it can hardly be held, as Ruegg would have us believe, that he is using the prasaṅga method.

Let us examine the argument in detail. The opponent has spotted a weakness in Nāgārjuna's thought since if all is empty, then on what conceivable grounds can Nāgārjuna propound in a meaningful way the emptiness of all views. Thus the VV opens:-

"If own being (svabhāva) does not exist anywhere in any existing thing, your statement (itself) being without own being is not capable of refuting own-being. But if that statement has (its own) own-being, then your initial proposition is refuted. There is a (logical) inconsistency here and you should explain the grounds of the difference." (52)

To what seems a justifiable complaint, Nāgārjuna replies that either his opponent accepts that negation must always have something real as its negandum in which case he must accept emptiness (śūnyatā), or else he must give up his thesis. This is confusing but, as far as Nāgārjuna's position is concerned there is no negating anything, otherwise he would be forced to accept the neganda. As that is the case all he claims to be attempting to do is to suggest or indicate (jñāpayate) the absence of his own being. (53) In his reply then, Nāgārjuna makes the distinction between indicating an absence of his own being and negating the existence of own being and that these two activities are completely different. He claims to be doing the former and not the latter. In the accompanying auto-commentary (svopajñāvṛtti) verse 65 is glossed.

"In the same manner, the sentence, "there is no svabhāva of the bhāvas, does not make the svabhāva without essence, but conveys the absence of svabhāva in the bhāvas". (54)

Menta (55) uses an analogy to elucidate this point in his interpretation

of the argument. He says that when one makes a statement such as "Devadatta is not in the house", the statement itself merely informs us of Devadatta's absence in the house and therefore does not possess the power to bring about the existence or non-existence of Devadatta as such. However the statement about Devadatta is really in no way analogous to the argument in VV since, while the statement concerning Devadatta is easily verifiable by sense perception and may therefore be proved or disproved by a state or states of affairs beyond the structure of the sentence, there is no way in which an opponent can challenge Nāgārjuna's contention that the statement "All things are without own-being" simply serves to make such a fact known[^], without having the further power of leaving other statements incoherent. It seems that it is Nāgārjuna who misses the point here. Since no contemporary thinker held a view that statements themselves have the power to bring about states of affairs, eg. emptiness (śūnyatā) Nāgārjuna is again abandoning any claim for him to be Prāsaṅgika. It seems that he is putting forward this view himself. The opponent is therefore not objecting to this particular thesis but simply to the logical form of Nāgārjuna's central theme. In other words "If all things are empty, how can you demonstrate, given the fact that your own words are empty, emptiness?" The logical structure of a sentence such as "Devadatta is not in the house" is simply an inadequate analogy to the Madhyamaka contention that:

"... śūnyatā does not have the function of making dharmas empty since this is what they are; a sentence concerning śūnyatā therefore serves to make this fact known." (56)

All sentences must presumably serve to make something known, otherwise one would be left with an absurd theory of language. Here again therefore we have evidence of Nāgārjuna's technique at work. He does not attempt to answer the objection, but rather sidesteps it, proposes a theory that his opponent does not hold, which has the effect of introducing confusion, and finally introduces a conclusion which because of the foregoing argument seems acceptable when viewed not too critically. It is not the case that by a remorseless application of logic based on reductio ad absurdum of the opponent's thesis Nāgārjuna achieves a crushing victory, and it is certainly not the case, as Ruegg ⁽⁵⁷⁾ would have us believe that the Mādhyamika theory is immune from refutation. One cannot help but agree with Streng here when he says that Nāgārjuna's work occasionally is "an analysis which appears to be rather arid and often simply a play on words". ⁽⁵⁸⁾ With reference to this particular argument in VV Betty has recently observed:-

"It is as if the objector had said to Nāgārjuna, "You're wrong", and Nāgārjuna had answered "Of course I'm wrong, that's precisely what makes me right". As alluring, as stunning, as Taoistically fascinating as such an answer is, it is not really an answer; it is not cogent in an argument where the rules of logic apply, as they do here. Nagarjuna has evaded the issue; he has seen the problem, but he has not treated it seriously : he has not "accepted" it." ⁽⁵⁹⁾

Another apparent inconsistency arises in connection with VV.29 which says:

"If I would make any proposition whatever, then by that I would have a logical error; but I do not make a proposition; therefore I am not in error." ⁽⁶⁰⁾

The autocommentary goes on to say:-

"... when all entities are empty, altogether still and devoid of a nature how could there be a proposition (presenting them as being something or other)?" (61)

The objection must be raised, however, that here again Nāgārjuna is up to something fishy. Is it not true that the statement "...I do not make a proposition", is not itself a proposition (prati^hjñā), and since it is, how is such a fact compatible with the autocommentary in which we are told that there are no such things as propositions. These obviously are. The problem from a logical point of view here is quite analogous to our examination of statements concerning śūnyatā above. However, in this case Nāgārjuna does not attempt to follow up the problems. Ruegg attempts to dispense with them by saying

"... this interpretation assimilates two distinct uses of the term "proposition", and it would hold good only if prati^hjñā meant here any sentence or statement ... But this sentence (ie nāsti ca māma prati^hjñā VV. 29) is not a prati^hjñā in Nāgārjuna's sense; for in his way prati^hjñā denotes an assertion and more specifically a thesis which seeks to establish something." (62)

So according to Ruegg the term (ie, prati^hjñā) may have one of two meanings. Firstly it may mean any sentence, and secondly it means a thesis which seeks to establish something. If we accept Ruegg's belief (unsupported by reference to sources) that all that Nāgārjuna is saying in VV.29 is that he does not make propositions which seek to establish something, we are still back to square one and Ruegg has done nothing to extricate himself and Nāgārjuna from the problem,

since the objection still exists, "Is not your statement, that you do not make propositions seeking to establish theses, itself a proposition?"

VV is actually full of such inconsistencies and in the light of what we have said regarding both it and MMK, we must be forced into a different interpretation of these two works than that provided by Ruegg and others. There can be little doubt that Nāgārjuna does not abide by the prasāṅga method in argumentation. If he was a Prāsaṅgika we could accept that he has no thesis of his own to put forward, but this is simply not the case. Once we are able to abandon this false connection with prasāṅga logic there is consequently no obstacle in our way for accepting Nāgārjuna's adherence to partial (paryudāsa) as opposed to total (prasaṅga) negation (patiṣedha). This interpretation is certainly consistent with the texts themselves.

Using these conclusions as our foundations we shall be able to promote the thesis that the Madhyamaka is not so dissimilar to the Yogācāra as generally thought. Since we now understand that Nāgārjuna, particularly in his apparent use of a three valued logic, may be implicitly able to hold "positive" positions concerning the nature of things, the idea that only the Yogācāra adopted such an outlook seems onesided. (63)

More similarities between the two "schools" will now be able to be revealed, particularly when treated against the background of the early Buddhist tradition.

Notes

- 1 Mūla Madhyamakārikās de Nāgārjuna avec la Prasannapadā Comm-
entaire de Candrakīrti par L. de la Vallée Poussin (1903 -
1913)
Bibliotheca Buddhica IV
Republished by Biblio Verlag, Osnabrück (1970)
- 2 TRV Murti The Central Philosophy of Buddhism p 131
- 3 R. H. Robinson Some Logical Aspects of Nāgārjuna's System
in Philosophy East & West Vol 6 (1957) p 291 - 308 p 295
- 4 MMK.VII.30
sataśca tāvabhāvasya nirodha nopapadyate
ekatve na hi bhāvaśca nābhāvaścopapadyate
- 5 MMK.VIII.7
kārah sadasadbhūtaḥ sadasatkurute na tat
parasparaviruddhaḥ hi saccāsaccaikataḥ kuṭaḥ
- 6 MMK II 8
gantā na gacchati tāvadagantā naiva gacchati
anyo ganturagantuśca kaṣṭhīyo hi gacchati
- 7 MMK XXI 14
bhāvamabhyupapannasya śāśvatocchedadarśanam
prasajyate sa bhāvo hi nityo 'nityo 'tha vā bhavet
- 8 Robinson op.cit p 296
- 9 R. H. Robinson Did Nāgārjuna really refute all philosophical
views? p 1 - 12 in; Vedānta & Buddhism; ed J. L. Mehta
Varanasi, Benares Hindu University, 1968
- 10 cf ibid p 4
- 11 CS III 39
yan nodeti na ca vyeti nocchedi na ca śāśvatam
tad ākāśapratīkāśam nākṣarajñānagocaram
- 12 U.80
Atthi bhikkhave tad āyatanam, yattha nēva paṭhavī na āpo
no tejo na vāyo na ākāśanañcāyatanam na viññānañcāyatanam
na ākiñcaññāyatanam no nevasaññānāsahñāyatanam n'āyam
loko na paraloka ubho candimasūriyā, tad aham bhikkhave
n'eva āgatim vadāmi na gatim na tthitim na cutim na upapattim
appatittham appavattam anārammanam eva tam es'ev'anto
dukkhassā'ti
- 13 MMK XVIII 7
nivṛttamabhīdhātavyam nivṛtte cittagocare
anuppannāniruddhā hi nirvānamiva dharmatā

- 14 Robinson op.cit. p 5
- 15 MMK XXI 11
dṛsyate sambhavaścaiva vibhavaścaive te bhavet
dṛsyate sambhavaścaiva mohādvibhava eva ca
- 16 MMK VII 34
yathā māyā yathā svapno gandharvanagaram yathā
tathotpādastathā sthānam tathā bhaṅga udāhṛtam
- 17 MMK VII 8-9
pradīpaḥ svaparātmanau samprakāśayitā yathā
utpādah svaparātmanāvubhāvutpādayettathā
pradīpe nāndhakāro'sti yatra cāsau pratiṣṭhitah
kiṃ prakāśayati dīpaḥ prakāśo hi tamovadhaḥ
- 18 MMK XXIV 8
- 19 Robinson op.cit. p 8-9
- 20 P. T. Raju "The Principle of Four-Cornered Negation in Indian Philosophy; in Review of Metaphysics 7 (1954) p 694-713
- 21 D. S. Ruegg The Four Positions of the Catuskoṭi and the Problem of the Description of Reality in Mahāyāna Buddhism; in Journal of Indian Philosophy 5 (1977) 1-71 ; p 40 n 154
- 22 H. Nakamura : Buddhist Logic expounded by Means of Symbolic Logic in Journal of Indian & Buddhist Studies Vol 7/1 (1958) p1 - 21.
First published in Japanese (1954) cf. p. 14-15
- 23 MMK XXIV 14
sarvaṃ ca yujyate tasya śūnyatā yasya yujyate
sarvaṃ na yujyate tasya śūnyatā yasya na yujyate
- 24 Robinson Some Logical Aspects p 306
- 25 MMK XXIV 18
yaḥ pratītyasamutpādaḥ śūnyatām tām pracakṣmahe
sā prajñaptirupādāya pratipatsaiva madhyamā
- 26 Ruegg op. cit. p. 51
- 27 ibid p. 50
- 28 ibid p. 49
- 29 ibid p. 50

- 30 J. F. Staal. Negation and the Law of Contradiction in Indian Thought; in Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies vol 25 (1962) p 52 - 71
J. F. Staal. Exploring Mysticism Berkeley 1975
- 31 ibid p 44
- 32 P. Fenner A Study of the Relationship between Analysis (vicāra) and Insight (prajñā) based on the Madhyamakāvātāra; in Journal of Indian Philosophy vol 12 (1984) pp 139-197 p 164
- 33 Ruegg op. cit. p 51
- 34 MMK XXV 10
prahāṇam cābravīcchāsta bhavasya vi bhavasya ca
tasmāna bhāvo nābhāvo nirvāṇamiti yujyate
- 35 Fenner op.cit p 187
- 36 ibid p 188
- 37 Ruegg op. cit. p 4
- 38 MMK.22.13-14
Yena grāho grhītastu ghano 'stīti tathāgataḥ
Nāstīti sa vikalpayan nirvṛtasyāpi kalpayet
svabhāvataśca śūnye 'smimścintā naivopapadyate
Param nirodhādbhavati buddho na bhavatīti vā
- 39 MMK.22.15-16
Prapañcayanti ye buddham prapañcātītamavyayam
te prapañcāhataḥ sarve na paśyanti tathāgatam
Tathāgato yatsvabhāvastatsvabhāvamidam jagat
Tathāgato niḥsvābhavo niḥsvabhāvamidam jagat
- 48 K. Bhattacharya : The Dialectical Method of Nāgārjuna
(Vigraha vyāvartanī Dehli (1978) p 38 n 2
- 49 G. Tucci Pre-Diñnāga Buddhist Texts on Logic from Chinese
Sources Baroda (1929) p xxvii
- 50 Lindtner Nāgārjuniana p 71 n 110
- 51 Ruegg The Literature of the Madhyamaka School p 22

- 52 VV 1-2
sarveṣāṃ bhāvānāṃ sarvatra na vidyate svabhāvas' cet
tvadvacanam asvabhāvaṃ na nivartayitum svabhāvaṃ alam
atha sasvabhāvaṃ etad vākyam pūrvā hatā pratijñāte
vaiśamikatvaṃ tasmin viśeṣahetuś ca vaktavyaḥ
- 53 VV 61-67
sata eva pratiśedho yadi śūnyatvaṃ nanu pratisiddhaṃ idaṃ
pratiśedhayate hi bhavān bhāvānāṃ niḥsvabhāvatvaṃ
pratiśedhayase'tha tvam śūnyatvaṃ tac ca nāsti śūnyatvaṃ
pratiśedhaḥ sata iti te nanv eṣa vihitṛyate vādaḥ
pratiśedhayami nāham kiṃ cit pratiśedhyam asti na ca kiṃ cit
tasmāt pratiśedhayasīty adhilaya eṣa tvayā kriyate
yac cāharte vacanād asataḥ pratiśedhavacanasiddhir iti
atra jñāpayate vāg asad iti tan na pratinihanti
mṛgatṛṣṇādrṣṭānte yaḥ punar uktas tvayā mahāś carcaḥ
tatrāpi nirṇayam śṛṇu yathā sa drṣṭanta upapannaḥ
sa yadi svabhāvataḥ syād grāho na syāt pratītya sambhūtaḥ
yaś ca pratītyabhavati grāho nanu śūnyatā saiva
yadica svabhāvataḥ syād grāhaḥ kastam nivartayed grāham
śeṣeṣv apy eṣa vidhis tasmād eso'nupālambhaḥ
- 54 tadvat nāsti svabhāva bhāvānāṃ ety etad vacanam na
svabhāvānāṃ niḥsvabhāvatvaṃ karoti bhāveṣu svabhāvasya
abhāvatvaṃ jñāpayati
- 55 M. Mehta. Śūnyatā and Dharmatā : The Mādhyamika View of
Inner Reality; p 26-37 in Developments in Buddhist Thought :
Canadian Contributions to Buddhist Studies ed. R. C. Amore
(1979) Waterloo, Ontario p 30 n 18
- 56 Ruegg op. cit. p 22
- 57 ibid p 23
- 58 F. J. Streng Emptiness : A Study in Religious Meaning (1967)
Nashville p 181 - 182
- 59 L. S. Betty Nāgārjuna's Masterpiece - logical, mystical,
both or neither? ; in Philosophy East and West Vol XXXIII
(1983) p. 121-138 p 128
- 60 VV.29
yadikā cana pratijñā syān me tata eṣa me bhaved doṣaḥ
nāstica mama pratijñā tasmān naivāsti medoṣaḥ
- 61 sarvabhāveṣu śūnyeṣv atyantopaśānteṣu prakṛtivivikteṣu
kutaḥ pratijñā
- 62 Ruegg The Four Positions p 49
- 63 Conze's point of view. This will be treated in more detail
in Chapters 6 and 8.

Chapter Three

Nāgārjuna and the Continuity of Tradition

A. K. Warder ⁽¹⁾ has attempted to ascertain the exact nature of the Mahāyāna teachings, if any contained, in MMK. His opinion, like my own, is that the approach to Nāgārjuna's work via later commentators such as Candrakīrti should be dealt with carefully, since it is unlikely that any school of thought would stay still for a period of 400 years or so. Turning to the text then, Warder notes that throughout the whole of MMK there is no explicit quotation from any known Mahāyānasūtra. However, and this is surprising given the fact that Nāgārjuna is generally considered to be the Mahāyānist par excellence, quotations from the Tripitaka of the early schools are fairly frequent. Ruegg vigorously opposes Warder's thesis that there is no good reason to refer to the author of MMK as a Mahāyānist simply because he attacks certain ideas held by contemporary Abhidharmikas. He in fact unearths a verse of MMK which he claims "clearly to presuppose a section of the Ratnakūṭa collection, the Kāśyapaparivarta". ⁽²⁾ This particular verse,

"Emptiness (śūnyatā) is proclaimed by the victorious ones as the refutation of all viewpoints; but those who hold emptiness as a viewpoint - (the true perceivers) have called those incurable (asādhya)". ⁽³⁾

however is not found intact in the Ratnakūṭa; the general idea is merely developed in this text. Since one could in all probability ascribe similarities in doctrine between other verses of MMK and

all sorts of disparate literatures, without at the same time being able to bring parallel texts forward as evidence, the contention that Nāgārjuna is a Mahāyānist since he quotes Mahāyānasūtras cannot be upheld in this case. However Ruegg is definite that:-

"... in view of his place in the history of Buddhist thought and because of his development of the theory of non-substantiality and emptiness of all dharmas, it seems only natural to regard Nāgārjuna as one of the first and most important systematizers of Mahāyānist thought." (4)

Ruegg defends his position at another point by noting that while the MMK may be problematic in its relationship to the Mahāyānasūtras this is not the case with the Ratnāvalī which quotes at length from a number of Mahāyāna sources. However as explained in detail earlier on, since the Ratnāvalī does not form part of the logical (yukti) corpus of Nāgārjuna's work as acknowledged by Tibetan and Chinese tradition, we must regard the authorship of this text as doubtful, and have already decided not to include an analysis of its teachings in an exposition of Nāgārjuna's thought.

Other scholars have actually found parallels between MMK and Mahāyāna-sūtras, most noteworthy of these being Lindtner. (5) He believes he has found three allusions to the Laṅkāvatārasūtra (LS) in MMK.

These are:

(i) MMK XVIII 7
nivṛttam abhidhātavyam nivṛtṭas' cittagocarah
anutpannāniruddha hi nirvāṇam iva dharmatā
LS III 9
astināstīty ubhāvantau yāvaca cittasya gocarah
gocarena nirudhena samyak cittam nirudhyate

(ii) MMK XXI 11

drśyate sambhavaś caiva vibhavaś caiva te bhavet
drśyate sambhavaś caiva mohād vibhava eva ca
LS X 37

sambhavaṃ vibhavaṃ caiva mohāt paśyanti bāliśāḥ
na sambhavaṃ navibhavaṃ prajñayukto vipaśyati

(iii) MMK XVII 33

kleśāḥ karmāṇi dehāś ca kartāras ca phalāni ca
gandharvanagarākāra marīcisvapnasamñibhāḥ
LS X 279

kleśāḥ karmapathādehaḥ kartāras ca phalaṃ ca vai
marīcisvapnasamkāsā gandharvanagaropamā

While it is sufficiently clear that neither of these three pairs constitute parallel readings Lindtner feels that not only are the ideas presented in them identical, but the verses of MMK are themselves references to the Lankāvatārasūtra. This is clearly an overstatement. P. Williams ⁽⁶⁾ has shown that such a position cannot be upheld. In the case of example (i), while both verses do refer to the cessation of the wandering about of the mind (cittagocara) MMK goes on to talk of the cessation of that which can be talked about (nivṛttam abhidhātavyam) and concludes on a positive note; in other words that nirvāṇa coincides with the true nature of things (dharmatā). The LS is quite different from the verse simply saying that when cittagocara is brought to an end then so too is the mind (citta). This is certainly not implied in MMK.

Let us look at the second example. Although both verses do refer to production and destruction as apprehended in delusion (moha), the LS quotation contrasts such a viewpoint with that of one united with prajñā (prajñāyukta), while the MMK does not. Therefore while LS is comparing the vision of the enlightened with the unenlightened,

MMK is more likely than not arguing with the commonly held Abhidharmika concepts of origination and destruction. Example (iii) shows the most thoroughgoing overlap. However the comparison of conventional existents such as bodies (dehāḥ) with a city of the Gandharvas, a mirage or a dream is a stock image from a certain phase of Buddhist writing and in this case Nāgārjuna may have been referring to any of a large number of texts. In fact Lindtner believes that Nāgārjuna's use of the Gandharvanagara metaphor is itself sufficient reason to refute Warder's claim that the author of MMK cannot be demonstrated to be a Mahāyānist by showing that the term Gandarvanagara does not occur in the ancient āgamas. (7) Now although such an argument may be admitted it does not appear to me that the use of a newly-coined metaphor in Nāgārjuna's writing provides sufficient proof to reject Warder's claim. Before returning to Warder though let us merely endorse Williams' statement that although the verses quoted may "express similar sentiments ... there is no need to assume that the ... connection ... is a reference by Nāgārjuna to LS". (8)

The texts that are definitely referred to in MMK are mainly from the Samyuttanikāya of the early Tripitaka. The only sutrā actually named is in MMK.XV.7. This is the Kātyāyanāvāda (9) which shows that the Buddha, throughout his teaching, always avoided the extremes between being (asti) and non-being (nāsti). Other sutras are however agreed, by most scholars, to be referred to in MMK. Thus the Acelakāśyapa (10), which incidentally follows immediately on from the Kātyāyanāvāda in the Samyuktanikāya, is referred to in MMK.XII.1. It appears that this sutra may be the source of Nāgārjuna's use

of the catuṣkoṭi since we are told in it that suffering (duḥkha) does not come about either through self-causation (svayaṃ kṛtam), causation by another (parakṛtam), by the two together or by neither. In fact suffering is said to come about through dependent origination (pratītyasamutpāda) which cannot itself be characterised by any of these four positions (catuṣkoṭi).

According to Warder other references to early texts are found in MMK.XIII.1 where the Dhātuviṅṅgasūtra ⁽¹¹⁾ is invoked. The rejection of extreme opinions (drṣṭi) such as whether things (dharmas) are eternal or non-eternal contained in MMK.XXVII also seems to follow some version of the Brahmajālasūtra. ⁽¹²⁾ He concludes therefore that in MMK:

"There are no terms peculiar to the Mahāyāna. There is no evidence that Nāgārjuna had ever seen any Prajñāpāramitā text ... for him the most important canonical text is the Nidāna Saṃyukta". (13)

It appears that Nāgārjuna, if we accept Warder's thesis, does not stand outside the early Buddhist tradition in order to set up an entirely independent school of thought but rather, he represents one strand of thought within the tradition itself, which maybe at odds with what he considers to be a deviant branch. In the last chapter we met with the idea that the purpose of the Vigrahavyāvartanī was not to counter the arguments of all-comers, but rather to check the excesses of a certain group of Abhidharmikas, and again this may well be the case with MMK. Rather than establishing a new teaching therefore, Nāgārjuna may be seen as someone engaged in the defense of orthodoxy.

That a so-called proto-Madhyamaka strand of thought is to be found in the Tripitaka, there can be no doubt. If we look at some of the earliest Buddhist writings i.e. the Aṭṭhakavagga and the Parāyanavagga of the Suttanipāta we are immediately reminded of Nāgārjuna's assertion that all views (dr̥ṣṭi), because they are generated by the dichotomising tendencies of the mind (prapañca), which give rise to thought construction (vikalpa), are to be rejected. Although, as we shall see, Nāgārjuna does not reject reality as such, nevertheless all theories associated with pinning it down because they are generated by prapañca etc. must be rejected. This is also the position of the Suttanipāta when it says:

"Giving up assumption, unattached, he builds no reliance on knowledge itself ... he does not rely on any view whatsoever ... he who has no leanings here to either of the two extremes; being or non-being, here or beyond, he has no moorings whatsoever, no clutching while distinguishing among dharmas. He has not formed even the last apperception in what is here seen, heard or thought". (14)

In Gomez's (15) study of this early material the origin of false views bears remarkable similarity to the aetiology suggested by the writers of the Madhyamaka. Gomez states:

" ... what is the cause of our preferences and attachments? The misdirected mind, specifically the wrongly applied faculty of apperception (sañña). Apperception leads to dualities, graspings, conflicts and sorrow because of its two primary functions: its power to conceptualise and define (saṃkha) and its tendency toward division and multiplicity (papañca). The capacity of these faculties to generate friction and frustration is reinforced by the root apperception of "I" and "mine". (16)

However, and here again the equivalence with Nāgārjuna is clear,

the author of the Suttanipāta is not enunciating a position of nihilism in the sense that with the rejection of all views based on the dichotomy of being and non-being, everything comes to an end. He is simply saying that in such a state an enlightened person has transcended the erroneous impulse to construct theories about the nature of reality through having brought thought construction etc. to a halt. The appropriate response for a mind which has moved into nirvāṇa therefore is to remain at peace and not to be disturbed by the desire to talk since, as language itself is infected at its root by false dichotomies based on notions such as being and non-being, even an enlightened person cannot use language successfully to give an accurate picture of reality. At best language must remain a heuristic device used for the purpose of hinting at things which cannot in fact be successfully articulated. As the Suttanipāta puts it:

"Of him who has gone to cessation there is no measure, there is nothing in terms of which one could speak of him. When all dharmas have been uprooted, all the ways of speech have also been uprooted." (17)

"The silent one (muni) does not speak of "equal", "low" or "high", serene, having left all attachment to self behind, he does not grasp at anything nor does he reject anything". (18)

Nāgārjuna adopts such a position.

"The bringing to rest of all apprehending is the bringing to an end of the dichotomizing tendencies of the mind and this is peace. No dharmā anywhere has been taught by the Buddha of anything". (19)

For him a recourse to speech and language inevitably leads to error,

and by such a recourse one can never know the true nature of things, for the true nature of things (tattva, dharmatā) is only to be apprehended in nirvāṇa. Language leads away from nirvāṇa.

"Those who describe the Buddha in detail, who is unchanging and hence beyond description, are defeated by such description and do not see the Tathāgata". (20)

Only when mental discrimination is brought to an end is nirvāṇa achieved and at such a point language grinds to a halt.

"When the wandering of the mind (cittagocara) is brought to a halt, the realm of words also ceases. This indeed is nirvāṇa which is neither originated nor destroyed, the true nature of things (dharmatā). (21)

Reality as such is not contaminated or implicated with dichotomous thought (prapañca), thought construction (vikalpa) and is non-differentiated (anānārtham). (22) Commenting on MMK ch.XVIII Candrakīrti shows that for him the world of suffering is brought about by erroneous views concerning tattva. He in fact presents his own truncated form of the classical 12-linked pratītyasamutpāda to account for the unenlightened state. In this formula the first link in the chain is appropriation (upalambha) which gives rise to the other members which in turn are dichotomising thought (prapañca), thought construction (vikalpa), erroneous attachment to "I" and "mine" (ahammameti-abhiniveśa), defilement (kleśa), actions (karma), and old-age and death (jarāmaraṇa). (23) The generation of such a causal series is destroyed when the appropriation (upalambha) which causes it is destroyed. When this activity (which is equivalent

to ignorance (avidyā) in the classical formula) is brought to rest the factors leading to old-age and death do not arise and there is nirvāṇa. Since reality (tattva) is from this point of view always beyond the reach of knowledge and speech, this, according to Candrakīrti, is the meaning of Nāgārjuna's statement that the Buddha has never taught anything.

Considering the above close similarity between the early Suttanipāta and later Madhyamaka doctrine with regard to speech and silence there appears to be a case for establishing some sort of influence of the former on the latter, or at the very least for proposing a tendency with regard to this particular doctrine common to both periods of Buddhist thought.

The question we must now ask is what happens to the mind once prapañca etc. have been brought to cessation? Are we correct in assuming that this will result in a state totally devoid of any mental activity, a state of total unconsciousness, or will the mind continue to operate but in an entirely different manner from its unenlightened mode?

In other words is there mind or some state of mind in nirvāṇa?

Let us look at the early Buddhist tradition first. Now the Suttanipāta itself refers to people having attained nirvāṇa. Their minds (cittāni) are said to be free from the obsessions. ⁽²⁴⁾ In other texts it is clear that the mind still functions for it is said to be "well composed and free" ⁽²⁵⁾, "and of such a nature that it will not return to the world of sense desire" ⁽²⁶⁾ after have attained enlightenment.

Such a state of mind is consequently of a different order from that characterised by the turmoil created by prapañca, vikalpa etc. It may be that these two states are referred to respectively by citta and viññāna, where citta is somehow at the deeper level and therefore unconditioned by activities at the interface between mind and matter. Viññāna on the other hand is conditioned, dependent on prapañca, constantly changing and hence differentiated, only being brought to a halt in nirvāṇa. Since viññāna is one of the terms of the classical pratītyasamutpāda series and hence arises dependent on ignorance (avidyā) it stands to reason that when avidyā is uprooted viññāna will come to an end. However, and this is a very important point, it should not be assumed that such an event signals the total extinction of mental processes since before viññāna arose citta existed and when viññāna ceases citta is still there. Johansson confirms such a supposition. He notes that in nirvāṇa:

"... although viññāna is "stopped", still an act of differentiated understanding can take place, so the "stopped" viññāna refers to a different layer of consciousness than the momentary surface processes ... There are simply, according to the early Buddhist analysis, two layers of consciousness; what we call the momentary surface processes and the background consciousness". (27)

The background state is often spoken of in terms of being "an immovable, unfluctuating mind" (28), and as being "deep, immeasurable and unfathomable as the great ocean". (29) We will come to see, in an examination of a nexus of doctrines connected with this mental background state, which we must put off until the final chapter of this thesis, that such conceptions clearly anticipate some of

the so called developments in the psychological system outlined in the works of Vasubandhu and Asaṅga.

One important aspect of citta when in the state of nirvāṇa, particularly relevant to our discussion of the overlap between early Buddhism and Nāgārjuna is that, in the Majjhimanikāya, it is said to be associated with emptiness. In a state which clearly refers to the attainment of nirvāṇa, the mind (citta) is said to be free from the obsessions of sensuality (kama), becoming (bhava) and ignorance (avijja), and the monk comes to understand that such a conscious state represents an emptiness ⁽³⁰⁾ of the obsessions (āśava). This emptiness (suññatā) is therefore associated with a permanent state of mind (citta), equivalent to nirvāṇa which derives from the cessation of viññāṇa. ⁽³¹⁾ Nirvāṇa is also associated with emptiness in the Therīgathā. ⁽³²⁾ These references to emptiness in the early Buddhist canon do seem to emphasise the fact that emptiness is a state in which subjectivity and objectivity break down. When those processes habitually met with in the unenlightened mind (ie. āśavas, prapañca, vikalpa) are eradicated the distinction common to that state between self and other can no longer be established. There is an intimate union between the knower and the known. Although one may talk provisionally of the knowledge of a Buddha it must always be born in mind that such knowledge itself transcends any distinction between epistemology and ontology. Crucial in the eradication of all the factors that contribute to the unenlightened state is prajñā (Pali-paññā). It is responsible for bringing to an end the obsessions (āśavas).

"... having seen by means of paññā, the obsessions (āśavā) are completely destroyed." ⁽³³⁾

It is therefore ultimately responsible for bringing ignorance (avidyā) to an end, and consequent on this the entire pratītyasamutpāda series.

"If paññā is developed, what result will it lead to? All ignorance is abandoned". (34)

In other words when prajñā is generated viññāna and all the other twelve links are stopped, there is no suffering, and a person enters nirvāṇa. Now Dignāga, admittedly a later author, holds prajñā to have the same efficacy in the Mahāyāna as it seems to have in the early texts. He says:

"Prajñāpāramitā is non-dual knowledge (advayajñāna), and that is the Tathāgata. The treatise and the spiritual discipline, as leading to this end, receive the same application". (35)

In fact as we have already mentioned in Chapter One, many scholars do hold the major function of the Prajñāpāramitā corpus to be to expound and help generate prajñā, which is felt to be the chief of the perfections (pāramitās). Many scholars, not least Murti, have held that the Prajñā-pāramitā is the major literary influence on Nāgārjuna. However since there is no direct reference to prajñā in the MMK one must agree with Warder that such a thesis has not been proved. What evidence do we possess to suggest that a notion of prajñā, even though not explicitly expressed, is important for an understanding of MMK? Let us follow up Dignāga's hint that prajñā is a synonym for non-dual knowledge (advayajñāna). In the first place Candrakīrti, (and here

we are bearing in mind the fact that as a commentator 400 years removed from Nāgārjuna we should not place too much trust in his interpretations) at the very beginning of his Prasannapadā, comments on the centrality of non-dual knowledge (advaya^ājñāna) in the Madhyamaka system. (36)

Murti of course takes his interpretation of the Madhyamaka system from Candrakīrti. For him

"Non-dual knowledge (jñānam^ā advaya) is the abolition of all particular viewpoints which restrict and distort reality". (37)

"The sole concern of the Mādhyamika advaya^āvāda is the purification of the faculty of knowing. The primordial error consists in the intellect being infected by the inveterate tendency to view Reality as identity or difference, permanent or momentary, one or many etc. ... With the purification of the intellect, intuition (prajñā^ā) emerges; the Real is known as it is, as Tathatā or bhūtakōṭi". (38)

Now one problem with Murti's approach, even though when we have examined the doctrines of MMK on this point and found them to generally support his view, is that his interpretations are based too heavily on the Prajñāpāramitā texts. In other words although we may find support for the PP notion that the non-appropriation of all things (yo'nupalambhaḥ sarvadharmānām) is the perfection of prajñā^ā (39), there is no evidence to suggest the fact that Nāgārjuna held "non-dual knowledge (prajñā^ā) is contentless intuition". (40) Nāgārjuna's psychological position in connection with such questions as whether prajñā^ā, or for that matter any form of consciousness, has content or is contentless, is not sufficiently well developed and one cannot fall either on one side or on the other in this matter. The issue remains undeveloped until a much later date in the history of Buddhist

thought when it became the subject of a heated debate; the Sākāravādīns like Jñānaśrīmitra and Ratnakīrti holding there to be a content to consciousness while the Nirākāravādīns such as Ratnākārasānti holding consciousness to be void of an object. (41) Murti is therefore jumping to conclusions which cannot be justified. What then can we know concerning the existence or non-existence of consciousness in the enlightened state?

In the first place nowhere in the MMK does Nāgārjuna reject the existence of consciousness as such. In fact his position appears to be very much the same as that presented in the Suttanipāta. How is this so? Well, to start with, Nāgārjuna seems to attach a greater degree of conditionality to viññāna than to any other mental state. This is not surprising since in the early tradition viññāna is seen to be conditioned by the pratītyasamutpāda process and can therefore be brought to a halt. In his critique of the five faculties (caṅṣurādīndriya) Nāgārjuna brings his thesis to light:-

"As a son is said to have come about through the mother-father relationship, so therefore does viññāna come about through the relationship between the eye and material form". (42)

and similarly in the analysis of the twelve links (dvādaśāṅga) of pratītyasamutpāda Nāgārjuna holds that viññāna is conditioned by mental predispositions (saṃskāra) while at the same time being itself the cause of name and form (nāmarūpa). (43) This is entirely consonant with the classical formulation of the twelve links which is found in the Tripitaka (44). Now we have already seen how viññāna is

said to be stopped once nirvāṇa is reached, in the early literature.

Nāgārjuna holds exactly the same position since for him:-

"By the cessation of every (link of pratītyasamutpāda) none function. Thus that single mass of suffering is completely destroyed". (45)

In other words, once the momentum of the chain of becoming is broken, none of its individual links can be maintained and they consequently cease to function. This is the suppression of suffering (duḥkha) and is equivalent to nirvāṇa. Since viññāna is one of the links concerned we must assume that for Nāgārjuna nirvāṇa may be characterised as, among other things, the cessation of viññāna. Are we to assume by this that nirvāṇa must be a state devoid of consciousness? Nāgārjuna is in fact quick to point out that this is not the case. He makes a distinction between the enlightened and the unenlightened person. The distinction between the two is that while the latter, under the influence of ignorance (avidyā) creates mental predispositions (saṃskāra) etc., the former has cut ignorance at its root through the application of jñāna. When jñāna is operative ignorance does not arise and all the factors conditioned by ignorance have no efficacy. The enlightened one therefore, through the agency of jñāna sees reality (tattva) as it is.

"Thus the ignorant create the mental predispositions which are the root of saṃsāra. One who creates (such predispositions) is ignorant. The wise person is not (one who creates) because he sees reality (tattva). When ignorance ceases mental predispositions do not come into existence. The cessation of ignorance comes about through the cultivation of jñāna". (46)

Now we have already noted that the term prajñā is not used on any occasion in MMK. This must not in itself be conclusive evidence that Nāgārjuna does not entertain the notion of such a faculty. As we have already noted the terms prajñā and jñāna form a nexus in which it is very difficult to distinguish the precise significance of each term. The most we have been able to suggest is that jñāna may designate the end process in the development of prajñā. Be that as it may, it is clear that there is a well defined distinction between the mental state or states designated by vijñāna and that designated by prajñā/jñāna. We have already also seen that in the earliest strata of Buddhist literature while vijñāna refers to a conditioned surface state of consciousness only available to the unenlightened, prajñā/jñāna refers to the unconditioned vision of reality. If such is the case, let us not be overinfluenced by subtle semantic points but rather cast our attention to the structure of MMK to ascertain whether Nāgārjuna admits the possibility of prajñā, though under another name.

Now we have seen that the characteristic of the unenlightened mind is its habitual tendency to distort reality. This is brought about by a number of factors including prapañca and vikalpa which in turn are conditioned by ignorance (avidyā). Nirvāṇa then is the cessation of these factors. As Nāgārjuna has it:-

"On account ^{of} ~~for~~ the destruction of karmic defilements (karmakleśa) there is liberation (mokṣa). The karmic defilements are mentally constructed (vikalpataḥ). They arise because of dichotomous thought (prapañca). Dichotomous thought is brought to cessation through emptiness (śūnyatā)". (47)

Emptiness (sūnyatā) then is a state of consciousness in which dichotomous thought (prapañca) no longer holds sway. It is a state of mind dehabituated from its ignorant tendency to distort. As such the attainment of emptiness (sūnyatā) must, by definition, be incommunicable and unknowable since it is the transcendence of all dichotomies, including subjectivity and objectivity. The attainment of emptiness may be understood as the dawning of gnosis, remembering our previously stated view that all such talk must remain provisional. Ultimately there can be no differentiation between knower and known in such an elevated state and the distinction between epistemology and ontology collapses.

Now we have noted that in the Majjhima Nikāya emptiness represents that state of mind which is free from the defilements of the obsessions (āsrava). We are consequently in a better position to interpret the curious MMK.XVIII.7.

nivṛttamabhidhātavyam nivṛtte cittagocare
anutpannāniruddhā hi nirvāṇamiva dharmatā

in which nirvāṇa is equated with the cessation of cittagocara. Now cittagocara has variously been translated as the realm of thought, the domain of thought, the mind's functional realm etc., but it is clear that these are unsatisfactory renderings since they imply

that the mind is brought to a halt in nirvāṇa. Although the term gocara does imply the range of something, such a meaning is secondary since in many cases it implies ranging in the sense of wandering about. In such circumstances the term cittagocara would be better translated as the wandering about of the mind. As the cow (go, gaus) is an undisciplined animal wandering wherever its fancy takes it, so also is the mind of an unenlightened being. Nirvāṇa therefore is the suppression of an unruly mind, made to wander here and there by the action of prapañca etc. This interpretation of nirvāṇa is quite congruent with our understanding derived from early Buddhist literature, in many senses rescues Nāgārjuna from one aspect of the charge of nihilism (since if nirvāṇa was total unconsciousness why should anyone be motivated to strive for it, or rather could it not be attained through suicide?), and fits in well with the general tenor of the text of MMK. Nowhere are we told that nirvāṇa is in fact a non-conscious state. Rather it is always defined as a state free from those mental factors which are associated with vijñāna. Hence:

"Not related to anything in a conditional way, at peace, not elaborated by dichotomous thought, free of thought construction, undifferentiated. Such are the characteristics of reality (tattva)". (48)

In the last verse of this chapter Nāgārjuna goes on to say, quite explicitly, that enlightenment is a state of mind.

"If fully accomplished Buddhas do not arise, and the Śrāvakas disappear, then independently the jñāna of the Pratyekabuddhas is produced". (49)

We are now in a good position to tie together most of the central concepts of Nāgārjuna's system and subject them to our own interpretation. In the first place śūnyatā is not a metaphysical ontological concept. Nāgārjuna is therefore not an absolutist. Stcherbatsky (51) is quite wrong to find in the term śūnyatā a concept similar to the Absolute Idea of Hegel. There is no evidence in the MMK that śūnyatā has an ontological dimension, that it develops in a dialectical process, or that it may be rendered in English as "relativity". In fact śūnyatā is something quite the opposite of a thing; it is a state in which the imputation of "thingness" (svabhāva) is no longer operative. All of this is quite clearly borne out by the important Chapter XXIV of MMK (Āryasatya parīkṣā). By contrasting the conventional (samvṛti) with the ultimate (paramārtha) truths, Nāgārjuna here distinguishes between worldly understanding and the understanding of the wise. He goes on to demonstrate that while the latter has its basis in the former, nevertheless the ultimate vision of things is free from the substantializing tendency of the conventional. Since this substantializing tendency is intimately connected with the imputation of self nature, the ultimate (paramārtha) must be in a condition empty of such self natures. The ultimate then is emptiness (śūnyatā). We may be tempted to infer that this state is equivalent to jñāna. When the mind is empty of the defilements which lead to a distorted picture of reality (tattva) ie. the defilements leading to the imposition of concepts such as being and non-being, the mind is no longer held in the turmoil of ignorance (avidyā) and consequently becomes enlightened. Śūnyatā therefore describes the state of enlightenment or nirvāṇa.

Nirvāṇa seems to correspond to the mind empty of the defilements. In Samsāra, on the other hand, a general condition of mind operates in which factors, determined by ignorance (avidyā), predominate. This being so a distorted vision of reality, dependent on the individual's personal desires and cravings is established.

"The status of the birth-death cycle is due to grasping (upādāyā) and dependence (pratiyā). That which is neither grasping nor dependent is taught to be nirvāṇa". (52)

Nirvāṇa is therefore an exalted state of mind, and the achievement of accomplishing such a state, empty of the defilements, will not entail a fundamental change in the structure of reality. It is rather a radically different way of looking at reality. This is why Nāgārjuna says that nirvāṇa can be neither described in terms of existence nor non-existence. (53) It is essential to bear in mind the previously stated view that nirvāṇa transcends any distinction of subjectivity or objectivity (54) and in this sense it would be wrong to assign any ultimate epistemological or ontological value to it. Nirvāṇa signifies that state in which there is an intimate union of seer and seen. It is a state in which those thought constructive processes which generate dichotomies of all kinds are no longer operative.

Samsāra may more readily be understood as an epistemic state in which prapañca operates. Nāgārjuna's statement that:-

"There is no difference between samsāra and nirvāṇa;
There is no difference between nirvāṇa and samsāra." (55)

correctly interpreted, is true therefore in the provisional sense that, since ^{as} samsāra and nirvāṇa seem to be orientations towards one

ontological category which Nāgārjuna calls reality (tattva), there can be no essential difference between them. They are both states of mind. They do not both refer to radically different reality structures. Reality (tattva) therefore is the ontological base for the appearance of both the enlightened and the unenlightened world views. The difference between them is purely conventional since while the samsaric epistemological orientation generates an imaginary world picture complete with internal contradictions which lead to suffering, the nirvānic orientation, a state of mind characterised by emptiness from the defilements, views things as they are (yathābhūtam) involves no contradictions and is at peace (śānta). This reveals the true nature of things (dharmatā).

If we look at MMK.XXIV.14 again (cf this thesis, Chapter 2 n 25)

sarvaṃ ca yujyate tasya śūnyatā yasya yujyate
sarvaṃ na yujyate tasya śūnyaṃ yasya na yujyate

it is clear what is meant. When it is said that whatever is in correspondence with emptiness (śūnyatā) is in correspondence, we may interpret that Nāgārjuna is conveying the notion that when the mind is empty of defilement everything is seen correctly. Conversely when the mind is not empty things are not seen correctly.

Having ascertained that in speaking of nirvāṇa or Samsāra Nāgārjuna is dealing with epistemological orientations towards reality (tattva) we may now decide the exact status of tattva in Nāgārjuna's system. Actually there has been a great deal of scholarly debate as to the

correct interpretation of MMK XXIV 18.

yaḥ pratītyasamutpādaḥ śūnyatām tām pracakṣmahe
sā prajñaptirupādāya pratipatsaiva madhyamā

It is clear however that in the overall context of its appearance in a chapter devoted to examining the doctrine of the four noble truths, which in the process counters an opponent's claim that śūnyatāvāda leads to an abandoning of those truths and hence to a position in which morality appears absurd, Nāgārjuna is, in this verse, trying to give his own version of the Middle Way (madhyamā pratipad) which avoids the extremes of nihilism or eternalism.

We have already discussed at some length the fact that these extremes depend on notions of existence and non-existence which in their turn are the result of the actions of prapañca, vikalpa etc. on the unenlightened mind. This is why it is said that nirvāṇa cannot be characterised in terms of either of these concepts. It is concept-free. Emptiness (śūnyatā) represents the sense of emptiness of such concepts in the enlightened mind, and as such is the equivalent of nirvāṇa. In the light of this how will we interpret MMK.XXIV.18?

The first hemistich reads "We declare that dependent origination is emptiness (śūnyatā)."
On the relationship between pratītya-
samutpāda and śūnyatā Stcherbatsky states that:-

"In Mahāyāna it (ie. pratītyasamutpāda) is synonymous with the central conception of the Mādhyamikas and means their idea of Relativity or Negativity (madhyamā pratipad = śūnyatā =

pratītyasamutpāda). cp. XXV 18." (56)

We may wish to disagree with Stcherbatsky's translation of technical terms, but will accept that emptiness and dependent origination are ultimately synonymous.

Now from a provisional point of view emptiness refers to that state of mind devoid of defilement and hence appears to be used epistemically in MMK. Again dependent origination (pratītyasamutpāda), particularly as treated in the mangalasloka, is provisionally the ontologically indeterminate existence realm; indeterminate in that it cannot be spoken of in terms of mutually exclusive categories such as existent and non-existent. It is free from dichotomous thought and at peace. The synonymous nature of śūnyatā and pratītyasamutpāda will however be revealed from the ultimate point of view since while conventionally they refer respectively to mental and extra-mental entities or processes, ultimately there is union between the two. The knowledge of the Buddha transcends the distinction between self and other.

Turning to the second hemistich we notice first of all that śūnyatā of the first hemistich is now termed a metaphorical designation (prajñaptir upādāya). The meaning of this should be quite clear. Śūnyatā should not be hypostatized, as Stcherbatsky wants.

Also it is a metaphorical designation not meant to convey the fact

that pratītyasamutpāda is essentially empty, in the sense of non-existent, but rather that in reality pratītyasamutpāda may not be characterised in terms of dichotomously opposed concepts. This therefore is the true meaning of the Middle Way. Put simply MMK XXIV 18 conveys the fact that Nāgārjuna adheres to the Middle Way laid down by the Buddha and expounded by the early traditions. Although reality (tattva = pratītyasamutpāda) is essentially incapable of description in terms of existence or non existence (it is ontologically indeterminate - the true sense of the Middle Way which avoids the two extremes), the unenlightened mind confers such definitions upon it. Only when the mind is emptied of the defilements which lead to such superimpositions will it appreciate tattva as it is. While sūnyatā may provisionally be taken as the nirvānic state of mind, ultimately it refers to a condition which transcends epistemology and ontology. The final verse of Nāgārjuna's analysis of the four noble truths puts his entire system into perspective.

"He who perceives pratītyasamutpāda also sees suffering, the arising of suffering, its destruction and the path." (57)

In fact then, pratītyasamutpāda is the base not only for the arising of duḥkha but also for its extinction. Through ignorance (avidyā) the other eleven factors arise which contribute to the distorted vision of the basis, while through knowledge which has been purged of those same factors the basis is seen as it is. It is clear then that in the final analysis Nāgārjuna does hold to a concept of prajñā even though it is not specifically referred to in MMK. Implicit in his system is a concept of mind purged from all the

factors which lead it to a distorted vision of reality and this purified mind is structurally related to the idea of prajñā found in both the early Buddhist writings and the Prajñāpāramitā literature. Finally to follow up one loose strand we may further add that there is justification in saying that for Nāgārjuna this state of mind may be referred to as non-dual knowledge (advaya^{jñāna}) since we have already seen that this state transcends those in which things are described in dichotomously related terms.

Returning to Warder's initial thesis, it does appear that much that has been said above tends to confirm his position. With the possible exception of a couple of novel terms such as the reference to the city of the Gandharvas (gandharvanagara) it has been shown that the central core of MMK does expound a doctrine which differs very little from that contained in much of the early Buddhist writings. That Nāgārjuna does have an opponent to which^h his arguments are addressed is however certain. It seems an overestimation to say that his target is Early Buddhism in general for two good reasons. Firstly, he does seem to quote some early texts with approval, but secondly and perhaps more importantly because there is a strong congruence between his position and the position of early texts. The idea that Nāgārjuna has somehow abandoned the whole of the early teaching and set up a new school called the Mahāyāna must therefore be seen as an inadequate understanding of his role in the history of Buddhist thought.

It is far more likely that Nāgārjuna stands in the position of

someone who is attempting the defence of orthodoxy against new and possibly heretical teachings. The heterodox teachings which are most likely to have been his target will be those which concentrated strongly on the dharma theory of existence. Such schools, such as the Sarvāstivāda, held that only dharmas are ultimately real (paramārtha) while other things which were believed to be built out of combinations of these primary building blocks, in other words the things of the everyday world, were merely conceptual. As Warder ⁽⁵⁸⁾ has pointed out one of Nāgārjuna's principle targets in MMK is the idea of the existence of dharmas. The heart of this critique is that the existence of dharmas is incompatible with the concept of dependent originality (pratītyasamutpāda). Both the Abhidharmikas and Nāgārjuna accept pratītyasamutpāda, but he shows that the assumption that dharmas exist implies "exist always" which is the extreme position of eternalism. He goes on to prove that a process of dependent origination is made absurd if one holds that dharmas always exist, or in other words have an immutable nature; an own-nature (svabhāva). This being the case, and given the fact that pratītyasamutpāda is the central teaching of the Buddha, and hence inviolate, if such things as dharmas are operative in pratītyasamutpāda they cannot be immutable and must therefore be devoid of own-nature (niḥsvabhāva).

The own-nature (svabhāva) doctrine was probably formulated in the Sthaviravāda commentaries before 100AD ⁽⁵⁹⁾ and is not explicitly mentioned in the tradition of the Sarvāstivāda. However given the time Nāgārjuna was probably writing and particularly some of

of the contents of MMK (cf. Ch XV - Examination of svabhāva it seems highly feasible that MMK serves a two fold purpose. Firstly as a polemic against the increasing widespread influence of the Abhidharmika dharma theory and its latter developments including the theory of own-nature (svabhāva), and secondly as an attempt to reinforce and give a new but essentially unchanged treatment of the central doctrines of liberation according to the early teaching. As Warder puts it:-

"From all this it seems clear that Nāgārjuna accepts the Tripitaka, in an ancient form recognised probably by all schools of Buddhists as the teaching of the Buddha, but attacks what he sees as misinterpretations of it by the scholastic traditions of the schools. He professes to be simply restoring the original meaning of the old sūtras, showing that the innovations of the schools lead to contradictions and in particular conflict with what he takes to be the essential teaching, namely conditioned origination. This is hardly going over to the new Mahāyāna movement ... " (60)

We conclude this chapter with many more questions left to answer, but have at least laid to rest the myth that Nāgārjuna overthrew the whole of the Buddhist tradition to establish a new school. We can now see him not as an innovator, but rather as an expositor following in a long tradition. Our next task is to establish the correct position of the Vijnānavādin authors Asaṅga and Vasubandhu in the Buddhist tradition and once this is done to compare what they have to say, particularly concerning the nature of reality and the enlightened and unenlightened mind, with Nāgārjuna's own statements. It is only through such a process that one can attempt a reliable comparison between the so-called Yogācāra and Madhyamaka schools of Buddhism.

- 1 A. K. Warder : Is Nāgārjuna a Mahāyānist? in The Problem of Two Truths in Buddhism and Vedānta ed. M. Sprung (1973) Dordrecht p 78-88
- 2 D. S. Ruegg Lit. of Madhyamaka p 6
- 3 MMK XIII 8
Śūnyatā sarvadr̥ṣṭīnām proktā niḥsaraṇam jinaiḥ
yeṣāṃ tu śūnyatādr̥ṣṭistānasādhyān babhāṣire
- 4 D. S. Ruegg op.cit p 7
- 5 Chr. Lindtner Nagarjuniana p 122 n 149
- 6 P. Williams : Review Article of Chr. Lindtner "Nagarjuniana"
in Journal of Indian Philosophy vol 12 (1984) p 73-104 p 90ff
- 7 Lindtner op.cit. p 21 n 67
- 8 P. Williams op.cit. p 91-92
- 9 Pali S ii 17
Sanskrit : Tripathi 167ff
Chinese : Taishō 99 Section 12 No 19
- 10 Pali : S ii 19ff
Sanskrit : Tripathi 172ff
Chinese : Taishō 99 Section 12, No 20
- 11 Pali M iii 245ff
Chinese : Taishō 26 No 162
- 12 Pali D i
Chinese : Taishō 1, No 21
- 13 A. K. Warder op.cit. p 80-81
- 14 Sn 800-802
Attam pahāya anupādiyāno nāṇe pi so nissayam nokaroti
sā ve viyattesu na vaggasāri ditthim pi so na pacceṭi kiñci
yassūbhayante paṇidhīdha n'atthi bhavā bhavāya idha vā huram vā
nivesanā tassa na santi keci tassīdha ditthe va sute mute vā
pakappitā n'atthi añu pi saññā tam brāhmaṇam ditthim
anādiyānam kenīdha lokasmin vikappayeya
- 15 L. O. Gomez : Proto-Mādhyamika in the Pāli Canon, in Philosophy East and West Vol XXVI (1976) p 137-165
- 16 Ibid p 142
- 17 Sn 1076 : Atthaṅ gatassa na pamaṇam atthi uspasivā ti
Bhagavā : yena naṃ vajju taṃ tassa n'atthi sabbesu dhammesu
samūhatesu samūhatā vādapathā pi sabbe ti

- 18 Sn 954
na samesu na omesu na ussesu vadate muni
santo so vitamaccharo nadeti na nirassāti : ti Bhagava ti
- 19 MMK XXV 24
sarvopalambhopaśamaḥ prapañcōpaśamaḥ śivaḥ
nakva citkasya citkaścid dharmo buddhena deśitaḥ
- 20 MMK XXII 15
prapañcayanti ye buddhaṃ prapañcātītamavyayaṃ
te prapañcahataḥ sarve na paśyanti tathāgataṃ
- 21 MMK XVIII 7
nivṛttamabhīdhātavyam nivṛtte cittagocara
anuppannānirudhā hi nirvānaṃiva dharmatā
- 22 MMK XVIII 9
aparapratyayaṃ śāntaṃ prapañcairaprapañcitaṃ
nirvikolpamanānārthametattattvasya lakṣaṇam
- 23 Prasannapadā ed.de la Vallée Poussin p 350-1
For an investigation into the classical form of this formula
v.this thesis Chapter 7 ; particularly n. 13
- 24 Sn 149;- āsavehi cittāni vimuccimsu
- 25 Theragāthā v 1 :- cittam me susamāhitam vimuttaṃ
- 26 A.iv 402:- anāvattidhammaṃ me cittam kāmabhavāyati
- 27 R. E. A. Johnson The Psychology of Nirvāna London (1969) p109
- 28 Theragāthā v 649 :- asamhīram asankuppaṃ cittam
- 29 M 1 487 :- gambhīro appameyo duppariyogāho seyyathā pi mahāsamuddo
- 30 M iii 106-108
Tassa evaṃ jānato evaṃ passato kāmāsavā pi cittam vimuccati
bhavāsavā pi cittam vimuccati avijjāsavā pi cittam vimuccati
so suññaṃ idaṃ saññāgataṃ kāmāsavenāti pajānāti suññaṃ idaṃ
saññāgataṃ bhavāsavenāti pajānāti suññaṃ idaṃ suññāgataṃ
avijjāsavenāti pajānāti
- 31 Sn.734 vinñāṇassa nirodho
- 32 Therīgāthā 46 The arahant Uttamā says she is the winner of
of emptiness and the signless (suññatassānimitassa lābhini)
on attaining nibbāna
- 33 M i 477 :- pannāya c'assa disvā āsavā parikkhīnā honti
- 34 A i 61 Pannā bhāvitā kam atthaṃ anubhoti? Yā avijjā sā pahīyati

- 35 Quoted in Abhisamayālamkāraloka of Haribhadra. Gaedwak Oriental Series, Baroda (19) p 28 & 153
The quotation is from Dignaga's Prajñāpāramitā Pindārtha Nirdeśa prajñāpāramitā jñānam advayam sā tathāgataḥ : sādhyā tādarthayogena tēcchabdyam granthamārgayoḥ
- 36 Prasannapadā .de la Vallée Poussin ed p 26
- 37 Murti Central Philosophy p. 214
- 38 Ibid. p 217
- 39 Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitāsūtra. Bibliotheca Indica p 177:-
Skandha dhātuvāyatanam eva hi Subhūte śūnyam viviktaṃ śāntaṃ iti hi prajñāpāramitā ca skandadhatvāyatanam cādvayam etad advaidhīkāraṃ śūnyatvād viviktatvād evaṃ śāntatvān nopalabhyate yo'nupalambhaḥ sarvadharmānāṃ sa prajñāpāramitetyucyate
- 40 Murti op.cit. p 219
- 41 In connection with this debate cf. Y. Kajiyama:Controversy between the sākāra and nirākāra-vādins of the Yogācāra school - some materials; in Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies Vol 14 (1965) p26-37
- 42 MMK III 7
pratītya mātāpitarau yathoktaḥ putrasambhavaḥ cakṣūrūpe pratītyaivamukto vijñānasambhavaḥ
- 43 MMK XXVI 2
vijñānam samniviśate saṃskārapratyayaṃ gatau samniviṣṭe'tha vijñāne nāmarūpam niścicyate
- 44 eg M III 63-64.cf. supra Chapter 6 n.13 & 14
- 45 MMK XXVI 12
tasya tasya nirodhena tattannābhipravartate duḥkaskandhaḥ kevalo'yamevaṃ samyagnirudhyate
- 46 MMK XXVI 10-11
samsāramūlān saṃskārānavidvān saṃskarotyataḥ avidvān kārakastasmānna vidvāmstattvadarsanāt avidyāyāṃ niruddhāyāṃ saṃskārānāmsambhavaḥ avidyāyā nirodhastu jñānenāsyaiḥ bhāvanāt
- 47 MMK XVIII 5
karmakleśākṣayānmokṣa karmakleśā vikalpataḥ te prapañcātprapañcastu śūnyatāyāṃ nirudhyate
- 48 MMK XVIII 9
aparapratyayaṃ śāntaṃ prapañcairaprapañcitaṃ nirvikalpamanānārthametattattvasya lakṣanam

- 49 MMK XVIII 12
sambuddhānāṃ anutpāde śrāvakaṇāṃ punaḥ kṣaye
jñānaṃ pratyekabuddhānāmasaṃsargātpravartate
- 50
- 51 Th Stcherbatsky - Madhyāntavibhaṅga: Discourse on Discrimination
between Middle and Extremes. Calcutta (1971) p 3 (reprint
of Bibliotheca Buddhica XXX)
- 52 MMK XXV 9
ya ājavanjavibhāva upādāya pratītya vā
so'pratītyānupādāya nirvāṇamupadiśyate
- 53 MMK XXV 10 :.. nabhāvo nābhāvo nirvāṇamiti yujyate
54 supra ps. 75 & 81
55 MMK XXV 19
nā saṃsārasya nirvāṇātkiṃ cidasti viśeṣaṇaṃ
nā nirvāṇasya saṃsāratkiṃ cidasti viśeṣaṇaṃ
- 56** Th. Stcherbatsky : The Conception of Buddhist Nirvāṇa. Leningrad
(1927) p 81
- 57 MMK XXIV 40
yaḥ pratītyasamutpādam paśyatīdam sa paśyati
duḥkham samudayaṃ caiva nirodhaṃ margameva ca
- 58 A. K. Warder op.cit. p 82-3
- 59 cf. Adikaram : Early History of Buddhism in Ceylon Migoda (1946)
- 60 A. K. Warder oip.cit. p 84

Chapter Four

The Problem of Mahāyāna "Schools"

The second great moment in the history of Mahāyāna Buddhism is generally considered to coincide with the establishment of the Yogācāra/Vijñānavada school of Maitreya, Asaṅga and Vasubandhu. The dating of this entire period of Indian history is beset with a multitude of problems connected with both the paucity of sources and the ambiguous identifications of authors and writings prevailing at this time.

Nāgārjuna himself is paradigmatic. Warder⁽¹⁾ asserts the existence of more than one author of this name, but since his Nāgārjuna I is attributed with all the works that concern us, this theory need not detain us unduly. Accepting Bu-ston's statement that Nagarjuna is a pupil of Rahulabhadra (c.120 AD), Warder assigns the former to the second century of the Christian era⁽²⁾ and in this he is supported by Lamotte⁽³⁾, Winternitz⁽⁴⁾, and Murti⁽⁵⁾. Either side of this date we find Shackleton Bailey⁽⁶⁾ going for the end of the first century, and Walleser placing Nāgārjuna⁽⁷⁾ in the third. Ruegg⁽⁸⁾ is altogether more cautious, being content to say that:-

"Nāgārjuna is generally believed to have been born and to have worked in South-Central India (South Kosala or Vidarbha?) early in the first millenium P.C."

Opinions on the date and identities of the authors of the Yogācāra are equally distributed. Those accepting the historicity of Maitreya tend to place him at the turn of the fourth century AD⁽⁹⁾, with Asaṅga, on whom the latter's dates are computed, generally

coming out as being active sometime within the mid-fourth century. Both Warder (10), and Yamada (11) agree here though the actual dates do not correspond exactly.

Vasubandhu complicates matters yet again. In an influential article Frauwallner has argued, on the basis of discrepancies in the traditional accounts (particularly in Paramārtha's Life of Vasubandhu (12)), for the existence of two authors with the name Vasubandhu. However again this need not worry us over much since the writer of the Mahāyānist texts which are of interest to us is claimed by Frauwallner (13) to be the younger brother, and therefore contemporary, of Asāṅga. Jaini nicely sums up the research on this question of dating:-

"Takakusu favoured A.N. 1100 and proposed A.D. 420-500 as the period of Vasubandhu. In 1911 P.N.Peri, after a thorough investigation of all available materials on the subject, proposed A.D. 350. Over a period several scholars, notably Professor Kimura, G.Ono, U.Wogihara, H.Ui, and many others, contributed their views on this topic, which were summed up in 1929 by J.Takakusu, who again tried to establish his previously proposed date of the fifth century A.D." (14)

Clearly Takakusu's (15) date is too late to allow us to maintain a close relationship between him and Asāṅga and we will therefore be better off sticking to the date Frauwallner gives to Vasubandhu I, in which he agrees with Ui (16) and others, of sometime in the fourth century.

We have, or will have cause to refer to a number of other important writers in this thesis. Regarding later Yogācārins the consensus puts Vasubandhu's commentator Sthiramati in the mid sixth century (17) making him a contemporary of Bhāvaviveka (18). We tend to find Nagarjuna's important, though late, commentator Candrakīrti unanimously agreed to have lived in the mid-seventh century (18), though as la Vallée Poussin puts him a little earlier, "vers la fin du VI^e

ou le commencement du VII^e siècle." (19).

Taking into account the details of the foregoing discussion we may be reticent to ascribe exact dates to any of the authors mentioned. We may however be fairly confident in putting forward a general chronological schema which will allow us the luxury of determining who precedes who, and so on. The chart below will be appropriate:-

NĀGĀRJUNA	1st-2nd century AD
(MAITREYA ?), VASUBANDHU and ASANGA	4th century AD
STHIRAMATI	6th century AD
BHĀVAVIVEKA	6th century AD
CANDRAKĪRTI	7th century AD

Now the Madhyamaka

has received a great deal of attention from Western scholars and consequently possess a burgeoning secondary literature, the Yogācāra/Vijñānavādā has been relatively neglected. This neglect has contributed to a long standing misunderstanding of the principle doctrines expounded by the authors of this "so-called" school. A number of influential writers therefore have attempted to put forward the idea that the establishment of the Yogācāra/Vijñānavāda heralded an entirely new epoch in the development of Buddhist thought; this epoch being characterised by an abandoning of the principal positions of the old Buddhist tradition and the erection of a new intellectual edifice which has as its fundamental feature an interpretation of Buddhist doctrine from an idealistic point of view.

This mistaken approach to the subject has a number of sources. We have already discussed in connection with the interpretation of the Madhyamaka how the use of commentarial texts, particularly written some time after the root text itself, can give rise to misleading

results. Now one of the earliest studies on the subject is a work by S. Lévi ⁽²⁰⁾ who attempted an outline of the Vijñaptimātra system as contained in Vasubandhu's Vimśatikā and Triṃśikā. To do this he relied entirely on Chinese and Japanese sources. Now since the Chinese mind was already strongly influenced by Mencian idealism before the arrival of Buddhism in that country, it is hardly surprising that Chinese translations of Sanskṛt texts which deal predominantly with psychology, epistemology and ontology would convey a strongly idealistic flavour. It is consequently not surprising that Lévi should reach the conclusion that Vasubandhu, having criticised the realistic systems of both Buddhists and non-Buddhists, would set about the task of erecting a system, based upon an idealistic Absolute. Thus, talking about the Vimśatikā Lévi says:-

"Vasubandhu, avant d'exposer en détail sa propre doctrine de l'idéalisme absolu s'attache à réfuter les objections de principe qu'on peut lui opposer à l'intérieur de l'église bouddhique elle-même; puis il s'attaque à la théorie atomique des Vaiśeṣikas, l'interprétation physique de l'univers la plus puissante que le génie hindou ait élaborée, et qui s'était insinuée dans le bouddhisme, jusque chez les Vaibhāṣikas du Cachemire que Vasubandhu avait longtemps suivis avec sympathie". (21)

Lévi gives the impression that this work represents a radical disjunction from what has gone before, both among Buddhists and their opponents. A fellow countryman, J. May, substantially repeats Lévi's position, though in an attenuated form, that we are confronted with a new school of Buddhist thought, propounding a new philosophical idealism.

"Du IIIe au VIIe siècle de notre ère, selon la chronologie la plus souvent admise, la pensée bouddhique en Inde a trouvé une expression particulièrement brillante dans l'école dite du Vijñānavāda ... Les catégories qui gouvernent la pensée philosophique en Occident s'appliquent mal, en général, à la pensée indienne. Pourtant on peut admettre, sans trop forcer les choses, que le Vijñānavāda est un idéalisme". (22)

The other major source of misleading interpretation is Stcherbatsky who has also influenced a generation of scholars. Stcherbatsky did not depend on Chinese sources, for the most part concentrating his efforts on Sanskṛt originals, and Tibetan translations when necessary. Although the general problem of translation still arises when Tibetan materials are used we are nevertheless in a slightly simpler situation, since while the Chinese had already a long history of philosophical speculation and literature which was bound to influence the reception of Buddhist ideas, the position in Tibet was different. While it would be over simplistic to claim that the Tibetan mind was a tabula rasa before the arrival of Buddhism, nevertheless in comparison to China the level of philosophical speculation would be expected to be relatively low and in consequence the influence of earlier traditions probably had a low impact on the reception of Buddhist philosophical ideas. Of course this would not necessarily have been the case with regard to things like ritual, cosmology, demonology etc. Although Stcherbatsky did not have the problems to deal with which beset the predominantly French Sinologists, his handicap was just as serious; a great desire to demonstrate the fact that Buddhist thought, in its many aspects, mirrored the central position of the German idealist philosophies. He was particularly keen to show the correspondence between Mahāyāna Buddhism and Hegel or Kant, although on many occasions other luminaries of the Western philosophical firmament are invoked to demonstrate the essential similarity between Eastern and Western philosophical speculation. Therefore, while Stcherbatsky's overall work has been immensely influential in the growth of Buddhist studies, it would be true to refer to him as one of the first Buddhist apologists in the West. His conclusions

on the Yogācāra reflect this stance. For him authors, like Vabubandhu are expounding a species of Absolute Monism. Yogācāra philosophy is:-

"... the denial of Pluralism and the vindication of Monism, with the implication that this Monism has a superstructure of phenomenal Relativity or that the phenomenal Relativity has a subjacent foundation of Absolute, non-relative Reality ... This Absolute represents the unique substance of the Universe (ekamdravyam). There is no other substance. It embraces the totality of everything relatively real, but is itself the non-relative Absolute". (23)

This attitude has spilt over into more recent work in much the same way as Lévi's has. Thus Murti, who seems to follow the line taken by Stcherbatsky, who is in fact heavily influenced by him, takes the position that:-

"The Idealism of the Yogācāra (Vijñānavadā) school has to be understood as a significant modification of the Mādhyamika śūnyatā on a constructive basis". (24)

It does appear that Indian authors who have taken a particular interest in the Yogācāra have, without exception, been under the influence of the two prevailing tendencies. For them the Yogācāra is both idealistic and absolute monism. A. K. Chatterjee is a good example of this synthetic approach. Concluding his book "The Yogācāra Idealism" he says:-

"Idealism is one of the greatest philosophies of the world, and the Yogācāra system, it has been the contention of this essay, represents idealism in its pure epistemological form. It cannot be stigmatised as merely subjectivism, since absolutism is its inevitable logical goal. In spite of being absolutism however it does not give up its idealistic bias". (25)

Finally a recently published book on the work of Vasubandhu reiterates all that has been said before. For K. N. Chatterjee ⁽²⁶⁾ the Yogācāra school set itself the task of avoiding the nihilistic tendencies of the Madhyamaka by proposing the idea that everything that exists is mind-only (cīttamātra). ⁽²⁷⁾

In the last few pages I have attempted an outline of what has come to be the established orthodoxy among Buddhist scholars in relation to the position of Yogācāra school both historically and philosophically. However there have been a number of people who have disagreed with this point of view. For them the small discrepancies between Nāgārjuna and the Yogācāra authors are far outweighed by the overwhelming concord of their writings. According to these authors neither Nāgārjuna nor Asaṅga nor Vasubandhu are system-builders in the generally accepted sense of the term. Rather they have, in common, the task of rendering traditional Buddhist doctrine in such a way that it can be used to tackle particular problems. Therefore it is pointless categorising them as nihilists or idealists or anything else. Rather they should be seen as expositors, adapting traditional doctrine to meet the needs of particular tasks while at the same time leaving the body of that doctrine fundamentally unchanged and unquestioned.

D. T. Suzuki seems to have been the first person to take up this matter and argue for a de-emphasis between the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra

"Most Buddhist scholars are often too ready to make a sharp distinction between the Mādhyamika and the Yogācāra school,

taking the one as exclusively advocating the theory of emptiness (śūnyatā) while the other is bent single-mindedly on an idealistic interpretation of the universe. They thus further assume that the idea of emptiness is not at all traceable in the Yogācāra and that idealism is absent in the Mādhyamika". (2)

What Suzuki appears to be getting at here is that one should be cautious of identifying a Buddhist school merely on the basis of its treatment of a single issue. In some senses it is a misnomer to refer to the Madhyamaka as Śūnyatāvāda because this indicates that the doctrine of śūnyatā is the central doctrine of such a school. As we have already seen this would be a simplistic interpretation. Similarly the use of the term Vijñānavāda as descriptive of the writings of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu tends to overemphasise the position played by viññāna in their works.

L. de la Vallée Poussin is an exception amongs scholars working in French. He is less inclined to make a hard and fast distinction between Mahāyānists. It seems that in his statement:

"Peut-on douter qu'il y ait Mādhyamikas et Mādhyamikas, Yogācāras et Yogācāras?"

he is suggesting that while some authors have associated themselves as adherents of one school or the other, there are other Mahāyāna authors who have not done so. It appears to me that the idea of belonging to a school of thought was a fairly late development in the history of Buddhism in India and in all probability neither Nāgārjuna, nor Asaṅga, nor Vasubandhu considered themselves in such a manner.

In more recent times W. Rahula has outlined in more detail the above position. To him the idea that the authors of the early Mahāyāna were involved in the expounding systems of philosophy in contradiction with each other is clearly absurd. On the contrary:-

"Their contribution to Buddhism lay not in giving it a new philosophy, but providing, in fascinatingly different ways, brilliant new interpretations of the old philosophy. But they all solidly based themselves on the ancient Canonical texts and their commentarial traditions". (29)

Rahula believes that in many senses the work of writers like Nāgārjuna and Vasubandhu may be seen as analogous to the Pali commentarial literature sometimes ascribed, though he believes incorrectly, to Buddhaghosa. Nāgārjuna therefore, while he places emphasis on the doctrine of śūnyatā, is not introducing anything new into Buddhist thought, since as we have already seen the concept of emptiness is found in a number of places in the Tripitaka. Similarly the Yogācāra concern with consciousness (viññāna, citta) is not in the slightest bit innovative. The interaction between the external world and the mental processes and the consequent world views generated is a constant theme at all periods in the history of Buddhist thought. Rahula however very firmly points out the error in interpretations that attempt to show that the Yogācāra teaching of viññaptimātratā is one which introduces a notion of Absolute Reality composed of mind into Buddhist doctrine. This appears to me to be exactly the tone of Stcherbatsky, and his followers', interpretations. Rahula feels that such a position would be totally opposed to the fundamental axioms of Buddhist thought and hence quite unacceptable.

In conclusion he says:-

"The śūnyatā philosophy elaborated by Nāgārjuna and the cittamātra philosophy developed by Asaṅga and Vasubandhu are not contradictory, but complementary to each other. These two systems known as Mādhyaṃika and Yogācāra or Vijñānavāda, explain and expound, in different ways with different arguments, the very same doctrines of nairātmya, śūnyatā, tathatā, pratītyasamutpāda, but are not a philosophy of their own which can properly be called Nāgārjuna's or Asaṅga's or Vasubandhu's explanations, arguments and theories, postulated to prove and establish the Canonical teaching of śūnyatā, cittamātra or nairātmya. If any differences of opinion exist between them, these are only with regard to their own arguments and theories, advanced to establish the old fundamental Canonical teaching, but not with regard to the teaching itself." (30)

Actually it is clear that the controversy we have been looking at is nothing new. Many early Buddhist commentators have left a similarly confusing message. It seems to me that the root of the problem may be traced to a passage in the Sandhinirmocanasūtra which mentions the threefold turning of the wheel of Dharma (dharmacakrapravartana). Unfortunately the Sanskṛt text is not extant but É. Lamotte translates the passage that concerns us, from Tibetan, thus:-

"At first in the deer park in Varanasi, the Lord set the wheel of Dharma in motion for adherents of the Disciples' Vehicle (Śrāvakayāna) in the form of teaching about the four Noble Truths .. However this setting in motion was surpassed, gave rise to criticism, contained an implicit meaning (neyārtha) and became the subject of controversy .. As a result the Lord set about teaching that all phenomena are without essential nature, not produced, not destroyed, originally quiescent and by nature in a state of Nirvāṇa. This second wheel of dharma he set in motion for adherents of the Mahāyāna in the form of teachings about emptiness ... Finally the Lord taught that all phenomena are without essential nature ... This third wheel of Dharma which is perfectly expounded he set in motion for adherents of all vehicles. This setting in motion is unsurpassed, does not give rise to criticism, contains an explicit meaning (nitārtha) and is not a subject of controversy". (31)

Now although it seems fairly clear what the first turning of the wheel of dharma refers to, since it appears to be the Buddha's first sermon after gaining enlightenment in which he laid down the Four Noble Truths, it is less obvious precisely what the second and third turnings might be. In fact the subject is a controversial one, but nevertheless I have been unable to find any Indian Buddhist author who specifically associates individual Mahāyāna schools with particular groups of Mahāyāna canonical literature. There is no harmony of opinion here however. According to Tibetan sources (32) Bhāvaviveka held the second turning to reflect the teaching of the Sandhinirmocanasūtra and the third was in conformity with the Prajñāparamitā corpus. On the other hand Dharmapāla inverted the sequence identifying the Prajñāparamitāsūtras with the second and the Sandhinirmocanasūtra with the third turning. The author of this source, Wōnch'uk, gives us his opinion on the subject. He feels that the second turning was initiated by Nāgārjuna's authorship of several śāstras including MMK and the third by the composition of śāstras by Maitreya, Asaṅga and Vasubandhu. This is substantially the same position as that held by Tsoñ-kha-pa. (33) It seems likely therefore that the ascription of different turnings of the wheel of dharma to different "schools" of the Mahāyāna was a fairly late development in Buddhist history. It is interesting to note at this point that Wōnch'uk states that even at the time of Dharmapāla (since Prabhāmitra was Dharmapāla's disciple), there was thought to be no fundamental conflict between the work of Nāgārjuna and Vasubandhu. Thus:-

"At that time (ie.the time of Vasubandhu) there was no controversy over śūnyatā and bhāva (existence). This is the reason why Bandhuprabha or Prabhāmītra said, "A thousand years ago, the taste of the Buddha's teaching was one. Thereafter, the smṛti (dran pa) and prajñā have gradually deteriorated, which caused the rise of controversy over existence and non-existence". (34)

Another piece of evidence to suggest that the notion of Mahāyāna schools was a fairly late development, possibly contemporaneous with the transmission of Buddhism to Tibet, is provided by Atīśa (c.980-1056AD). In his Bodhimārgadīpaṅjikā, the autocommentary on his famous Bodhipathapradīpa, we are given the distinct impression that the matter of "schools" and their relative merits have still not finally settled, since he speaks of his own gurus as if they had not really plumped for one side or the other in the dispute. He says:-

"In India learned men have claimed that Ārya -Asaṅga advocated a modification of the Teaching (deśanāparyāya) for he took the meaning of prajñāpāramitā to be representation-only (viññaptimātra) and at present this is also the opinion of my guru Suvarṇadvīpa and guru Sāntipa. Ācārya-Nāgārjuna however preached the essence of the Teaching (deśanāsāra) for he understood the meaning of prajñāpāramitā in the deep sense of the Middle Way (mahāmādhya-makārtha) transcending being and non-being and this was also advocated in the tradition of other learned men. At present this is also the opinion of my guru Bodhibhadra and bhaṭṭāraka Kusulupa." (35)

From what we can gather from this quotation Atīśa acknowledges his debt to a number of gurus, some of whom accept Asaṅga to be the source of a correct tradition for the interpretation of the Dharma, others accepting Nāgārjuna. In a later verse Atīśa comes down on the side of the latter, but it seems to me that since he regards all of his teachers with respect, and claims Asaṅga and

Nāgārjuna to be Ārya- and Ācarya respectively we are not at this point in Buddhist history looking at someone who for sectarian reasons considers one teaching to be inferior to the other.

Sectarian rivalry certainly seems to be even less evident several hundred years before Atīśa. Ārya Vimuktisena probably lived about a hundred years before Candrakīrti, which means, according to Ruegg (36), around the first half of the sixth century. Vimuktisena is considered by the Tibetan pseudo-historians to be the founder of the "so called" Yogācāra-Madhyamaka synthesis. It is thought that such a synthesis came about partially through Vimuktisena's studies in the school of Dignāga and partially through his studies of the Prajñāpāramitā literature. Now we know that the Buddhist traditions hold Nāgārjuna's main scriptural influence to have been the Prajñāpāramitā corpus, and Dignāga on the other hand to have been a member of a lineage of exegesis which stems from Asaṅga and Vasubandhu. It seems strange that someone could bring together two radically opposed systems of thought and end up with a workable system, as Vimuktisena is alleged to have done, and therefore we must conclude that, here again, we have someone who to all intents and purposes seems quite happy to study in two separate traditions of exegesis. Such a conclusion must strengthen the case that these two traditions were not hostile to one another.

An interesting point in connection with Ārya-Vimuktisena concerns his commentarial works, and in particular his commentary, on Maitreya's Abhisamayālaṅkāra. Now the Abhisamayālaṅkāra is itself a summary and commentary on all the important doctrines of the Prajñāpāramitā

corpus and was written according to Bu-ston (37) from the point of view of the Yogācāra-Mādhyamika-Svātantrika (Rnal-'byor-spyod-pa'i-dbu-ma-rañ-rgyud-pa), which is curious since Maitreya is generally considered to be the mythical instructor of Asaṅga, and therefore for those who see Māhāyāna Buddhism in terms of schools, to be the founder of the Yogācāra-Vijñānavāda. One wonders why someone seeking to establish a rival school to Nāgārjuna should wish to write a treatise on the Prajñāpāramitā if, as many authors believe, it is amenable only to an interpretation from the standpoint of the Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka. Now according to Obermiller (38) the Tibetan tradition assigns all the great authorities on the Prajñāpāramitā in the Madhyamaka to the branch which we have referred to as the Yogācāra-Mādhyamaka-Svātāntika. He goes on to say, on the basis of Tibetan tradition again, that the great exponents of this commentarial work include Ārya-Vimuktisena, Bhadanta-Vimuktisena and Haribhadra, and that Tibetan writers of Tsoñ-kha-pa's school also follow the same method of interpretation. This again is a strange fact since Tsoñ-kha-pa considers himself to be a Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka following the line laid down by Candrakīrti in his Prasannapadā and Madhyamakālamkāra. Taking all this into account it does look very much as though we are receiving confirmation for our view that the development of Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism should not be seen as a series of diverging schools. Rather fundamental doctrines are illuminated in different ways by different seminal writers for purposes entirely unconnected with the establishment of novel interpretations. Actually each of these important authors seems to be applying an exposition of the doctrine to the solving

of particular problems, such as attacks by opponents, protection from heresy and cultivation of spiritual discipline. It is not surprising that, if this were the case, the works and ideas of these people should converge in the writings of those later systematisers such as Ārya-Vimuktisena or Tsoñ-kha-pa where such convergence would naturally be seen to illuminate fundamental knowledge.

In fact Ruegg, who is generally resistant to such an interpretation, preferring his own ideas which involve the evolution of schools, acknowledges my own position, although quite possibly unconsciously. He mentions the fact that "several Yogācārīn/Vijñānavādin masters wrote commentaries on works by Nāgārjuna and Āryadeva". (39) This is borne out by the fact that Atiśa (40) mentions one of the eight standard commentaries on MMK used in his day to be that written by Ācārya-Sthiramati, who, as we shall see, is mainly relevant in modern Buddhist studies as a major commentator on Vasubandhu and, therefore to most scholars, a Yogācārīn. Ruegg goes on to suggest that the authors that followed Nāgārjuna and Āryadeva paid particular attention to those details of the Buddhist tradition which are given scant attention in the writings of the Yogācāra.

In his discussion of the work of Śāntarakṣita Ruegg says:

"... the Yogācāra-Madhyamaka synthesised the pure Madhyamaka-which it regarded as perfectly valid and adequate with respect to the paramārtha - with a form of philosophical analysis derived from the Yogācāra/Vijñānavāda, a school which by the eighth century had attained a high degree of development and whose achievements could not, it was evidently thought, be ignored by the Madhyamaka". (41)

This statement gives the impression that the fusion of the two "schools" was made for negative reasons, since it was perceived by the Madhyamaka that it would be better to have the Yogācāra as an ally than as an enemy. It seems much more likely that the synthesis has no origin in a particular point of time, but rather that the two ways of treating fundamental doctrines ran parallel to one another, and at the same time mutually conditioned one another for some considerable time before the advent of the Yogācāra-Madhyamaka, which anyway seems to be an invention of the Tibetan pseudo-historians.

There is a section in Sāntaraksita's Madhyamakālamkāra in which, according to Ruegg, he compares the Vijñānavāda with the Madhyamaka. This section is supposed to demonstrate the fact that the outlook of the former may be considered to be a philosophical propaedeutic which ultimately leads to the outlook of the latter. However if one examines the text such a statement cannot be upheld. It says:-

"On the basis of cittamātra one is to know the non-existence of external things and on the basis of this system one is to know complete non-substantiality, riding the chariot of the two systems and holding the reins of reasoning (yukti), (the philosopher) therefore attains the sense as it is, the Mahāyānist one itself." (42)

Ruegg interprets this to mean that the cittamātra viewpoint, once it is won, is itself superceded by the system that establishes complete non-substantiality (niḥsvabhāvatā or śūnyatā). However this is an over simplistic rendition. In the first place we have already suggested in our treatment of Nāgārjuna's work, particularly

in Chapter 3 above, that while he holds to a doctrine of nonsubstantiality or emptiness, this is in a very specific sense. For Nāgārjuna unenlightened cognition infected with thought constructive tendencies (vika lpa, prapañca etc.) distorts reality leading to the imputation that entities (dharmas) possess substance or own-being (svabhāva). However in reality the existence of such entities cannot be established since they exist only due to the distortion caused by ignorance (avidyā). In other words mentally constructed phenomena overlay true reality (tattva) and prevent its gnosis by the unenlightened. These mentally constructed phenomena do not therefore exist in reality. In a sense then it is clear that, even in the works of Nāgārjuna, we have two stages in the development of the enlightened mind outlined. In the first there is the realisation that all things perceived by the ignorant are actually the construction of an unenlightened mind, and in the second such mental contents are realised to be devoid of substantiality. This being so, Nāgārjuna himself can be said to progressively combine the doctrine of cittamātra with that of complete non-substantiality. As we shall see in the following chapter, exactly the same can be maintained by a careful analysis of the work of Asanga and Vasubandhu. For them the realisation that the unenlightened world view is characterised by the fact that it is mentally constructed (cittamātra; vijñaptimātra) leads to a rejection of the basis for such a view, and a subsequent transformation to a state of gnosis (jñāna) in which things are understood without the thought constructive tendencies of the unenlightened state intervening. This results in knowledge devoid of thought construction (nirvikalpajñāna).

Returning to the quotation from Śāntarakṣita's Madhyamakālamkāra then, it does seem that Ruegg's interpretation is inadequate. Nowhere does Śāntarakṣita refer to the terms Madhyamaka or Vijñānavāda. On the contrary he simply refers to the Mahāyānist as someone who has moved from a realisation of cittamātra to the realisation of complete non-substantiality, and as we have said such a position could be said to be held by both Nāgārjuna and Vasubandhu. It seems clear that in this case there is no evidence to suggest that Śāntarakṣita holds the Yogācāra/Vijñānavāda to be a preparatory stage in the path to the Madhyamaka outlook. It would be nearer the spirit of the quotation to say that he held both outlooks to be the core of the Mahāyāna, although it may be said that in some senses they complement one another.

It must be noted that at the present stage of historical scholarship into the development of the Mahāyāna it is impossible to say exactly when the differentiation into schools of thought actually happened but from what we have noted above, a reasonable assumption may be that it took place sometime during the transmission of the tradition to Tibet. If one imagines what may have happened at the time such a hypothesis makes a lot of sense. It is exceedingly probable that the nature of the transmission was such that Buddhism was introduced by Indian teachers brought up in particular lineages. This was certainly the case with Śāntarakṣita, Atīśa etc. Each lineage could be expected to have its own peculiar method of interpretation and therefore in the early days those unfamiliar with the tradition as such could easily confuse methods of interpretation, based on the emphasis of one or two doctrines over the others, with sectarian

differences. Such an attitude would naturally be passed on and finally formalised by the systematizers and pseudo-historians such as Bu-ston. Their work, which has been utilised by students of Indian Buddhism, has consequently coloured attitudes with the result that nowadays most authors accept the proposition that Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism comprised a number of exclusive and doctrinally incompatible schools of thought, even though there is no evidence from primary sources to support such a conclusion.

Now the traditional Buddhist view about the path to Buddhahood is that it is gradual and progressive. It was such a view that defeated the Chan-like notion of sudden enlightenment put forward by the Chinese protagonist Hoshang at the Council of Samye sometime in the 8th century; a view which can be traced back to the Tripitaka:-

"Just as the great ocean dips gradually, ebbs gradually, slopes gradually and not suddenly like a precipice, so in my doctrine and my discipline, the access to perfect knowledge (aññāpaṭivedha) is achieved by gradual practice (anupubbāsikkhā), a gradual action (anupubbakiriya), a gradual way (anupubbapaṭipadā) and not directly (na āyatakena)". (43)

Such a view is observed by many Mahāyānist authors who developed a teaching which emphasised this sense of gradual progress. The form which such a teaching takes is very often one in which a particular stage in the path is linked with the realisation of a particular attainment or the realisation characteristic of a certain stage of mental development. The stages (bhūmi) in the progress of the Bodhisattva is one example in point, but one more relevant to our present discussion is to be found in both the writings of the early

Yogācāra and of Candrakīrti. In these writings we find the progress of someone seeking Buddhahood described in four stages characterised by progressively higher comprehension of reality. The Yogācārabhūmi which was probably written by Asanga gives the following stages:-

- (i) The stage of reality established by the world (loka-prasiddha-tattvārtha)
- (ii) The stage of reality established by reasoning (yukti-prasiddha-tattvārtha)
- (iii) The stage of reality in which the mind is purified of the obstacles of the defilements (klésāvaraṇa-visuddhi-jñāna-gocara-tattvārtha)
- (iv) The stage of reality in which the mind is purified of the obstacles of the knowable (jñeyāvaraṇa-visuddhi-jñāna-gocara-tattvārtha) (44)

The first two stages refer respectively to common sense, and the world-view formulated through philosophical thought. Stage three is supposed to come about upon the realisation of non-existence of self (puḍgala-nairātmya) while stage four follows from the realisation of the non-substantiality of things (dharmā-nairātmya). Stage four is in fact the equivalent of the purest knowledge of ultimate reality (yathābhūta, tathatā dharmatā, śūnyatā), according to the text. In other words it is nirvāṇa.

A very similar doctrine is presented in Candrakīrti's Prasannapadā. Commenting on MMK.XVII.8, which mentions the graded teaching of the Buddhas (buddhānuśāsanam), he also reveals that there are four levels of understanding corresponding to that of an ordinary person, that

of someone who has not eradicated the obstacles (āvaraṇa), that of someone who has partially eradicated the obstacles, and finally that of an Ārya. (45) This corresponds very well with the previous schema outlined by Asaṅga. Interestingly enough it also ties in with the account of the three turnings of the wheel of dharma (dharmacakra-pravartana) given in the Sandhinirmocanasūtra. There we are told of three teachings; the first being introductory, the second and third being implicit, and explicit (and hence unsurpassed) respectively.

It appears that the first level of understanding given by Asaṅga and Candrakīrti refers to a non-Buddhist understanding and is therefore not mentioned in the Sandhinirmocanasūtra. However once someone enters the path they enter the second stage or the first turning of the wheel of dharma. Consequently the second turning corresponds to the third stage and so on. By indicating such a correspondence it is clear that what has been thought to be a reference to schools and their respective merits in the Sandhinirmocanasūtra, may in fact be reference to distinct levels of attainment in spiritual practice. Neither Asaṅga nor Candrakīrti do in fact associate these levels of attainment with any particular school of thought and we must conclude that here again we have found no evidence to support the assertion that Indian Mahāyāna ācaryas thought the Madhyamaka was more advanced a path than the Yogācāra, or vice versa.

One point does however need to be cleared up before we turn to an examination of the thought of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu as such. There is in Candrakīrti's Madhyamakāvata (46) a celebrated critique of the Vijñānavāda. There have been a number of articles (47) in recent

years which have used this critique to point out the radical differences between the Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka and the Vijñānavāda but P. G. Fenner makes clear:-

There is some controversy among contemporary scholars as to whether the Vijñānavāda is a genuine idealism. Independent of the outcome of that controversy it is clear that Candrakīrti interprets the Vijñānavāda as "idealism". (46)

It is certainly true that during the course of his critique Candrakīrti does use the term Vijñānavādin, although it must be said that it only crops up in the autocommentary. The problem is that the doctrines ascribed to the Vijñānavāda do not correspond with those expounded by Vasubandhu or Asaṅga. It will be shown in the next chapter that neither author puts forward an idealistic interpretation of reality. However it is clear that Candrakīrti directs his criticism at notions adopted by the Yogācāra such as the store-house consciousness (ālayavijñāna) and the doctrines of the three natures (trisvabhāva), but again these are represented in a way not intended by the latter. Let us take the notion offered by Candrakīrti that for the Vijñānavāda reality may be said, from the ultimate point of view (paramārthasatya) to be nothing other than mind (cittamātra), bearing in mind that a further treatment of this subject will be undertaken in the next chapter.

Now many canonical texts state that mental processes have a profound effect on the way reality is understood and one of the most influential sources in this connection is the Daśabhūmikasūtra which states that:-

"This triple world is nothing but mind (cittamātra); the twelve members of existence (bhavāṅga), which have been distinguished and proclaimed by the Tathāgata, they all depend on mind." (49)

Now since this is a canonical source Candrakīrti cannot reject it, so he attempts to interpret it in a novel way. (50) For him the sūtra has a provisional meaning in the sense that it is made from the point of view of the conventional truth (saṃvṛtisatya). It therefore has been spoken by the Buddha to destroy the adherence, among the ignorant, to the notion of a permanent and personal agent (kartr) which results in the idea of actions (karman). In other words, it is mind alone (cittamātra) which is the cause of the erroneous conceptions although from the ultimate point of view such conceptions do not exist. Therefore the doctrine of mind-only (cittamātra) is true only from the conventional point of view. For Candrakīrti the mistake made by the Vijñānavādins is that they hold this doctrine to be true from the ultimate point of view. Such a position leads to a rejection of the Buddhist teaching and the establishment of full-blown idealism; the absolute existence of mind. The Vijñānavādins have therefore misinterpreted the Daśabhūmikasūtra. Candrakīrti re-emphasises his argument by quoting from the Laṅkāvatārasūtra:-

"The person, continuity, aggregates, causal conditions, atoms, primal matter, Īsvāra, a maker - I say they are all mind only". (51)

By making this quotation Candrakīrti proves that he has scriptural authority for stating that all categories put forward as synonymous ~~with~~ ^{with} ~~for~~ ultimate principles have no validity from the ultimate point of view; they are all mentally constructed. It would therefore

be just as much of a mistake to say that from the ultimate point of view there is nothing but mind. It is interesting in this connection to note that there is also a text ascribed to Nāgārjuna by Atīśa in his Bodhimārgadīpapañjikā which performs exactly the same interpretation on the Daśabhūmika quotation as Candrakīrti is doing above. This text is the Mahāyānaviṃśikā (52) which is generally not included in the list of authentic Nāgārjuna works since it deals with topics usually of more interest to the Yogācāra. However since it follows the line adopted by Candrakīrti its authorship by Nāgārjuna may be worth reconsidering.

Having noted Candrakīrti's interpretation of mind-only (cittamātra) and his subsequent condemnation of the Vijñānavāda doctrine on this matter let us now examine the works of a representative of this viewpoint in order to assess Candrakīrti's contention. In fact nothing that he says would be contradicted by Vasubandhu, for instance. He opens his autocommentary on the Twenty Stanzas (Viṃśatikā) with the assertion that:-

"... in the Mahāyāna it has been established that those belonging to the three worlds are only representations of consciousness (vijñaptimātram)". (53)

This is a clear reference to the Daśabhūmika with the exception that the term mind-only (cittamātra) in the former has been replaced by representation-only (vijñaptimātra) in the latter. However as T. Kochumuttam (54) has pointed out the term traidhātukam in the above quotation has the adjectival meaning "belonging to the three worlds". As a matter of fact this is the case for the Daśabhūmika

excerpt also. He argues that the term traidhātuka, being adjectival, should qualify a noun and, from an examination of Vasubandhu's other works, comes to the conclusion that the noun or rather nouns, in question are the mind and mental states (cittacaitta). Kochumuttam's strongest piece of evidence comes from the Triṃśikā of Vasubandhu. In this text we are told that all that is considered as representation only (viññaptimātra) is confined to consciousness and its evolutes (viññānaparināma).

"This (threefold) transformation of consciousness is (just) the distinction (between subject and object). What is thus distinguished, does not exist as (subject and object). Therefore all this is representation-only (viññaptimātra)." (55)

In other words due to the transformations of consciousness, in three stages according to Vasubandhu, distinctions of thought constructions (vikalpa) arise which take a dichotomous form, usually treated in these texts as the division into a false subject/object pairing. These vikalpas and their concomitants are what is referred to as representations (viññapti), since the word viññapti is a causative form of viññāna and therefore means "caused by consciousness". Vikalpas are therefore brought about by viññāna.

If we look at the term viññānaparināma more closely we find that viññāna has three modes, the most fundamental (out of which the other two develop) is the storehouse consciousness (ālaya-viññāna). Of the ālayaviññāna we are told that:-

"... it is like a to rent of water which ceases with the attainment of arhatship". (56)

In other words the basis of viññānaparināma (ie. ālayaviññāna) comes to an end somewhere towards the end of the Buddhist path. Now if the Yogācāra was idealistic it would want to hold that even at the attainment of Buddhahood, an enlightened being would maintain that nothing existed apart from mental phenomena. However it is clear from a reading of Vasubandhu that this is not the position that he holds. For him the unenlightened mind is one in which representations (viññapti) are delusively held to be real, while on the other hand once the mind has freed itself from this state of ignorance, it realises the mistakes of its previous state, attains the condition of gnosis devoid of thought construction (nirvikalpajñāna), and sees things as they are (yathābhūtam); this is Sthiramati's interpretation of the penultimate stanza of the Triṃśikā:-

"That indeed is the supramundane knowledge, no-mind (acitta), without a support. It is the revolution at the basis (āśraya parāvṛtti) through the removal of the two-fold wickedness." (51)

Viññāna is brought to a halt by a revolution at the basis (āśraya) which results in the removal of the two wickednesses which are the obstacles of the defilements (kleśāvaraṇa) and the obstacles of the knowable (jñeyāvaraṇa). The basis is the store-house consciousness (ālayaviññāna). When this is brought to an end supramundane knowledge (lokottarajñāna) dawns.

If we now go back to our original point which was, "how does Vasubandhu interpret the Daśabhūmika passage?", we are in a better position to answer. The statement that the triple world is mind-only

(cittamātra) simply means that for the unenlightened person what he or she takes to be reality is in fact nothing but mind and its concomitants (citta caitta). The enlightened being on the other hand sees things as they are (yathābhūtam). Sthiramati takes this line of reasoning:-

"The above mentioned threefold transformation of consciousness is just thought construction (vikalpa). This is nothing but the citta and caittas belonging to the triple world which have for their object mentally constructed forms. Hence it is said; the citta and caitta of the triple world are a non-existent imagination". (58)

Kochumuttam is therefore vindicated in his assertion that the nouns qualified by "belonging to the three worlds (traidhātukam)" are citta and citta.

We actually have a situation in which Vasubandhu and Candrakīrti are in agreement over the interpretation of the Daśabhūmika passage. For the latter it has a provisional meaning in the sense that while it may be correct to say that for an unenlightened being the world is purely mental, nevertheless, upon the attainment of Buddhahood this could not be said to be so. The mind of the Buddha has been transformed in the sense that it is no longer contaminated by the vikalpas, prapañcas etc., which are caused by ignorance. Candrakīrti does not go on to say that such an enlightened mind is conscious of nothing, or he would be open to the charge of nihilism; he rather, and this is entirely consistent with his overall stance, refused to speculate on the nature of reality. Vasubandhu is quite similar here. He also distinguishes between an unenlightened state in which

it may be justified in saying that mind only or representation-only operates, and an enlightened state which is equivalent to a radical transformation of the mind which has now been freed to see reality as it is. There is no hint of idealism here. For Vasubandhu enlightenment is the realisation that in the unenlightened state one has been deluded into taking the representations of consciousness to be real. This is the true interpretation of the term Vijñaptimātratā.

Both authors therefore give an entirely consistent treatment of the notion of mind only (cittamātra) which is outlined in the Daśabhūmikasūtra, and we must conclude from this that when Candrakīrti refers to the Vijñānavāda he is either misinterpreting what the Yogācārins have said, or what is more likely given what we have said about the early mutual development of the Mahāyāna, is taking issue with a point of view which was never held by exponents of classical interpretation and therefore represents a definite deviation from Buddhist principles. While many authors have chosen to interpret Candrakīrti as being radically opposed to the Vijñānavāda, using our method of exegesis it seems, on the contrary, that both were in close harmony.

Notes

1. A.K.WARDER: Indian Buddhism . Varanasi (1970) p.375
2. Ibid p.374
3. É.Lamotte: Traité de la Grande Vertu de Sagesse. Louvain (1944) vol.I, p.x
4. M.Winternitz: History of Indian Literature. Calcutta (1933) Vol.II, p.342
5. T.T.R.V.Murti: Central Philosophy of Buddhism. London (1955) p.87
6. D.Shackleton Bailey: Śatapañcāśatka of Mātṛceṭa. Cambridge (1951) p.9
7. M.Walleser: Life of Nāgārjuna, in Asia Major. in Hirt Anniversary Volume (1923) p.423
8. D.S. Ruegg: Literature of the Madhyamaka... p.4
9. I.Yamada: Vijnaptimātratā of Vasubandhu. p.158, gives Maitreya's date as c.270-350 AD.
10. Warder. op. cit. p.436, gives Asanga's date as c.260-360 AD.
11. Yamada. ibid. p.158, gives c.310-390 AD for Asanga.
12. J.Takakusu (trans.): The Life of Vasubandhu by Paramārtha. in Toung Pao, Leiden, vol.V, ser II, (1904) p.269-296
13. E.Frauwallner: On the date of the Buddhist master of the law, Vasubandhu. Serie Orientale Roma, III. Roma (1951)
14. P.S.Jaini: On the Theory of Two Vasubandhus. p.48 in Bulletin of the London School of Oriental and African Studies vol.XXI (1958) p.48-53.
15. J.Takakusu: The Date of Vasubandhu. in Indian Studies in Honor of Charles Rockwell Lanman. Cambridge, Mass. (1929) p.79-88
16. H.Ui: ibid p101ff.
17. Y.Kajiyama: Bhāvaviveka, Sthiramati and Dharmapāla. p.203
18. Warder. op.cit. p.465, gives the end of the sixth century AD
Ruegg. op.cit. p.71 prefers c.600-650 AD.
19. L.de la Vallée Poussin: Madhyamakāvatāra (trans.) introduction p.250. Le Muséon vol.8 N.S. (1907)

- 20 Matériaux pour L'étude du Système Vijñaptimātra par Sylvain Lévi Paris (1932)
- 21 ibid p 7
- 22 La Philosophie Bouddhique Idéaliste, par Jacques May p 265 in Asiatische Studien Vol XXV (1971) p 265-323
- 23 Th. Stcherbatsky - Madhyāntavibhaṅga p 4-5
- 24 T. R. V. Murti The Central Philosophy of Buddhism p 104
- 25 A. K. Chatterjee The Yogācāra Idealism Delhi (1975) p 229
- 26 K. N. Chatterjee Vasubandhu's Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi with Sthiramati's Commentary Varanasi (1980)
- 27 ibid p xxxvi
- 28 D. T. Suzuki in Eastern Buddhist Vol iv p 255 (1928) Reprinted in D. T. Suzuki : Studies in the Laṅkāvatārasūtra London (1968) p 170
- 29 W. Rahula : Vijñaptimātratā Philosophy in the Yogācāra System and some Wrong Notions p 324 in MahaBodhi (1972) p 324-330
- 30 ibid p 326-7
- 31 Saṅghinirmocanasūtra. L'explication des mystères Texte tibétain édité et traduit par Étienne Lamotte Paris (1935) Saṅghī VIII 30
- 32 Tibetan Tripiṭaka vol 106 14d : 3-8
quoted in Hirabayashi and Iida - Another Look at the Mādhyamika vs Yogācāra controversy (p 347-8)
in Prajñāpāramita and Related Systems ed L. Lancaster Berkeley (1977)
- 33 Tson-kha-pa : Legs-bśad-sñin-po To.no 5396 quoted by E. Conze and S. Iida - Maitreya's Questions p 231 in p 229-242 Mélanges d'Indianisme à la Mémoire de L Renou Paris (1967)
- 34 Tibetan Tripiṭaka Vol 106 16b 7-8 and 16c 1-2 quoted by Hirabayashi & Iida p 355-6
- 35 Bodhipathapradīpa and Bodhimārgadīpapañjikā Peking ed. Tibetan Tripiṭaka No 5344 Ki fol 322a1 - 324b4 lines 205-208 quoted by Chr Lindtner : Atīśa's Introduction to the Two Truths, and its sources. Journal of Indian Philosophy Vol 9 (1981) p 161-214. p 210

- 36 Ruegg Lit. of Madhyamaka p 87
- 37 cf E. Obermiller: The Sublime Science of the Great Vehicle to Salvation Acta Orientalia Vol IX (1931) p 81-305; p 83
- 38 op.cit.
- 39 Ruegg, Lit p 87
- 40 cf Bodhimārgadīpapañjikā in Chr. Lindtner: Atisa's Introduction.
op cit p 211
- 41 Ruegg Lit. of Madhyamaka p 88
- 42 Madhyamakālamkāra 92-93 (Madhyamakālamkāra vṛtti fol. 79a-b),
quoted by Ruegg Lit p 90
- 43 Vin II p 238; A iv 200-201; Udāna p 54
seyyathā pibhikkhave mahāsamuddo anupubbaninno anupubbapono
anupubbapabbhāro n'ayataken'eva papāto evam eva kho bhikkhave imasmim
dhammavinaye anupubbāsikkhā anupubbakiriyā anupubbapatipadā
n'ayataken'eva anāpativedho
- 44 Yogācārabhūmi (Taisho No 1579; Vol 30, 486b-c) quoted by I.
Yamada; Vijñap timātratā of Vasubandhu p 160 in Journal of the
Royal Asiatic Society (1977) p 158-176
- 45 Mūlamadhyamakakārikās avec la Prasannapadā ed by L. de la Vallée
Poussin p 370f
- 46 Madhyamakāvatāra par Candrakīrti Tibetan text with Candrakīrti's
autocommentary, ed. L de la Vallée Poussin. Reprinted Osnabrück
(1970) p 117f
French partial translation in Le Museon NS.8(1907) 249-317;
11(1910) 217-358, 12 (1911) 235-328
- 47 Including (a) R. F. Olson: Candrakīrti's critique of Vijñānavāda,
in Philosophy East and West Vol 24 (1974) p 405-411
(b) P. G. Fenner: Candrakīrti's refutation of Buddhist
Idealism, in Philosophy East and West Vol 33 (1983) p251-261
- 48 P. G. Fenner ibid p 258 n2
- 49 Daśabhūmikasūtra Ch VI (Rahder's ed p 49c)
Cittamātram idam yad idam traidhātukam. Yāny apīmāni
dvādaśa bhavāṅgāni tathāgate nāprabhedaśo vyākhyātāni
apī sarvāny eva cittasamāśritāni
- 50 Madhyamakāvatāra p 182f
- 51 Madhyamakāvatāra p 183
Pudgalah saṃtatiḥ skandhāḥ pratyayā anavas tathā
pradhānam īśvārah kartā cittamātram vadāmy aham

Lankāvatārasūtra Nanjio's Ed p 79
reads - cittamātram vikalpyate

- 52 Mahāyānaviṣṭikā
Tibetan text in G. Tucci (ed) Minor Buddhist Texts Vol I Rome
(1956) p 201 f
- 53 Viṣṭatikā vṛtti 1 from Vasubandhu's Vijñaptimatrātāsiddhi ed.
K. N. Chatterjee Varanasi (1980)
Mahāyāne traidhātukam vijñaptimātram vyavasthāpyate
- 54 T. Kochumuttam : Vasubandhu the Yogacarīn : A new translation
and interpretation of some of his basic works
Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Lancaster (1978) p 203
- 55 Triṣṭ 17
Vijñāna-pariṇāmo 'yam vikalpo yad vikalpyate
tena tan nāsti tena idam sarvam vijñaptimātrakam
- 56 Triṣṭ 4-5
Taccā vartate srotasaughavat.Tasya vyāvṛtir arhatve
- 57 Triṣṭ 29
Acitto 'nupalambho 'sau jñānam lokottaram ca tat
Āsraya parāvṛttir dvidhā dauṣṭulya hānitaḥ
- 58 Triṣṭ bhaṣya 17
Yo 'yam vijñānapariṇāmas trividho 'nantaram abhihitaḥ
so 'yam vikalpah. Adhyāropita artha ākāraḥ traidhātukas
citta caitta vikalpa ucyate. Yathoktam abhūtaparikalpastu
citta caitta tridhātukah.

Chapter Five

The Conception of Truth in the Hīnayāna

Much of the commonly held presuppositions concerning the distinction between Madhyamaka and Yogācāra revolve around their conceptions of truth. In order to determine the veracity of such presuppositions we must now turn our attention to the earliest Buddhist notions of truth (sacca; satya), before tackling the central issue in the next chapter.

On the surface this is an enormously complex subject since many apparently conflicting formulations are found throughout the development of Buddhist thought. In the earliest strata of the tradition we meet with the notion that truth is unitary.

"There is one truth without a second. People, being confused on this point, claim there to be many truths". (1)

Now, are we to assume that in this reference the concept of truth (satya) being one should be understood in the sense given it by a system such as the Advaita Vedānta of Śaṅkara? Is this satya an ontologically unitary absolute of the monistic variety? It seems unlikely. Jayatilleke has an alternative theory. He argues (2) that in the context of the discussion taking place in the Sutta Nipāta it is more likely that when the Buddha talks about truth being unitary he in fact means that statements should not contradict one another. In other words, if someone makes a series of statements on a particular matter it is important that they should all point

in the same general direction, or rather that they should cohere. Someone whose statements do not meet this condition may be dismissed as someone who is not expounding a unitary truth, therefore. There is nothing uncommon in this procedure in the history of Buddhist thought. It is one of the primary methods employed by Nāgārjuna in his attempt in MMK to discredit potential opponents and is the basis of the prasāṅga method of reasoning extolled by Candrakīrti. If an opponent's position can be shown to be internally inconsistent the force can rapidly be taken out of his attack. This does not mean however that the Prāsaṅgika challenger is forced to accept the fact of a unitary (in the sense of absolute) truth. Rather he merely insists that any series of statements must conform to a coherence theory of truth in order to be taken seriously. This particular aspect of the Buddhist truth formulation is therefore entirely independent of any ontological speculation since it rests solely on the non-contradictoriness of statements.

Other concepts of truth however are also met within the early literature. We are told that it is possible to entertain both true and false notions with regard to facts and that such notions may be proved or disproved by recourse to pseudo-empirical methods. Thus:-

"When in fact there is a next world, the belief occurs to me that there is no next world, that would be a false belief ... When in fact there is a next world, the belief occurs to me that there is a next world, that would be a true belief." (3)

It is clear that what we have here is a primitive correspondence theory of truth since statements which do not accord with the way

things really are must be false while statements which are true conform to the facts. This is in the sense of the Sanskrit term yathābhūtam - as it is. If something is said to be yathābhūtam it must be true since it corresponds with reality (bhūta). Again there is no question that simply because something is true by this criterion we must conclude that reality is some sort of unitary absolute. Furthermore there is no particular conflict between this correspondence theory and the statement already quoted from the Sutta Nipāta, since the former may still be seen to yield a unitary truth in the sense that all true statements may now be said to cohere with the true state of things.

Another important distinction which is made in the Pāli canon, which we shall soon see has a direct bearing on the conception of truth in later Buddhism, is that between two different types of Suttas; those with a direct meaning (nītattha) and those with an indirect meaning (neyyattha). Thus:-

"There are these two who misrepresent the Tathāgata. Which two? He who represents a sutta of indirect meaning as a sutta of direct meaning and he who represents a sutta of direct meaning as a sutta of indirect meaning". (4)

Now the Pāli canon itself gives no information on how to identify a passage of either direct or indirect intention, and further there exists no positive evidence which would lead to the placing of one sutta in a more exalted position than the other. It seems that the nītattha/neyyattha distinction is basically one with a pedagogical purpose; the one kind of sutta being suitable for a

person of a particular disposition, or at a certain stage in the path, the other for someone else. The strictures contained in the above quotation would therefore be aimed merely against mixing up teaching materials and support the use of appropriate teachings for the appropriate kind of disciple.

It is actually the Pāli commentarial literature which seems to make the distinction between nītattha and neyyatha suttas one of degree. Since these commentaries were written some time after the rise of the Mahāyāna one may suspect a certain amount of cross-fertilization. Be that as it may, it appears that in these writings the suttas of indirect meaning (neyyattha) are placed in a subordinate position to those of direct meaning (nītattha). This is because while the later are deemed to be true from the ultimate point of view (paramattha) the former are only conventionally so (sammuti). Now the Pāli canon itself contains no passage in which statements of ultimate and conventional meaning are contrasted and we may therefore suspect that this distinction is a commentarial development. However there is no doubt that such an idea exists implicitly in the Abhidharma literature, even though there may be no explicit formulation. The Abhidharma recognises the fact that while conventionally language about persons (puggala) etc. may be understood and acted upon by the ordinary person, the psycho-physical continuum is in reality nothing but a mirage caused by the constant interplay of countless impermanent, insubstantial, and unsatisfactory elements (dharma). It is clear that sometimes the Pāli commentarial literature draws on the Abhidharmika tradition in its attempt to make the distinction between sayings of indirect meaning and those of direct

meaning , for we are told:-

"A sutta of the form "there is one individual, O monks", etc., is a sutta of indirect meaning... Here although the perfectly Enlightened One speaks of "there is one person, O monks", etc., its sense has to be inferred since there is no individual from the ultimate point of view ... One should speak of a sutta of direct meaning (as of the form), "this is impermanent, unsatisfactory and devoid of a soul". (5)

There does seem to be a case to be made for the assertion that the concept of two levels of Buddhist truth is therefore a fairly late development in the evolution of doctrine. As we have already said, the early texts tend to speak of only one truth, or rather one interconnected series of statements which together may be taken as expounding the truth. This interlocking formulation results in a coherent vision of reality as such and corresponds to the Buddha's teaching (dharma). While it could be maintained, that on the basis of this statement it may be possible to hold to a two-level truth doctrine in the sense that everything conforming to dharma must be true while everything contrary to it must be false, this is not what is generally meant by two levels of truth in the Pāli commentarial work and in the writings of the Mahāyāna. Rather both of the two truths are held under certain circumstances to possess veracity, though it is clear that the parameters which limit one do not necessarily apply to the other.

If we return to the nītattha/neyyattha distinction of the early literature we notice again that no explicit value judgement has been placed on the two forms of teaching. The distinction merely

refers to the appropriateness of their use in the pedagogical process. How then did the position arise in which the Pāli commentators felt the need to introduce a novel formulation in which for the first time the teaching of direct meaning becomes linked with ultimacy, while the indirect teaching is relegated to a position of inferiority? It is more than probable that in the period marked by the rise of the Mahāyāna and the development of the schools of the Abhidhārmikas a need was recognised to systematise, to a degree that had not been done before, some of the many seemingly conflicting references to truth in an already burgeoning ocean of doctrine. This would probably have been due to the fact that a coherent dharma needed to be presented to conform with both the influential Sutta Nipāta statement that "truth is one without a second", and to protect Buddhist doctrine from the criticism of opponents. As we have already noted the Abhidhārmikas had promoted the idea that while persons, trees, etc., could be held to possess a conventional reality, only the dharmas underlying these objects could be said to be true from the absolute point of view. It was more or less inevitable therefore that a systematizer would come along and graft this idea on to the nītattha/neyyatha concept and arrive at a synthesis not unlike that presented by the commentator on the Aṅguttara Nikāya.

It is impossible to say exactly who was responsible for this new departure but from approximately the fifth century AD onwards it becomes an important doctrinal element. Candrakīrti⁽⁶⁾ gives a reference to a canonical work of unknown date, the Āryākṣayamati-sūtra, in which sūtras of indirect meaning (neyārtha) are said to deal with conventional ideas such as living things (jīva), souls

(puruṣa) and persons (puḍgala) while sūtras of direct meaning (nītārtha) concern doctrines such as selflessness (anātman). Authors before Candrakīrti however were well aware of the awkwardness of some of these attempts at synthesis. Asaṅga, for instance, in his Bodhisattvabhūmi classifies truth (satya) in ten ways. At the top of the list he says that "truth is one in the sense of being non-contradictory"⁽⁷⁾, while seemingly contradicting such an assertion immediately afterwards by saying that "truth is two-fold as conventional truth and ultimate truth"⁽⁸⁾. While noting the point that Asaṅga must surely have realized the variance between these two statements, we will wait until a more appropriate stage in our argument to see how he resolved such obvious difficulties. The conflict between a one truth doctrine and a two truth formulation was not the only stumbling block. The Buddha had insisted from the very beginning of his teaching that the dharma consisted of Four Noble Truths. How could this be consistent with the ideas expressed in the Sutta Nīpāta? The Vibhāṣā asks the same question,

"If there are four truths, why did the Bhagavat say that there is only one truth?" (9)

It goes on to answer that there is no inconsistency. The way that this is done supports the idea that the concept of a unique truth should not be taken in any absolute sense, and should on the contrary merely refer to coherence within a matrix of doctrinal formulations. The Vibhāṣā goes on further to seek support from Pārsva's contention that the one-truth concept is the only correct interpretation of the four-noble truths. It seems that many heterodox teachers had

taken each of the noble truths to refer to a number of different attainments. To take an example, according to the Vibhāṣā (10) many heretical teachers confused the truth of cessation (nirodhasatya) with the four formless attainments (ārūpyasamāpatti)

- ie (i) The stage of infinite space (ākāśānantyāyatana)
(ii) The stage of infinite consciousness (viññānānantyāyatana)
(iii) The stage of nothingness (ākimcanyāyatana)
(iv) The stage of neither consciousness nor non-consciousness (naivasamjñānāsamjñāyatana).

However none of these attainments actually represent deliverance (vimukti); they are rather forms of existence in the non-material sphere (ārūpyabhava). This being the case, when the Buddha taught the truth of cessation (nirodhasatya) he was referring only to the one true deliverance (vimukti); in other words nirvāṇa. The same technique is used by the Vibhāṣā to demonstrate that the other three noble truths can be correctly interpreted in one, unique and coherent manner and consequently any attempt to segment any of them is heretical.

Samghabhadra puts the whole problem of the one and the four into perspective. In his commentary on the Abhidharmakośa, the Abhidharmanyāyānusārasāstra, written from a Vaibhāsika standpoint, and making particular reference to the one-truth doctrine of SN884, he maintains:-

"The expression 'one-truth' indicates a general manner of proclaiming the truths in the holy teachings (āryadeśanāśāsana)". (11)

What he means here is that there is no real dispute over the question of the four and the one since the expression "one-truth" merely refers to the correct and consistent interpretation of the four noble truths and all other Buddhist doctrines for that matter. It is, as he says, a general manner of understanding which is available only to those far-advanced on the Buddhist path, and which stands in conformity with the true intentions of the Buddha when he formulated his doctrine.

Following on from this particular problem, Saṃghabhadra also tries to reconcile the doctrine of the unity of truth with that of the two truth concept. For him the correct interpretation of the noble truths (āryasatya) corresponds with ultimate truth (paramārthasatya). In other words Saṃghabhadra implicitly links the "one-truth" of SN884 with paramārthasatya. With regard to conventional truth (samvṛtisatya) we are told that since it is connected with the manner of worldly speaking (lokajanapadanirukti), and that such discourse is itself based on false and vulgar designations, it is not the concern of the enlightened, since they no longer have recourse to such conventions. They have no dispute with conventional truth however since the method of discourse implicated in such truth formulations prevents the possibility of pointing out ultimate truth. Put more simply Saṃghabhadra seems to be saying that samvṛtisatya is an inherently unsatisfactory, but nevertheless the best possible, means of articulating paramārthasatya. For this reason samvṛtisatya is entirely dependent on paramārthasatya. The duality of this truth formulation is entirely apparent and the two-truth doctrine becomes

quite compatible with SN884, or as our text says:-

"As the conventional truth (saṃvṛtisatya) comprises the ultimate (paramārtha) there is no contradiction with the unity of truth taught by the great sage (mahāmūni)." (12)

The Vibhāṣā follows a slightly different tack by trying to find agreement between the two-truth and four-truth formulations, but in the end comes to the same conclusions as Saṃ ghabhadra. It mentions (13) four separate theories concerning the connection between these various doctrines. The first connects the first two noble truths (duḥkhasatya and samudayasatya) with the conventional truth (saṃvṛtisatya) since these two deal with mundane concepts, while the third and fourth of the noble truths (nirodhasatya and mārgasatya) connect with a supramundane reality (lokottaratattva) and are therefore ultimately true (paramārthasatya). The second opinion places the first three noble truths within the saṃvṛtisatya leaving only the mārgasatya as ultimately true, since according to this theory only the fourth truth is uncontaminated by mundane designations. The third opinion makes all the noble truths merely of conventional application, while the fourth, said to be associated with P'ing-kia, allows the noble truths to be both saṃvṛti and paramārtha depending on one's point of view. L. de la Vallée Poussin (14) has pointed out that other theories were also current which differed from the four enumerated in the Vibhāṣā. What is clear through all of these attempts at synthesis however is a deep seated desire by many Buddhist authors to reconcile the apparently contradictory statements of the Buddha concerning the nature of truth.

The Vibhāṣā presents these various attempts in a light which shows that they are not entirely satisfactory solutions to the problem. They may, in a sense, be considered as cul-de-sacs in the development of a comprehensive solution to this knotty problem. The Vibhāṣā does however present its own solution, which we have already noted corresponds quite clearly with that of Saṃghabhadra. Responding to the objection that, "If there is only one truth, why then establish two truths?", the author firstly equates the one truth with paramārthasatya. The author goes on to elaborate a kind of correspondence theory. Reality itself is uninfluenced by the construction of truth formulations. It is however the basis of two different points of view. The first point of view is not entirely accurate since, while it takes reality as its starting point, it is affected by many subsidiary factors which are built into worldly conventions. It accordingly departs from the true state of affairs but nevertheless is recognised as truth in conventional discourse. This is conventional truth (saṃvṛtisatya). The second point of view is uncontaminated by worldly convention and therefore conforms with reality as it truly is (yathābhūtam). This is the ultimate truth (paramārthasatya). Now since these two judgements both have their roots in a world independent of the processes of thought the Vibhāṣā reasons, quite justifiably, that in a sense it is entirely consistent to maintain one onto-logical truth: it is this world independent of thought which itself gives rise to the two truth formulations; one of which is in total correspondence (ie paramārthasatya), the other which is less so (ie saṃvṛtisatya). Paramārthasatya then is completely identical with reality (tattva); the saṃvṛtisatya, while taking reality as its basis and therefore

being dependent on paramārthasatya, deviates somewhat.

If we may now summarise a little, it becomes clear that while many Buddhist authors became confused in their treatment of the miscellaneous truth doctrines of the Buddha, there is a perfectly satisfactory way of explaining their overall coherence. In the first place all the evidence points to the Buddha's identification as a realist. There is a real world external to and independent of the processes of mundane thought. This reality is the ontological basis upon which two epistemic orientations have their foundation. The first epistemic orientation is dependent not only on its prime datum (ie. reality) but is also influenced by thought constructions which lead to a distorted picture of things. The second is a complete identification and accurate reflection of reality and is available only to those who, having progressed sufficiently along the Buddhist path, have eradicated the influence of convention. In other words, one ontological truth (ie. reality (tattva)) is responsible for two epistemic truths; the conventional (samvṛti) and the ultimate (paramārtha). The Buddhist teaching (dharma) is itself a body of disparate doctrines such as the four noble truths, the theory of dharmas, the three marks of existence, etc. which cohere into an overall picture with the explicit intention of providing an antidote to the conventional way of seeing things, and eventually leads to the realisation of ultimate truth. The Dharma then, while it may appear contradictory to a superficial examination, has in fact a coherent unity since it points towards the true nature of reality.

This leads us back to the nītattha/neyyattha distinction. There

is no doubt that, if what we have said above is correct, these two categories of discourse cannot ultimately be at variance with one another. If this were so we could not talk of the Buddhist doctrine as being internally coherent. It is clear therefore that the Pāli commentators are adopting a peculiar tactic when they ally nītattha with sammuti and neyyattha with paramattha, particularly since there is no basis for such a development in the Canon itself. Further analysis of these commentarial writings does in fact reveal that in the hands of the authors the terms sammuti and paramattha are being used in a sense which differs somewhat from that used by the Mahāyāna and the Abhidharma. In the Pāli commentarial treatment of the two kinds of truth there is no implication that one is actually superior to the other:-

"The Perfectly Enlightened One, the best of teachers, spoke two truths; the conventional and the absolute - one does not come across a third; a conventional statement is true because of convention and an absolute statement is true as (disclosing) the true characteristics of things". (15)

More importantly both "truths" are equally efficient in bringing the auditor to an understanding of the true state of affairs since they differ not so much in degree, but rather in the way that two foreign languages differ. They both express the same meaning though in ways designed to suit different individuals.

"Just as if there were a teacher, who explains the meaning of the Three Vedas and is versed in the regional languages; to those who would understand the meaning if he spoke in the Tamil language, he explains it in the Tamil language and to another who would understand (if he spoke in) the Ārdhra language, he speaks in that language." (16)

and "But whether they use conventional speech or absolute speech, they speak what is true, what is factual and not false." (17)

It seems that, according to this view, either form of teaching is capable of leading a person to the realisation of the nature of things and we must therefore conclude that this particular usage of the terms conventional (sammuti) and ultimate (paramattha) is quite different from that adopted by the rest of the Buddhist tradition

In this case they are merely used as synonyms for the two forms of teaching recorded in the discourses of the Buddha. One could almost say that in this usage the only difference between the two is that sayings of direct meaning (nītattha) are absolute (paramattha) since they employ Buddhist technical jargon, while those of indirect meaning (neyyattha) are conventional (sammuti) because they employ customary language.

What therefore is more commonly held, principally in the Abhidharma, to be the distinction between paramārtha and saṃvṛtisatya? First there is no doubt that the explicit distinction is entirely absent from the Theravāda tradition. This does not mean however that there is no trace of such a doctrine in the Hīnayāna as a whole. We are told in the Milindapañha that the person Nāgaseṇa is merely a name and consequently only conventionally true (sammuti), for from the ultimate (paramattha) point of view, again with reference to Nāgaseṇa, there is no person to be got hold of. (18) Light on such a theory can be shed by reference to Saṃghabhadra and his attempt to expound the doctrines of the Vaibhāṣikas. His idea is that existence may be subsumed under two headings; substantial existence

(dravyasat) and designated being (prajñaptisat). The former may be considered as a primary form of existence, the latter consequently being secondary. Saṃghabhadra gives a number of examples of what it means to constitute each of these classes of entity. Primary existents therefore are considered to be sense-data such as form and sensation, while an object like a chair would of necessity be a secondary existent since it depends for its being on primary existents (dravyasat). As Williams says:-

"Secondary existence is the sort of existence pertaining to entities which can be further analysed and which are therefore conglomerates composed out of primary existents." (19)

Returning to the Milindapañha reference then, it becomes clear that "Nāgasena" must be regarded as merely a secondary existent (prajñaptisat) since it is said to be conventionally true (saṃvṛti). This does not mean however that it is devoid of an underlying substantial existence (dravyasat), a primary nature, that may exist from the ultimate point of view (paramārtha), since as Williams again notes:-

"A secondary existent is an existent solely because it is an intentional and primarily linguistic referent. But primary existents too are linguistic referents for the Sarvāstivāda, the point of difference being that the secondary existent is dependent and therefore has no self-essence, in its own right it is nothing, that is, it lacks a uniquely individuating description". (20)

It seems that for the Vaibhāṣikas the real distinction between a dravyasat entity and a prajñaptisat entity is that the ontological status of the former is more certain than that of the latter. One could say that a prajñaptisat entity such as a "person" refers to

something with reality merely in the conventional sense; it is empirically real, while on the other hand since it can be analysed into more fundamental existents which themselves cannot be broken down any further, it may not be said to be ultimately real. What the Vaibhāṣikas seem to be getting at is the notion that when an external object is presented to consciousness the primary cognitive content is rapidly turned into a linguistic form for the purpose of conventional discourse. The mental activity which causes such a transformation is identified by another Sarvāstivādin, Subhagupta (21) in his Bāhyārthasiddhikārikā as a thought constructive consciousness (vikalpajñāna) which superimposes unity, and hence a convenient linguistic label, upon a series of separate primary elements. For this school of Buddhists it seems clear that the distinction between prajñaptisat and dravyasat entities is parallel to that of conventional truth (saṃvṛtīsatya) and ultimate truth (paramārthasatya).

What is not clear in this theory however, is whether or not dravyasat entities can be articulated linguistically, or in other words whether it is possible to speak of ultimate truth. In another article William tells us:

"There is nothing for the Sarvāstivāda which has no name, although there may be situations such as samādhi which are of a nature that precludes utterance. The inability to name does not render something ineffable, and this incoherence of ineffability is found not only in the Sarvāstivāda texts but also in those of the Theravāda and seems to be a notable feature of Abhidharma Buddhism. Followers of the older schools seem to have been united in holding that all existents can be named. Buddhaghōṣa observed that there is nothing which escapes being named, for if we say that a thing is ineffable then that thing is thereby named as 'ineffable' ". (22)

This quotation supports Williams' earlier scheme (23), and simply stated conveys the idea that experience, even from the ultimate point of view, can be successfully articulated. The basic idea seems to be that someone far advanced on the path has awareness of the contents of the world independent of thought. He "sees" the underlying substantial entities (dravyasat), or prime existents. He views the dharmas. As such his language will refer to the dravyasat level. He will therefore be able to successfully articulate his experiences, though one may suppose that such language, conforming to the specifications of the Abhidharmic system, will be necessarily technical. In other words he is likely to list the prime constituents of a chair rather than report that "it is a chair". The corollary to this is that the ignorant person, not trained in "seeing" dharmas, will indulge in illegitimate thought construction with primary existents as its basis, and use conventional discourse to describe the secondary (prajñaptisat) entities which he inevitably experiences.

The Sarvāsti-vādin position comes down to the following:- all known entities whether primary or secondary can be referred to linguistically. Such referring will be of a more or less technical nature, and will reveal, particularly to an adept in "bringing dharmas into view", the level of insight of the speaker. The use of conventional discourse may reveal a speaker as experiencing a secondary level of reality, while he who uses Abhidharmic jargon will have penetrated to the primary.

This schema clearly coheres with the nītārtha/neyārtha distinction already discussed in which talk of dharmic constituents of reality constitutes an unambiguous message from the Buddha, while conven-

tional discourse is held as merely implicit and hence requiring further orthodox interpretation in order to reach full intelligibility. This doctrine will be quite interchangeable with the Sarvāstivādin notions. Language of substantial entities (dravyasat) is therefore synonymous with talk of an explicit or direct intention (nītārtha), while language of designated entities (prajñaptisat) will only have an indirect (neyārtha) sense.

The section of the Milindapañha, previously quoted, clearly relegates discourse on "Nāgasena" to what is conventionally true and we have already stated that this should not lead us to the conclusion that "Nāgasena" is totally non-existent; ie. that/no substantial existent or existents underlie the name. It is not clear however in this text whether there is a possibility of referring to such dravyasat entities that possibly comprise Nāgasena, by name.

The Mahāyāna, on the whole, would be clearer on this point. In the authors of the Mahāyāna relevant to this thesis there is a consensus that the sphere of discourse does not touch the true nature of things. Candrakīrti will be a case in point. For him names (abhidhāna) and prajñaptisat entities are one and the same thing; they are ultimately non-existent. ⁽²⁴⁾ This seems a development distinct from that of the nītārtha/neyārtha distinction. Words no longer sometimes refer to a true state of affairs and sometimes refer to a distorted reality. In this view words themselves, irrespective of the precise ontological status of the thing to which they refer, must all be taken on the same level. A word denoting a dharmic constituent has no greater truth value than the word "Nāgasena". The net of language has become a meta-system thrown over the world, but standing apart from it. This net is inherently unsatisfactory in explicating it. One may say that language becomes a metaphor for reality.

Such a doctrine seems to be quite at odds with the prajñaptisat/dravyasat distinction of the Sarvāstivāda. It is however at the root of Nāgārjuna's contention that the Buddha never uttered a word.

"All mental perceptions (upalambha) are (basically) quiescent, free from dichotomisation (prapañca) and at peace. No dharma has anywhere been taught by the Buddha of anything." (26)

Candrakīrti's idea that nirvāna cannot be commented on by the saints (ārya) follows on from this. However the notion that reality cannot be properly articulated ~~may not be an~~ invention of the Madhyamaka.

In the unanswered or inexpressible (avyākāṭa) questions of the Pāli Cūla Mālunkyasutta ⁽²⁷⁾ we meet with the Buddha's refusal to answer on the grounds that any answer to fourteen philosophical questions:-

- (i) is the world eternal, or not, or both or neither?
- (ii) is the world finite, or infinite, or both or neither?
- (iii) Does the Tathāgata exist after death, or not, or both, or neither?
- (iv) is the soul identical to the body or not?

would result in misleading consequences. The Abhidharmika interpretation of the Buddha's refusal to answer would seem to be that by accepting the premises of these questions the Buddha would be giving credence to a view that concepts such as "world", "Tathāgata", "soul" etc. exist in reality rather than being, as the Abhidharma suggests, composite entities made up of more fundamental constituents. Another interpretation however is possible. We have already noted that Nāgārjuna make implicit reference to the Brahmajālasutta in MMK chapter XXVII.

Now this sutta makes the fundamental point that in all cases the Buddha wishes to avoid dogmatic speculation (diṭṭhi-vāda) since such activity inevitably leads to the participants being caught up in the "net" of Brahma (Brahmajāla). It seems therefore that the Buddha not only explicitly refused to answer the fourteen avyākāṭa questions, but also implicitly refuses to answer any questions of the type "Is it true that ...?", since if he were to give a yes or no answer he would be guilty of the crime of dogmatism (diṭṭhivāda) which he repudiates in others. The Buddha therefore treads a middle path (madhyama pratipad) when it comes to speculation of a metaphysical nature. He avoids the extremes of eternalism (śāśvatavāda) and nihilism (ucchedavāda). This does not of course imply that the Buddha taught a sort of Golden Mean with respect to truth. As Jayatilleke comments:-

"Logically there is no reason why truth should lie in the middle rather than in one of the two extremes ... The problem, however, is whether it was dogmatically assumed that the truth must lie in the middle or on the other hand whether it was considered that the truth in the above instances happened to lie between two extremes. The second appears to be the more plausible alternative in the light of the facts." (28)

There is much to commend what Jayatilleke is saying but one must also bear in mind the fact that while such a truth does occupy the mid ground between the two extremes, it is also entirely dissimilar to them since it is inarticulable. The two extremes are dogmatic theories the Buddhist "truth" is not.

"The Tathāgata, O Vaccha, is free from all theories ... Therefore the Tathāgata has attained deliverance and is free from attachment, inasmuch as all imaginings, or agitations, or false notions concerning a self, or anything pertaining to a self,

have perished, have faded away, have ceased, have been given up or relinquished." (29)

While it cannot be denied that the Buddha did speak a great deal about all manner of things, the importance of the "silence of the Buddha" doctrine is to put a certain provisional significance to such statements. The Buddha's teaching is merely a raft which should be abandoned once the stream has been crossed and is therefore not intended to have any ultimate value. As we are told in the Kaccāyanavāda,⁽³⁰⁾ the only sutta of the Tripitāka to be explicitly mentioned by Nāgārjuna, it is impossible to formulate statements without appeal to the "it is" (atthitam) and "it is not" (nāthitam) duality. Therefore reliance on language inevitably involves these two extremes. As the Buddha's teaching is said, in this sutta, to be the middle position between the two it may be possible to infer that in this particular strata of the canon the notion is proposed that the Dharma is ultimately inexpressible. This position corresponds well with the linguistic theories previously assigned to Nāgārjuna and Candrakīrti.

The Hināyāna tradition then leaves us with a certain tension with regard to its notion of the meaningful bounds of language. On one side we recognise that two levels of discourse are held to be possible; a lower, worldly usage and a higher, accessible to those who "see" the world of ultimate dharmic realities. On the other there appears to be tacit approval of the fact that when it comes to matters of ultimate importance, language, by its very nature, leads the seeker

for truth away from his goal. While recognising the pragmatic value of language this second viewpoint suggests that language itself is infected with dichotomies which always implicate it in a constructed world picture.

In the light of such a tension it is hardly surprising that the idea of a reality entirely free from the dichotomies inherent in language would eventually arise in Buddhist thought. It is similarly unsurprising that an author like Nāgārjuna, who repudiates the doctrine of dharmasvābhava, and therefore would have no need for a level of discourse which articulates dharmic realities, would adopt a position vis a vis language, which he does. Although the precise historical route by which the tension was overcome is not so far established, and one would therefore be foolish to be too specific, there are important indications that a provisional solution was being considered by two Buddhist groups- the prajñaptivādins and the followers of Harivarman.

We do in fact possess an important indication that such a doctrine may have played a major role in the teachings of the Mahāsāṅghikas. It has already been noted that designation (prajñapti) was considered to be a feature of conventional truth (saṃvṛtisatya) in the Milindapañha. In his Samayabhedoparacanacakra, Vasumitra ⁽³¹⁾ maintains that the Mahāsāṅghika school very quickly split into nine sub-schools, one of which is called the Prajñaptivāda. In the subsequent discussion of the doctrines of these sub-sects Vasumitra goes on to say that for the Prajñaptivādins all conditioned things (ie. secondary existents [prajñaptisat]) are unsatisfactory (duḥkha) since they are merely designations (prajñapti).

"Les compositions (samskāra), qui sont des assemblages (sāmagrī) évoluant en interdépendance, sont nommées douleur par simple désignation (prajñapti). Il n'y a pas d'homme agent (puruṣa karṭr)." (32)

Paramārtha (557-569 AD), the Chinese translator and commentator, tells us that the main point of controversy which led to the split between the Mahāsāṅghikas and the Sthāviras was over the status of the Buddha's teaching. For the former the use of various doctrines is merely a heuristic device, while for the latter doctrinal concepts such as nirvāṇa etc. are denotative.

"L'école Mahāsāṅghika soutenait que la transmigration (samsāra) et le Nirvāṇa sont tous deux les dénominations fictives (prajñapti); l'école Sthāvirīya soutenait qu'ils sont tous deux réels (dravya)." (33)

Paramartha goes on to say that the sub-sect Bahuśrutika-Vibhajyavāda (Prajñaptivāda) derives its authority from the teachings of Mahā-

Kātyāyana. This is interesting since it is precisely the Kaccāyanasutta of the Tripitaka that Nāgārjuna quotes with approval. We have seen that this sutta may be interpreted as promoting the view that the Buddha's teaching is essentially incommunicable owing to the fact that statements about reality inevitably rely on the false dichotomy of "it is" (atthitam) and "it is not" (nātthitam). Since Kaccāyana, the Prajñaptivādīns, and Nāgārjuna, do have important doctrinal features in common one cannot help speculating whether or not there was a direct line of transmission from one to another. Be that as it may, Paramārtha holds that for the Prajñaptivāda the Buddha's teaching is of provisional importance since it has to rely on prajñapti:

"... Ceci a été énoncé par le Buddha entant que denomination fictive (prajñapti), ceci est l'enseignement réel du Buddha; ceci est vérité absolue (paramārthasatya), ceci est vérité contingente (saṃvṛtisatya)." (34)

We seem to be moving towards the fully developed position of the Mahāyāna concerning the doctrine of two truths. However before we do so, let us briefly examine one further lead.

Demiéville tells us that the schismatic processes which led to the establishment of the various schools associated with the Mahāsāṅghikas resulted in what he calls "un syncretisme de Hīnayāna et de Mahāyāna." (35)

What is particularly of note is the fact that one of the texts to come out of this tradition is the Satyasiddhiśāstra of Harivarman. This is an abhidharmic document, the only surviving version being Kumārajīva's Chinese translation of 412AD. (36) According to Paramārtha, Harivarman was a follower of the Bahuśrutikas (Prajñaptivāda?) and consequently must have accepted some distinction between the two

truths. Now the Satyasiddhi occupies an interesting position in the history of Buddhist philosophy, belonging to a time of Hīnayāna/Mahāyāna synthesis and therefore containing many ideas which are found in elaborated form in the writings of either the Madhyamaka or the Yogācāra. (37) For instance it makes great use of the emptiness (śūnyatā) concept and goes on to create a teaching based on three truths.

However what is important to us at the moment is Harivarman's doctrine of three kinds of awareness:

- (i) Awareness of concepts (prajñapti)
- (ii) Awareness of phenomena (dharma)
- (iii) Awareness of emptiness (śūnyatā). (38)

The examination of these three groups comprises Harivarman's chapter on emptiness. The first awareness, ie. that of prajñapti, however is of most interest for us, since here we are told that:-

"... concepts are names conventionally attached to associations of phenomena (dharmas); the concept of a wagon is thus dependent on the association of wheels, axles and so forth, and the concept of a man is dependent on the association of the Five Groups (skandhas). These concepts are unreal, for there are no entities to which they correspond; but they are useful to us in the ordinary course of living." (39)

Harivarman goes on to use the terms conventional (saṃvṛti) and ultimate (paramārtha) truth and maintains that, while the former is a truth in terms of concepts (prajñapti), the latter corresponds to reality as such. (40) He also asserts that prajñaptis are devoid of own-characteristics (svalakṣaṇa) and can therefore not be the source

of true knowledge. We are left to infer that true knowledge can only come through paramārthasatya. The Satyasiddhi contains a long discussion on the possible relations between concepts and real phenomena. Using the example of a pot Harivarman argues that it would be incorrect that there is a total non-existence of such an object. If this were the case, the same may be applied to guilt, merit, bondage, release, etc. In other words a nihilistic attitude would easily spill over into the moral field and render Buddhist soteriology meaningless. Such an argument is analogous to that employed by Nāgārjuna in MMK.15. The imaginary opponents of Harivarman and Nāgārjuna both take the view that the consequence of maintaining the emptiness of concept (prajñapti), or in Nagarjuna's case own-being (svabhāva), renders that which is denoted non-existent. Both Buddhist authors vigorously reject such a conclusion. For them the correct understanding of the relationship between concepts and real phenomena is the key to the Buddhist path. Both reject nihilism. In the case of Harivarman the rejection of the ultimate value of concepts does not negate the underlying reality.

Pots, and so forth, do exist from the conventional (saṃvṛti) point of view, and the Buddha chooses to use convention as a vehicle to lead the ignorant towards awakening, even though ultimately (paramārtha) language makes no true contact with reality.

Harivarman seems to take the classical Abhidharmic theory that conventional things are in reality associations of primary existents and added the implicit notion that concepts only apply to the former conventional constructs. In the final analysis these constructs are

devoid of reality. Although Harivarman's position is not as explicit as that found in the Mahāyāna, there are some grounds for suggesting that his theory, along with that of the Prajñaptivāda, represents a halfway house between the truth formulations of the Hīnayāna proper and the Mahāyāna.

In conclusion let us survey the doctrines relevant to truth in the texts of the Hīnayāna. In the earliest phase of the canon we have found the idea that the Buddha's teaching comprises a coherent whole and in that sense truth may be claimed to be one. Although it is impossible at this stage to pinpoint a chronology in the development of early Buddhist thought we may note, again at this period, the existence of an idea concerning two levels of discourse; implicit (neyārtha) and explicit (nītārtha). The first reflects worldly usage while the second is technical and indicates the users' Buddhist insight and particularly his knowledge of dharmas. Some texts, notably the Milindapañha, come tantalisingly close to the Mahāyāna position and may be interpreted as promoting the view that everything which can be articulated is only conventionally true. From lack of evidence we should not push this too far, but may note that both the Prajñaptivādins and Harivarman seem to be moving towards a resolution of their respective truth and linguistic doctrines in a Mahāyāna-like direction. In their case we have more reason to put forward as a possibility the idea that they hold that what can be articulated is ultimately non-existent, while that which is ultimately the case must be inexpressible.

This is the general position we have arrived at through the examination of Hīnayānist sources. In the next chapter we must examine what

the authors of Mahāyānist works have to say on the subject. We shall then be in the position to judge whether or not there was a continuity of thought on this particular point, shared by all Buddhists irrespective of the so-called school they belonged to.

Notes

- 1 Sutta Nipāta 884
ekaṃ hi saccaṃ na dutīyam atthi
yasmin pajā no vivade pajānaṃ
nānā te saccāni sayāṃ thunanti
- 2 K. N. Jayatilleke Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge London (1963) p 353
- 3 M i 402-3
Santaṃ yeva kho pana paraṃ lokāṃ; natthi paro loko
ti'ssa diṭṭhi hoti, sā'ssa hoti michhādiṭṭhi
Santaṃ yeva kho pana paraṃ lokāṃ : atthi paro loko
ti'ssa diṭṭhi hoti, sā'ssa hoti sammā diṭṭhi
- 4 A i 60
Dve'me Tathāgataṃ abbhācikkhanti Katame dve? Yo ca
neyyatthaṃ suttantaṃ nītattho suttanto ti dīpeti; yo ca
nītatthaṃ suttantaṃ neyyattho suttanto ti dīpeti
- 5 AA ii 118
Ekapuggala bhikkhave...ti evarūpo suttanto ney yattho
nāma ...Ettha hi kiñcāpi sammāsambuddhena ekapuggalo
bhikkhave ti ādi vuttaṃ, paramatthato pana puggalo
nāma natthi ti evaṃ assa attho netabbo va hoti...
Nītatthanti aniccaṃ dukkhaṃ anattā ti evaṃ kathitatthaṃ
- 6 Mūlamadhyamakakārikās de Nāgārjuna avec la Prasannapadā de
Candrakīrti ed L de la Vallée Poussin
p 43.4 and n 2-3
- 7 Asaṅga Bodhisattvabhūmi ed.U Wogihara Tokyo (1930-6) p 292
avitathārtheṇa tāvad ekaṃ eva satyaṃ na dvitīyam
- 8 ibid.
dvidvidham satyaṃ samvrtisatyam paramārthasatyañ ca
- 9 cf Documents D'Abhidharma. Les Deux, les quatre, les trois vérités. Extraits de la Vibhāṣā et du Kośa de Saṃ ghabhadra in Mélanges Chinois et Bouddhiques Vol 5 (1937) p 161
- 10 ibid p 162
- 11 ibid p 181
- 12 ibid p 183
- 13 ibid p 163f
- 14 ibid p 165

- 15 AA i 95
Du^vve saccāni akkhāsi Sambuddho vadataṃ varo
sammutiṃ paramatthaṃ ca tatiyaṃ n'upalabbhati
sanketavacanaṃ saccam lokasammutikāraṇaṃ
paramatthavacanaṃ saccam dhammānaṃ bhūtalakkaṇaṃ
- 16 AA 1 94-95
Tatrāyaṃ upamā : yathā hi desabhāsakusalo tiṇṇaṃ vedānaṃ
atthasamvaṇṇako ācariyo ye damilabhāsāya vutte atthaṃ jānati
tesaṃ damilabhāsāya ācikkhati ye andhabhāsādisu aññatarāya
tesaṃ tāya bhāsāya
- 17 Kathāvatthuppakaraṇaṭṭhakathā JPTS 1889 p 34
Te sammutikathaṃ kathentā pi saccam eva sabhāvaṃ eva amusā'va
kathenti. Paramatthakathaṃ kathentā pi saccam eva sabhāvaṃ eva
amusāva kathenti
- 18 Milindapaṇḥa trans I. B. Horner p 37 (cf p 225)
sādhū kho tvaṃ mahārāja rathaṃ jānāsi, evam eva
kho mahārāja mayhaṃ pi kese ca paṭicca lome ca paṭicca pe
matthalungaṃ ca paṭicca rūpaṃ ca paṭicca vedanaṃ ca paṭicca
sankhāre ca paṭicca viññānaṃ ca paṭicca Nāgaseno ti
sankhā samānā paññatti vohāro nāmamattaṃ
pavattati, paramattho pan'ettha puggalo'nupalabbhati
- 19 P. Williams "On the Abhidharma Ontology" p 247 in Journal of
Indian Philosophy vol 9 (1981) p 227-257
- 20 ibid p 249
- 21 Subhagupta, "Bahyārtha Siddhi Kārikā" edited by N. A. Shatri
Bulletin of Tibetology vol 4 pt 2 (1967) p 1-96 verse 36
blos yis rtag tu rgyun chags dang
rigs mthun pa la 'dzin mod kyi
rnam par rtog pa'i shes pa yis
de gcig nyid du nges pa byed
- 22 Paul M. Williams: Some Aspects of Language and Construction in
the Madhyamaka.p2 in Journal of Indian Philosophy vol 8 (1980)
p 1-45
- 23 supra n.21
- 24 Madhyamakāvatārabhāṣya 6:47
mngon par brjod pa ni btags pa'i rnam par 'dzin pa'i phyir te
cf de la Vallée Poussin Madhyamakāvatāra in Le Museon New Series
vol xi (1910) p 328
- 26 MMK XXV 24
sarvopalambhōpasamaḥ prapañcopasamaḥ śivah
nā kvā citkasya citkāściddharmo buddhena deśitah

- 27 M i 426-432
- 28 Jayatilleke (1963) p 360
- 29 M i 486
Diṭṭhigatan-ti kho Vaccha apanītam-etam Tathāgatassa
Diṭṭham h' etam Vaccha Tathāgatena: iti rūpam, iti rū-
passa samudayo, iti rūpassa atthagamo; iti vedanā, iti ve-
danāya samudayo, iti vedanāya atthagamo; iti saññā, iti
saññāya samudayo, iti saññāya atthagamo; iti saṅkhārā, iti
saṅkhārānaṃ samudayo, iti saṅkhārānaṃ atthagamo; iti
viññānaṃ, iti viññānassa samudayo, iti viññānassa atthagamo
ti. Tasmā Tathāgato sabbamaññitānaṃ sabbamathitānaṃ
sabba-ahimkāra-mamimkāra-mānānusayānaṃ khayā virāgā ni-
rodhā cāgā paṭinissaggā anupādā vimutto ti vadāmi.
- 30 S ii 17
dvayanissito khvāyam, kaccāyana, loko yebhuyyena atthitañ
ceva natthitañca ... sabbam atthītikho, kaccāyana, ayam eko
anto; sabbam natthīti ayam dutiyo anto; Ete te, kaccāyana,
ubhe ante anupagamma majjhena tathāgato dhammam deseti.
- 31 cf André Barea u : Trois Traités sur les Sectes Bouddhiques
Attribués a Vasumitra, Bhavya et Vinītadeva. Part 1.p.237 in
Journal Asiatique (1954) pt 2 p229-266
- 32 ibid p 247
- 33 Paul Demiéville : L'origine des sectes bouddhiques d'après Paramārtha.
p 33 in Mélanges Chinois et Bouddhiques Vol 1 (1931-2) p 15-64
- 34 ibid p 50
- 35 ibid p 22
- 36 Harivarman; Ch'eng Shih Lun (Satyasiddhi) tr. Kumārajīva, Taisho T. 1646
- 37 cf C. D. C. Priestley : Emptiness in the Satyasiddhi. in Journal
of Indian Philosophy vol 1 (1970) p 30-39
- 38 T.1646 p 327a 1.8
- 39 Priestley op cit p 31
- 40 T.1646 p 327a 1.21
- 41 T.1646 p 328c 1.18
- 42 Priestley, op cit p 32

Chapter Six

The Two Truths and the Three Natures

On the basis of the previous chapter's investigations we are now in the position to investigate any distinctive features of the truth formulations of the Mahāyāna. In the process the veracity of the commonly held belief that Madhyamaka and Yogācāra hold differing doctrines in this respect may be tested.

The theory of two truths is found in the Prajñāpāramitā literature though explicit statement of it is not common. Murti's statement that:-

"The doctrine is already well-developed in the Aṣṭasāhasrikā and other Prajñāpāramitā texts ..." (1)

is therefore something of an exaggeration. It seems that the terms saṃvṛti- and paramāthasatya are not in fact contrasted in the earliest texts of this corpus. (2) While we have noted in the previous chapter that they were extensively used by some of the schools of the Hīnayāna, it is to Nāgārjuna that we turn for the first rigorous treatment of this particular doctrine. However before doing so let us examine the Prajñāpāramitā literature a little more fully, particularly since these texts are considered authoritative for the Madhyamaka and the Yogācāra.

It is certainly the case that the Prajñāpāramitā distinguishes between

the understanding of the wise, and that of ordinary people:-

"Those who course in duality cannot grow in merit. All the foolish common people are supported (nisrita) by duality, and their merit cannot grow. But a bodhisattva courses in non-duality." (3)

In other words the understanding of non-enlightened persons is infected by false dichotomies which arise from ignorance (avidyā). The enlightened person however has developed a non-dual form of knowledge (advaya[^]jñāna) which avoids the distortions imposed on the minds of the common folk. We have met with such a notion before.

Another important notion in the Prajñāpāramitā literature concerns the relationship between words and the entities that they signify. Now the entities in question are termed dharmas and Conze tells us that the ontological status of dharmas in the Prajñāpāramitā literature may be considered in a five fold manner. They are non-existent, they are devoid of a mark (lakṣaṇa), they are isolated (vivikta), they have never come into existence, and finally their existence may be understood to be purely nominal. (4) What is meant by the last member of the list is that dharmas are merely words, being nothing more than conventional expressions (vyavahāra) for the purpose of discourse among the unenlightened. In like manner therefore the Buddha may be said to be "the same as speechless silence". (5) However this does not seem to mean that the entity "the Buddha" is totally non-existent as this would entail nihilism, but rather the word "Buddha" itself cannot be held to be a true entity. Such an interpretation is upheld by another quotation:-

"... words are merely artificial constructions, which do not represent things (dharmā)... (they are) adventitious designations, which are imagined and unreal." (6)

From the fact that words are said to be adventitious (āgantuka) designations one may infer that while the relation between a word and the thing it putatively signifies does not hold up to examination, nevertheless one is not justified in negating the existence of the thing denoted. If this is the case then here again the Prajñāpāramitā is expressing a theory which has already been met with earlier in our investigations concerning the proto-linguistic doctrines outlined in the Milindapañha, and the more fully worked out accounts of the Bahuśrutika-Vibhajyavāda (Prajñāptivāda), and finally Harivarman in the Satyasiddhiśāstra. As we have also seen, these doctrines harmonise quite closely with the two-truth system of thought, so we may be justified in saying that the Prajñāpāramitā literature certainly contains implicit reference to the conventional (saṃvṛti) and the ultimate (paramārtha) truths.

The text of the Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikāpra jñāpāramitā sūtra (P), which was at some stage revised according to the divisions of the Abhisamayālaṅkāra contains a section known as "The chapter preached at the request of Maitreya", (Byam shus-kyi le'u). It is found in one Sanskṛt and three Tibetan renditions, all of which are in close agreement, although it is totally missing from all the Chinese sources. These facts combined with the apparently distinct nature of the doctrines contained in the chapter have led some scholars to assert that it is a later interpolation. Let us now analyse these claims in some detail.

The chapter starts off by putting forward the idea that things (dharmas) may be said to possess three aspects.

"Maitreya, that which is imagined form (parikalpitaṃ rūpaṃ) should be seen to be without substance (adravyam). That which is discerned form (vikalpitaṃ rūpaṃ), because of its substantiality (sadravyatā), should be viewed as substantial, although it never exists independently (svatantra). That which is the essential nature of form (dharmatā-rūpan) should be seen to be neither substantial nor non-substantial, being an appearance of ultimate reality) (paramārtha prabhāvitam)." (7)

Each of these aspects is elaborated during the course of the chapter.

With regard to the first:

"Maitreya: (If O Bhagavat, all dharmas have no own being), how then should the Bodhisattva, who courses in Prajñāparamitā train in all dharmas, ie from form to the Buddhadharmas? Being asked thus, the Bhagavat replied: He should train in the fact that all (things from form to the Buddhadharmas) are mere names (namamātra)." (8)

This first part of the teaching seems to be a reiteration of the designation-only (prajñāptimātra) which we have already noted plays an important role in some schools of the Hīnayāna, and Tsong-kha-pa confirms this interpretation when commenting on the above quotation, in his Legs-bshad snying-po. (9) He understands the above to imply that names are something adventitious (āgantuka) to the entity they are supposed, by the unenlightened, to signify. In other words, it is not the real existence of form (rūpa) that is being negated, but rather the existence of form (rūpa) in so far as it is merely a conventional designation (nāma-saṃketa-svabhā). As far as the statement "this is form" is concerned therefore, this is nothing but a nominal designation (nāmaprajñāpti), but this should not lead

us to negate the form (rūpa) itself which is the basis (āśraya) of the designation (prajñapti).

In its own treatment of this first aspect the sūtra tells us

"From form etc. to Buddhadharmas exist by way of worldly social agreements and conventional expression (vyavahāra) but not from the ultimate point of view (paramāthataḥ)". (10)

Translated into modern technology, what the author seems to be getting at here is the idea that language forms a net which has been cast about reality. This net possesses a certain coherence and is conducive to social intercourse, but is itself a mere meta-structure which obscures the concrete beneath it. Only reality can be said to exist ontologically.

Tsong-kha-pa draws parallels between the three aspect doctrine of the Prajñāpāramitā and a similar notion to be found in the Sāḍhinir-moḥaṣasūtra. In this latter text the aspects are referred to as marks or characteristics (lakṣaṇa) and with regard to the first it says that it consists in :

"Determination by means of names and conventional terms (nāma saṃketa-vyavasthāpanam) of self nature (svabhāva) and specifications (viśeṣa) in the sign of something conditioned (samskāranimitta) in speaking of form (rūpa) etc.

This is interesting because a virtually parallel passage exists in the Maitreya chapter. In this passage the first aspect, imagined form (parikalpita-rūpa) is said to be:

"False imagination (parikalpanā) with regard to the entity which is the sign of something conditioned (saṃskāranimittavastu) as having self-nature (svabhāva) of form etc. based on the name (nāma), notion (saṃjñā), designation (prajñapti), conventional term (saṃketa) or expression (vyavahāra) ie form etc." (12)

Unscrambling this rather complex terminology it appears that both texts accept an entity which underlies designation. This entity or property (vastu) is the sign of something conditioned. The problem with signifying such an entity (vastu) nominally is clearly stated. By the use of language a self nature (svabhāva) or substance is imputed to that entity which it does not in fact possess. False imagination (parikalpanā) therefore, the first of the three aspects, results in the false attribution of self nature (svabhāva) to conditioned things.

This is made clear when we look at the second of these aspects.

This is termed discerned form (vikalpitam rūpaṃ) and the Maitreya chapter defines it in the following way:

"Discerned form is the stable state (avasthānatā) of that entity which is the sign of something conditioned in its true nature (dharmatā) and merely discerned (vikalpaṃātra). Having depended on the discernment there is a verbal expression ... 'this is form' ". (13)

A distinction is being made in the reference to these first two aspects which in modern terminology we would term one between as perception and ^{अप}perception. On the difference between these two Leibniz tells us:-

"The passing state ... is nothing other than what is called perception, which must be carefully distinguished from apperception or consciousness... " (14)

Perception is a momentary contact with an external object which in the instant it takes place precisely mirrors that object on the surface of consciousness. Apperception follows on, immediately shaping the mirror image in such a way as to make it cohere with all past images. In other words as soon as the mirror image is received it becomes modified by the processes of consciousness and ceases to be a unique individual. As Leibniz says, it becomes confused. If we apply these ideas to an interpretation of the first two aspects then the discerned form (vikalpita rūpa) may be said in some senses to conform with the initial perceptual image. As we have seen it represents a stable state (avasthānatā) of the entity which is a sign of something conditioned (samskāra-nimittavastu), or rather it is in complete correspondence with the true nature (dharmatā) of the entity (vastu). This is why it is said at this point to be merely discerned (vikalpamātra), since no process has so far taken place to disturb, modify or confuse its stability. The attempt to fit it into a coherent picture which will be amenable to treatment by language however gives rise to the imagined form (parikalpita rūpa) or the form which has self-nature (svabhāva) attributed to it.

The Sāṅghinirmocanasūtra gives the second aspect the title - the dependent characteristic (paratantralakṣaṇa) since the first aspect is dependent upon it and it acts as the support for the imagined characteristic (parikalpita-lakṣaṇāśraya). For this sūtra the dependent (paratantra) is the dharmic world itself, although this world is not comprised of individual dharmas possessing self nature (svabhāva) as believed by the ignorant, but a plenum of mutually conditioned things in a constant state of flux.

This second aspect then has a substantiality (sadravya) which the first does not possess, but this substantiality is not produced from the sum of a multiplicity of individual self-natures (svabhāva).

Summing up a discussion on the first two aspects, Tsong-kha-pa says:-

"We negate the basis, which is constituted by name which is not postulated as being by means of conventional expression. On the other hand, we do not totally negate, in general, the place [or property (vastu)] of the basis which is constituted by name". (15)

Tsong-kha-pa is clearly using the partial (paryudāsa) negation which, as we mentioned in Chapter Two, can be inferred from Nāgārjuna's method in MMK. In this case the name itself is totally negated as constituting an entity, while the entity which is signified by the name is nevertheless affirmed.

Let us move on to the third aspect mentioned in the Maitreya chapter where it is called the true nature of form etc. (dharmatā rupa).

This true nature of form is said to be equivalent to the true nature of things (dharmānām dharmatā) the dharma element (dharmadhātu), suchness (tathatā), the reality limit (bhūtakoti), eternally and constantly devoid of self-nature (niḥsvabhāvata) and is equivalent to the absence of the first aspect (parikalpitarūpa) from the second (vikalparūpa). (16) The Sāṅghinirmocana sūtra calls it the accomplished characteristic (pariniṣpanna-lakṣaṇa) and corroborates what has been said. The pariniṣpanna is simply stated to be the middle aspect (ie. paratantra) eternally devoid of the first aspect (ie. parikalpita) which is itself said to be devoid of self nature (niḥsvabhāva) and consequently without correspondence to anything absolute (apariniṣpanna). (17)

To summarise, the three aspect doctrine seems to concern the nature of things, and the possible understandings of those things by people of differing degrees of spiritual development. The doctrine itself hinges on the second aspect which is referred to variously as the discerned form (vikalpita rūpa) or the dependent characteristic (paratantralakṣaṇa). Now, from what has been said this second is identical with the third, once imagination has been destroyed. Imagination, as the result of ignorance (avidyā), leads to the construction of an external world constituted of substantial entities. The extirpation of this world-view destroys subjectivity and objectivity which are functions of the imagined nature (parikalpita). Speaking of this purified aspect of the dependent nature (paratantra) the sūtra informs us that:-

"Whatever is discerned form, because of its substantiality, is viewed as substantial, although it never occurs as an independent reality (svatantravṛttah)." (18)

This means that there are real phenomena still present once ignorance has been uprooted and the mental concepts associated with it have been suppressed. However these phenomena can no longer be presented as external existents. Reality is no longer seen as independent or other to self. There is in fact total union of self and other. This is the accomplished nature (pariniṣpanna).

In a sense the vikalpitarūpa/paratantrasvabhāva may be seen as the basis for the arising of the other two, with the important proviso that ultimately there is no real separation between it and the pariniṣpanna; there merely appears to be separation of the two under the conditions of ignorance. Under such conditions the imagined (parikalpita) aspect operates abstractively in the sense that it isolates

specific items from the flux of existence, conjuring up discrete existents when there are, in reality, no such things. On the other hand the Maitreya chapter tells us that the third aspect represents the total absence of the first. Under such a conditions things are seen as they truly are (yathābhūtam) and hence free from the superimposition of individual self-natures (svabhāva). This vision of things is said to be ultimate (paramārtha), devoid of language and consequently inexpressible (nirābhilāpyā), the true nature of things (dharmānāmdharmatā) and suchness (tathatā), amongst other synonyms. As we shall see subsequently these are the usual synonyms employed by the Mahāyāna when talking about ultimate truth (paramārthasatya).

Earlier in this thesis we noted a Leibnizian parallel to the first two aspects of this three nature theory. Such a parallel becomes more prominent in the works of later Yogācārins, particularly in the writings of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti. In their attempt to work out a thorough going theory of knowledge they hold that perception (pratyakṣa) consists of one pure moment of sensation which is immediately followed by subsequent moments of thought activity in the minds of the unenlightened. While the first moment is uncontaminated and in the enlightened provides true knowledge, further moments will distort the image in a direction determined by the past actions and predilections of the perceiver. This distorted image finally coheres into a speculative theory of reality which because of its mistaken premises inevitably leads to suffering when applied to the "real" world. Such a situation is clearly described as parikalpita svabhāva in the three-natures theory. Now for Dignāga the initial moment of perception is pure since mental contamination is not yet at work. This will correspond to the dependent nature (paratantra).

Since the concepts of subjectivity and objectivity have not arisen, in this initial stage knowledge may operate in a context where externality is not a function. Now Dignāga holds out the possibility of all moments being like this. This will of course be equivalent to the attainment of nirvāṇa since all thought construction will have stopped and things will be seen as they are (yathābhūtam). Such knowledge, though one must be careful to distinguish it from conventional knowledge dependent on dichotomy (prapañca) and therefore subjectivity and objectivity, is the accomplished nature (pariniṣpanna).

Using the above interpretation gives the impression that the three-natures theory may be used to provide a soteriological scheme for the aspiring Buddhist. Parikalpitasvabhāva will represent the starting point of the path in ignorance; paratantra represents the bedrock of this samsāric condition but at the same time signifies those moments of pure sensation at the base of everyday experience which may be met with more powerfully in meditation; pariniṣpanna finally corresponds to the end of the path in which nothing but pure sensation exists and there is no knower and nothing known, i.e. nirvāṇa.

Now since the Maitreya chapter is not found in all the recensions of the Prajñāpāramitā text is question, and particularly since the doctrine of the three aspects corresponds closely to the trilakṣaṇa teaching of the Saṅghinirmocanaśūtra which is understood by Buddhist tradition to be authoritative for the Yogācāras, many scholars have considered it to be a later interpolation in a body of text which is at doctrinal variance with it. As Obermiller puts it:-

"As this differentiation appears to be identical with the teaching of the three aspects of existence, as we have it in the Saṅghinirmocana, the Yogācāras consider the Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā to be a text, the main standpoint of which is quite the same as that of the said Sūtra, i.e. a Yogācāra work". (19)

Bu-ston, in his history of Buddhism confirms such a point of view

by maintaining that the chapter containing Maitreya's questions was never retrieved by Nāgārjuna during his visit to the realm of the Nāgās, as was all the rest of the Prajñāpāramitā literature. The foremost modern scholar on the subject, E. Conze, goes along with the consensus when he points out that:-

"A modern historian, on the other hand, cannot fail to note that this "Maitreya chapter" differs radically from the remainder of the Prajñāpāramitā in vocabulary, style and doctrinal content." (20)

If we disregard the testimony of Bu-ston, since the only evidence to support his claim is mythological, both Obermiller and Conze take their standpoint on the basis that the chapter in question somehow differs doctrinally from the body of the text. This is not a view however that has been universally shared by the Buddhist tradition. Tsong-kha-pa, for instance, sees the Maitreya chapter as quite compatible with the rest of the text. (21) Now many commentators before Tsong-kha-pa, who wrote from a Madhyamaka point of view, held that while the body of the sūtra was written as direct meaning (nītārtha), the Maitreya chapter has only an indirect meaning (neyārtha) and consequently needs further elaboration by a qualified teacher. Tsong-kha-pa disagrees. For him the whole of the text has a direct meaning (nītārtha). However he was still at pains to make a distinction between the three aspect theory and the three self-nature (trīsvabhāva) doctrine of the Yogācāra. As we have already seen though, he does equate the teachings of the Maitreya chapter and the trīlakṣaṇa theory of the Saṅghinirmocana sūtra. He must therefore be led to an implicit denial that the Saṅghinirmocanasūtra is āgama for the Yogācāra, otherwise he would have to accept that the trīlakṣaṇa and trīsvabhāva doctrines are the same, and if so that the Yogācāra teachings must be in accord with the three aspects of the Maitreya chapter. He fails to do this explicitly and to a certain extent

this puts him in an awkward position. This is because he wants to maintain a distinction between the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra teachings on this point. How far is he justified in making such a distinction? Let us turn to an examination of Nāgārjuna's understanding of reality to see whether this will throw light on the distinction.

One must first of all see Nāgārjuna's teaching in its correct context. The doctrine of two truths (satyadvaya) is first brought up in Chapter XXIV of the Kārikās. They are in fact brought forward in argument with an opponent who asserts that since Nāgārjuna teaches everything to be empty (śūnya) certain consequences of a nihilistic nature follow. These consequences include the rejection of the existence of the Four Noble Truths, the impossibility of true knowledge (parijñā), the pointlessness of developing any spiritual discipline (bhāvanā) and the incoherence of the triple jewel (triratna), ie the Buddha, the Dharma and the Saṅgha. Nāgārjuna responds by saying that his opponent has misunderstood his particular doctrine of emptiness (śūnyatā) and therefore the charge of nihilism will not hold. What Nāgārjuna seems to mean here is that the opponent has confused emptiness with non-existence, and when Nāgārjuna claims dharmas to be empty (śūnya) this does not entail the fact that for him they are devoid of existence. He merely wishes to point out that dharmas are empty of something and this something is in fact self-nature (svabhāva).

It is to elaborate this argument that Nāgārjuna introduces the two truths.

"The teaching of the Dharma by various Buddhas is based on two truths; namely the worldly conventional truth and the ultimate truth." (22)

and he goes on to add that the teaching of the Buddha is profound (gambhīra) precisely because it makes the distinction between two truths. (23) This gives the impression that Nāgārjuna considers the Buddha to be the initiator of this specific doctrine, and does not therefore claim it as his own development. This also confirms our work in the previous chapter, in which we identified a two fold theory of truth in the writings of the Sthaviras.

It is also clear that, for Nāgārjuna, the two truths follow directly on the establishment of the doctrine of emptiness (śūnyatā) since his first comment to his critics is that:-

"... you do not understand the real purpose of śūnyatā, its nature and meaning. Therefore there is only frustration and hindrance (of your understanding)." (24)

As a consequence,

"If you perceive the various existences as true beings from the standpoint of self-nature (svabhāva), then you will perceive them as non-causal conditions". (25)

and since Nagarjuna, as evidenced by the maṅgalāśloka of MMK, holds fast to the central Buddhist doctrine of causality or dependent origination (pratītyasamutpāda), he claims that the opponent has not grasped the fundamental Buddhist revelation. By taking things as possessing self-nature (svabhāva) the latter has precluded the possibility of them being causally efficient, and hence contributing to the flux of existence. Nāgārjuna's position therefore is that:

"Any factor of existence (dharma) which does not participate in relational origination (pratītyasamutpanna) cannot exist. Therefore any factor of experience not in the nature of śūnya cannot exist". (26)

Nāgārjuna has effectively turned the opponent's criticism upside down and directed it back at him. The opponent has accused Nāgārjuna of nihilism and Nāgārjuna has shown that by maintaining self-nature (svabhāva), causal efficiency in the moral order and in the dharmic world is consequently negated. The opponent under such an attack becomes the nihilist, while Nāgārjuna in maintaining the existence of things, though empty (śūnya) of self-nature (svabhāva), can go on, as he does, to show that his teachings are conducive to the practice of the Buddhist path, the operation of the Four Noble Truths etc.

Nāgārjuna does not feel himself to be a nihilist therefore, and would agree with someone who maintains the existence of the world in a general way, though not necessarily in every specific detail. There is no particular reason therefore why he would disagree with the realistic claim of the suttas that:

"... because of the sensitive surface of the eye as support, and the four originating material elements as the object, there arises eye consciousness. By the meeting of those three arises contact." (27)

although he would of course object that neither eye, external object or eye consciousness could be possessed of self-nature (svabhāva) for such a situation in his view of things would itself preclude any contact. Since Nāgārjuna does show some sympathy towards realistic thought, though obviously his particular version of it, how then

are the two truths to be understood?

In the first place they are not mutually exclusive since the absolute can only be understood with the conventional as its basis.

"Without relying on everyday common practices (ie. the conventional truth) the absolute truth cannot be expressed. Without the absolute truth, nirvāṇa cannot be attained." (28)

Since the two truths appear to have a certain dependence on one another it does not seem likely that they are designed to fulfil the function performed by the two categories of a dualistic system such as Sāṃkhya or Cartesianism. For instance, Sāṃkhya deals with two mutually exclusive realities [primordial matter (prakṛti) and souls (puruṣa)], not a single reality which can be treated in a twofold manner. The two fundamental principles of Sāṃkhya may, one must admit, be termed truths in the ontological sense of the word, **such as when the** word truth is used as a synonym for being. Certainly the Sanskrit term for truth (satya) may have such a connotation since it contains within itself the word for being (sat). Under these circumstances, **and** since Sāṃkhya puts forward the notion of two mutually incompatible spheres of being, one may be justified in claiming that it teaches two truths. However, this is not the sense given by Nāgārjuna to his notion of two truths (satyadvaya). He is not a dualist and does not, as all Buddhists do not, recognise two entirely independent ontological realities. Rather, he recognises two epistemic orientations towards one reality, which may be termed the orientation of the ordinary person, and the orientation of the enlightened person. This is made clear by his references to the states of samsāra and

nirvāṇa.

"Samsāra is nothing essentially different from nirvāṇa. Nirvāṇa is nothing essentially different from samsāra. The limits of nirvāṇa are the limits of samsāra. Between the two, also, there is not the slightest difference whatsoever." (29)

It does appear therefore that Nāgārjuna wishes a link between the two truths on the one hand and samsāra and nirvāṇa on the other. Now samsāra and nirvāṇa are said to be identical since they have the same limit (koṭi), which must mean that they refer to the same world seen in the first case under the condition of ignorance (avidyā) and in the second through wisdom (prajñā). It becomes clear therefore that the conventional truth (saṃvṛtisatya) must be closely connected with samsāra while the ultimate truth (paramārthasatya) must similarly perform the same function as nirvāṇa.

Samvṛti is defined in Candrakīrti's commentary on MMK in three senses. It is said to be (a) the obscuration of the true nature of things through ignorance, (b) reciprocal dependence and finally (c) social convention involving the world of ordinary language and translation. (30)

Samvṛti also, according to Sprung⁽³¹⁾, involves the belief in a person, ie. conceptions such as "I" and "mine", and existence understood in terms of the defilements (kleśas). We may add to this by also noting that saṃvṛti is particularly associated with defilement (kleśa) by the imputation of self-nature (svabhāva) to dharmas through the co-operation of language. In consequence information obtained through verbal transaction, though having a pragmatic value is, from the ultimate point of view, untrue.

"The Blessed One has said that elements with delusive nature are untrue. All mental conformations (saṃskāra) are delusive in nature. Therefore, they are untrue". (32)

When Nāgārjuna talks about elements with a delusive nature, what he means are things to which self-nature is attributed. He is not therefore totally denying the existence of things in the above statement. We have already seen how the Buddhists ^{assess} ~~assessing~~ a pragmatic truth value to attempts to articulate ultimate reality. The Parable of the Raft in M.i.173 shows this clearly, in that the Buddhist teaching is promulgated so that it may be used as a vehicle to help on the path, though from the ultimate point of view it is without meaning and in the end must consequently be abandoned. The articulation of Dharma then pertains to the path and this is why Nāgārjuna says that the conventional truth (saṃvṛtisatya) is the basis (āśraya) of the ultimate truth (paramārthasatya) in MMK.XXIV 10. The articulated Dharma may be said to contain within itself the seed of its own transcendence since it hints at the ultimate reality of things which is inexpressible.

None of this is particularly novel. As Nānananda ⁿ⁻ comments, in the context of the Pāli canon,

"However the Buddha, for this part, was content to treat all of them (ie. teachings) as sammuti (= saṃvṛti). For him, they were merely worldly conventions in common use, which he made use of without clinging to them". (D.i.202). (33)

Nāgārjuna would interpret such a statement as indicating the fact that the Buddha, while he recognised the substantialising tendency

connected with language resulting in the attribution of self-natures (svabhāva), was forced to use such language for the purpose of leading the unenlightened towards enlightenment. In fact when one comes to understand that these putative self-natures implicated in the realm of discourse are empty (śūnya), then all views concerning the nature of things are uprooted for good. The notion of emptiness (śūnyatā) then merely indicates the non-existence of self-natures and should not be taken as yet another view concerning the status of the world etc. This is what Nāgārjuna means when he says:-

"Emptiness (śūnyatā) is proclaimed by the victorious ones as a refutation of all view points. It is said (therefore) that those who hold emptiness as a view point are incurable (asādhya)". (34)

The second or ultimate truth (paramārthasatya) is not a view point since it is not arrived at through the artifices of language. Sprung ⁽³⁵⁾ considers it to be synonymous with many of the terms which are normally employed by the Mahāyāna in referring to reality as it really is. The terms in question include śūnyatā, tattva, dharmatā, nirvāṇa. A number of things may be said to give an understanding of paramārtha, though it must be borne in mind that for the Madhyamakas it is fundamentally inaccessible through language. Of course we should remember that this notion is not peculiar to the Madhyamakas but as we have noted more than once, is found in the earliest strata of Buddhist thought. Acknowledging these strictures, and therefore using worldly convention, we may intimate, and no more, the structure of the ultimate truth. However, as with the treatment of nirvāṇa, the language we must use is predominantly apophatic.

Paramārtha may be said to involve the cessation of concepts such as "I" and "mine":-

"If the individual self (ātman) does not exist, how then will there be something which is "my own"? There is lack of possessiveness and no ego (ahaṁkāra) on account of the cessation of self and that which is "my own". (36)

Since saṁvṛti is tied up with and conditioned by the workings of the unenlightened mind and motivated by ignorance (avidyā), paramārtha must be a state in which dichotomies (prapañca) and thought constructions (vikalpa) has come to rest. The wandering of the mind (cittagocara) ceases and one achieves nirvāṇa (37). One understands the true nature of things (dharmatā). This is really so (tathyam), (38) a state of peace (śānta).

"Not conditionally related to anything else, peaceful, not elaborated by dichotomous thought, without thought construction, undifferentiated: such are the (true) characteristics of reality." (39)

It is liberation from the tyranny of the conventional (saṁvṛti).

Paramārthasatya is incapable of being taught or proved, though it may be hinted at through the spoken word. We meet with statements such as these time and time again in the Mahāyāna sūtras. For example the Pitāputrasamāgamasūtra tells us:-

"This much should be understood, the conventional and the absolute... Among these (two) convention was seen by the Tathāgata as worldly usage, while the absolute is inexpressible, unknowable, non-experiential, imperceptible, unrevealed, unmanifest ... not deed, not doer... not gain, not loss, not pleasure, not pain, not fame, not infamy, not form, not without form." (40)

The ultimate truth is free from the duality associated with the conventional and as such is not dual (advaya). It is therefore devoid of prapañca.

Now, as we have already said, the ultimate is dependent on the conventional for its expression, even though in the apophatic sense the objection can be raised as to whether there is any real way in which two truths can be said to "exist". Lindtner has found the seed of such an objection in the Mahāvibhāṣā.

"A very early piece of evidence to this effect has found its way into the Mahāvibhāṣā where objections were raised whether the relative (saṃvṛti) exists in a relative sense (saṃvṛtitaḥ), or in the absolute sense (paramārthataḥ). Whatever the answer, only the absolute (paramārtha) exists, and thus the theory of two truths is absurd." (41)

Kumārila was the most prominent non-Buddhist to criticise the two truth doctrine of Nāgārjuna, actually quoting MMK.XXIV.8 in his Ślokavārttika. (42) He maintained that it was totally nonsensical to have two separate truths. If paramārtha is ultimately true then for him, it follows that saṃvṛti is not a truth at all, but would be better described as untruth (mithyā). Kumārila makes the point that the Madhyamaka claim to teach two truths is actually misleading, because, what they in fact put forward is one truth (ie paramārtha) together with one falsehood (ie. saṃvṛti).

Amongst the Mādhyamikas, it is Bhāvaviveka who first takes up the challenge of these criticisms. Bhāvaviveka probably lived c500-570 AD (43), and consequently occupies an intermediate position in the

history of Madhyamaka thought between Nāgārjuna himself and Candrakīrti. Now Bhāvaviveka has been unfairly treated by many scholars of the Madhyamaka who have based their understanding of Nāgārjuna's seminal works on the commentaries of Candrakīrti. The main thrust of their argument is directed at Bhāvaviveka's attempt to answer the objections of Kumārila and others of the same ilk. Bhāvaviveka tries to show how Nāgārjuna's statement in MMK XXIV 8 that the ultimate truth has the conventional truth as its basis (āśraya) is true. Nonsense would be made of the Buddhist Dharma should no connection be possible, as the opponents claim. Now we have already noted that Nāgārjuna answers exactly the same criticism in his Vigrahavyāvartanī when he replies to an opponent's objection that if everything is empty then surely his (ie. Nāgārjuna's) words are empty and hence his teaching meaningless, by maintaining that:-

"... if there is the self existence of good dharmas, while not being related to something else, there would be no state of a spiritual way of life. There would be neither vice nor virtue, and worldly practical activities would not be possible". (44)

In other words it is precisely because all dharmas, and particularly the concepts of Buddhist Dharma, are empty of own-being that they are efficient, and since they are efficient they have the capacity to lead towards liberation. This is in total conformity with MMK, XXIV.8, so it does appear that Bhāvaviveka's attempt at exegesis has a basis in the writings of his master. It is surprising therefore that Bhāvaviveka's contemporary, the Prāsaṅgika Buddhapālita, and his later follower Candrakīrti, should both choose to disregard the objections of Kumārila et.al. dismissing:-

"such controversies as symptomatic of obsession (grāha) and themselves retain a non-committed attitude" (45)

towards ontology and epistemology. On such evidence it is not surprising therefore to hear E. Conze say of the school of Bhāvaviveka, the Madhyamaka-Svātantrika, that they:-

"... have upheld the well-nigh incredible thesis that in Madhyamaka logic valid positive statements can be made." (46)

Again Murti tells us that the Svātantrikas are:

"... against the correct standpoint of the Madhyamaka". (47)

Now the second objection here is quite clearly incorrect as we have seen by reference to Nāgārjuna's own works. Conze's statement is more complex, since it is coloured by an implicit assumption that the interpretation of the Prāsaṅgika, and particularly Candrakīrti, is the correct understanding of Nāgārjuna's position. Now the Prāsaṅgikas make a distinct and radical separation between the two truths.

In their writings they emphasise the fundamental contradiction between the absolute and human understanding and consequently stress the notion, found in Nāgārjuna that paramārtha completely transcends thought and language. Bhāvaviveka does not disagree here but since in this form the doctrine is open to the previously mentioned criticism of Kumārila, he modifies it somewhat.

The most sympathetic work of exegesis on Bhāvaviveka has been carried out relatively recently and mostly by Japanese scholars. One of

their number, Kajiyama observes:-

"Although yearning for the absolute truth is naturally accompanied by negation of the relative and conditioned knowledge ... a question should in this context be reflected upon: that is, whether the system of the relative knowledge can be, so far as the phenomenal world is concerned, recognized as valid or not, though it is always delusive from the absolute point of view. This very problem seems to have been a fork which divided ... the Madhyamaka itself into the Prāsaṅgika and the Svātantrika". (48)

Bhāvaviveka takes the view that relative knowledge does have value and is efficient with respect to the Buddhist path. To avoid the radical disjunction between the two truths characteristic of the Prāsaṅgikas he makes a distinction between two forms of the conventional (saṃvṛti); the real (tathya) and the erroneous (mithyā). In the Prajñāpradīpa (49) he tells us that while water may be said to be real (tathya) from the conventional point of view, the water in a mirage is not so and is in fact false (mithyā) from the same point of view. He bases such an opinion on Nāgārjuna's statement that "everything is so, or not so" (50). By making this point Bhāvaviveka succeeds to a certain extent in deflecting the criticism of Kumārila - the Buddhists do accept a conception of falsehood, but in a more particular sense than that used by their opponents. Something is false (mithyā) if it does not exist from the conventional (saṃvṛti) sense; such as water in a mirage, or the horns of a hare.

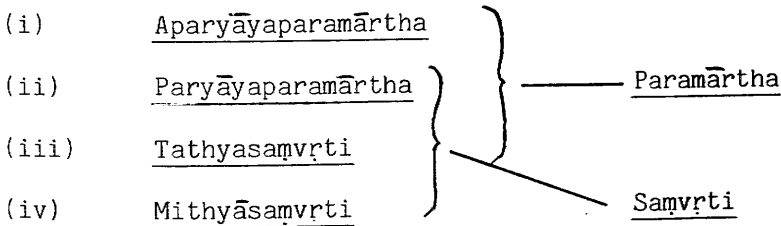
Bhāvaviveka does not stop here - he also allows that ultimate truth (paramārtha) may be similarly divided into an ultimate truth which may be inferred (paryāyaparamārtha) and one which is beyond inference (aparyāyaparamārtha).

Iida says:-

"Bhāvaviveka grades ultimate reality into two kinds, ie supra-mundane ultimate reality and mundane ultimate reality. The former has no attributes (nirlakṣaṇa) and is inexpressible. However the words and deeds of the ārya who has some experience of paramārtha differ from those of worldlings ... In other words, the words and deeds of the ārya based on ultimate reality should be pure and true knowledge of the world (tathya-saṃvṛti-jñāna)." (51)

This does not imply that for Bhāvaviveka the expression of truth by an ārya is the highest of truths since he still admits the inexpressible paramārtha of the Prāsāngikas. In his Madhyamakārthasaṃgraha (52) he in fact states that the truth formulations of the Hīnayāna and the heretical systems both belong to the pariyāyaparamārtha which gives the impression that he considers all spoken truth to be of a provisional nature.

The most important aspect of his system however is his linking of tathya-saṃvṛti with pariyāyaparamārtha. The following chart shows clearly what Bhāvaviveka intends.



The tathya-saṃvṛti provides the connecting link between the two truths. This is the connecting link which the Prāsāngikas do not possess; which leaves them open to the criticisms of the likes of Kumārila.

To fully appreciate this particular point though we must look at something Bhāvaviveka says in his Madhyamakahrdayakārikā. In this text the real, conventional knowledge, or true knowledge of the world (tathyaśaṃvṛtijñāna) is said to "correspond to the direction of the real object (bhūtārthapravivekāṅguṇyatā), MHK.III-7c-d." (53) This strongly indicates the fact that, for Bhāvaviveka, a real world does exist which provides the basis for both enlightened and unenlightened points of views; a position, which we have already found in the Maitreya chapter of the Pañcaviṃśatikasāhasrikāprajñāparāmitāsūtra, and implicitly in Nāgārjuna. It is Candrakīrti and the other Prāsaṅgikas, then, who somehow seem out of **step** with mainstream Mahāyāna thought. . Because they maintain a strict adherence to an inexpressible absolute (paramārtha), while at the same time rejecting the conventional (śaṃvṛti) absolutely, it seems as though the mid-term which links the two together is absent from their system, exposing them to criticism. This is the result of remorselessly pushing the logico-linguistic transcendality of paramārtha over śaṃvṛti to its limit, and leads to a seeming rejection of the Buddhist notion of reality (tattva) which is the basis of the two points of view. If we cast our minds back to our prior discussion of logic in Chapter Two this again is the reason why the Prāsaṅgikas are forced into total negation (prasajyapratīṣedha) while Bhāvaviveka's negations take the partial form (paryudāsapratīṣedha).

If we now turn back to Conze's astonishment that Bhāvaviveka was able to make positive statements we can see more clearly his partisan view. Since he follows Candrakīrti in his interpretation of the Madhyamaka he will not accept the paryāyaparamārtha of Bhāvaviveka even though

Bhāvaviveka admits that this is only a provisional stage on the way to aparyāyaparamārtha. This attitude incidentally is also at the root of Conze's contention that the Maitreya chapter of the Prajñāpāramitā is a later interpolation - he follows the interpretations of a 7th century AD writer!

Tsong-kha-pa on the other hand was a Svātantrika-Madhyamaka and bases his interpretation of the Maitreya chapter on the work of Bhāvaviveka. This chapter, together with the rest of the Prajñāpāramitā literature, therefore, has a direct meaning (nītārtha). At last we are able to fully assess the content of the nītārtha/neyārtha distinction and clearly relate it to the two truth doctrine, since Bhāvaviveka provides the key to do so. It is not quite the case, as some scholars have insisted and as we have already noted in the previous chapter, that nītārtha and neyārtha are respectively synonymous with paramārtha and saṃvṛtisatyas. The point that Bhāvaviveka makes is that it is the ultimate truth which can be inferred (paryāyaparamārtha) which must equate with statements of direct meaning (nītārtha) while the truth which is in conformity with real conventional knowledge (tathyasamvṛti) is of an indirect meaning. Such a distinction allows for falsehood or totally untrue statements in the shape of the false conventional knowledge (mithyāsamvṛti), while still allowing that at the highest level (aparyāyaparamārtha) the true nature of things is inexpressible (anabhilāpya). The relationship between the nītārtha/neyārtha formulation and the two truth doctrine is therefore more complex than some scholars have believed and this error on their part has led, in some cases, to a presentation of Mahāyāna Buddhist doctrine

which is open to the objections of people taking the stance similar to that of Kumārīla.

Conze and Iida actually record a conversation with a Tibetan lama, Dezhung Rinpoche, who repeats Bhāvaviveka's interpretation. (54)

Briefly, he equates the understanding of ordinary people (prthagjanā) with conventional truth (saṃvṛti) and that of the āryas with the ultimate truth (paramārtha). However for the ārya full understanding or paramārtha only comes with Buddhahood. An ārya between the first stage (bhūmi) of a Bodhisattva and Buddhahood itself has recourse to a subsidiary level of paramārtha (rnam-graṅs-pa'i don-dam bden pa ie. pariyāyaparamārtha). Dezhung Rinpoche goes on to say that the scriptures therefore must be understood by people of differing levels of attainment in three separate ways:-

- (i) By hearing about them (śrutamayī) one grasps their general sense
- (ii) By thinking about them (cintāmayī) one comes to a greater understanding of their significance
- (iii) By meditating on them (bhāvanāmāyī) one has direct experience face to face (mñon-sum-gyi-rtogs-par 'gyur).

This all fits quite clearly with Nāgārjuna's teaching of MMK.XXIV.10 where paramārtha is said to have its basis in saṃvṛti. Though an enlightened person knows that the summum bonum of the Buddhist path lies beyond conceptual thought and is "silent", to lead others to enlightenment he promulgates a teaching (neyārtha) which when inspected deeply (nītārtha) leads to its own abandonment. This is the ultimate paradox of the Buddhist Dharma.

While the neyārtha/nītārtha distinction therefore refers to differing levels of attainment with respect to the promulgation (Dharma), the two truth distinction refers to differing levels of understanding of reality (tattva). Samvṛti and paramārtha both have efficiency through their reference to an ontological basis, ie. tattva. Now, we have seen that Tsong-kha-pa accepts the Maitreya chapter as the closest approximation to ultimate truth (pariyāyaparamārtha = nītārtha) possible through language. He therefore endorses the three aspect doctrine as the correct interpretation of the two truth notion of Nāgārjuna. We have shown independently that this is so. Tsong-kha-pa is unhappy however to identify this doctrine with the three nature (trisvabhāva) teaching of the Yogācāra even though for them, as for Tsong-kha-pa, the Sādhinirmocanaśūtra is āgama and seems to deal with just such a doctrine. Funnily enough Conze is less dogmatic on this point, allowing that there may be a close correlation between the three aspects of the Maitreya chapter and the trisvabhāva of the Yogācāra since the chapter in question concerns:

"... a doctrine of the three svabhāvas which may or may not, be identical with the Yogācārin division into parikalpita, paratantra and pariniṣpanna". (55)

Now is the time to examine the doctrine of three natures and to determine whether Tsong-kha-pa is right in maintaining a distinction between the Madhyamaka and the Yogācāra on this matter. As we have already noted, the notion of three natures (trisvabhāva) finds scriptural authority in the Sādhinirmocanaśūtra and plays a major role in the Lankāvatārasūtra. It is however in the writings of Vasubandhu and Asaṅga that we find it treated in a systematic manner.

Before examining the writings of these authors however, it will be worthwhile to pause to consider the origin of the Yogācāra. The tradition retold by the Tibetan doxographer Bu-ston is that Asaṅga, while residing in the Tuṣita heaven, had five treatises revealed to him by the Bodhisattva Maitreya, which he promptly wrote down on his return to earth. According to this account Maitreya is the mythological founder of the Yogācāra, though to Asaṅga must go the credit for composing the seminal texts. Recently however certain authors, and particularly H. Hi⁽⁵⁶⁾ and G. Tucci⁽⁵⁷⁾ have suggested that rather than being a mythological character, Maitreya was in fact an historical personage and the true founder of the school. Since they bring no true historical evidence to bear in their discussions, reaching conclusions on the basis that since the writings generally ascribed to Asaṅga are heterogeneous and consequently it would be convenient to posit another author besides Asaṅga, the theory of the historicity of Maitreya is not proven. Obermiller⁽⁵⁸⁾ on the other hand is of the opinion that Asaṅga is the author of the works ascribed to him, the differences in doctrine presented representing his need to treat different topics for different classes of readership. We have already seen that the same is true of Nāgārjuna. It is therefore much more likely that the real reason for associating these particular works with the name of Maitreya is the heavenly sanction they would receive from such a connection.

More importantly for us is another connection. We have seen that the Maitreya chapter of the Prajñāpāramitā contains one of the earliest explicit formulations of the three aspect doctrine. Now one of the fundamental characteristics of the Yogācāra is its own exposition

of exactly such a doctrine. Would it not therefore be quite feasible to suggest, assuming this section to be earlier than the Yogācāra, that the connection with Maitreya in the case of some of Asaṅga's works is not with any heavenly Bodhisattva but rather with the character in the Prajñāpāramita? Is it not possible that the development of such a doctrine by the Buddha, based on Maitreya's promptings, strongly linked Maitreya's name with the trīsvabhāva teaching in the sense that Buddhist tradition considers him the originator of its exposition?

The three nature (trīsvabhāva) doctrine of the Yogācāra concerns the imagined nature (parikalpitasvabhāva), the dependent nature (paratantrasvabhāva), and the accomplished nature (pariṇiṣpannasvabhāva) a doctrine which, for Asaṅga ⁽⁵⁹⁾, derives its scriptural authority through the Vaipulyasūtra, the Abhidharmasūtra and the Ghanavyūha. It receives more thorough treatment however in the Bodhisattvabhūmi, the Mahāyānasamgraha, and the Madhyāntavibhaṅga of Asaṅga, and the Trīsvabhāvanirdeśa and the Triṃśikā both ascribed to Vasubandhu.

With regard to these natures then Asaṅga gives some synonymns.

"The imagined, the dependent and the accomplished are taught respectively to be objects (artha), the imagination of the unreal (abhūtaparikalpa) and the non-existence of duality (dvayābhāva). "(60)

Sthiramati, commenting on this stanza, goes on to say that the imagined (parikalpita) nature represents objects (artha) in so far as they are constructed through the processes of thought, appearing as self-existent entities (svabhāva). Once such a process has been accomplished

a subject/object dichotomy (grāhya-grāhaka) is set up which leads to the belief in self and objects as independent existents. It should be noted at this point that such a position does not in itself entail Sthiramati and, hence by implication, Asaṅga is putting forward an idealistic posture since this would assume that they wish to go further and state that external objects are caused by subjective thought processes. This is not so. All they are saying is that the self and objects as imagined (parikalpita) are in fact devoid of any self existence or own being. The third nature, the accomplished (pariniṣpanna) therefore is the total non-existence of those factors which lead to the false view of things entailed by the first. Pariniṣpanna must in consequence be an absence of parikalpita, and since the latter establishes the subject/object dichotomy, pariniṣpanna is said to be devoid of this duality (dvayābhāva).

All this is quite consistent with doctrines we have already noted in connection with the works of Nāgārjuna and earlier writers. For him the unenlightened mind, through thought construction (vikalpa), creates false dichotomies (prapañca) leading to the belief in a world constructed of building blocks (dharma) ^{possessing} containing own-being (svabhāva). The enlightened mind however is empty (śūnya) of such concepts and the task of someone on the Buddhist path is an attempt to accomplish the enlightened state. The conclusion of the path therefore coincides with the awakening of gnosis (prajñā) which is a non-dual knowledge (advaya-jñāna). We have noted that all previous writers have acknowledged, albeit implicitly, a reality (tattva) which gives efficaciousness to these two forms of knowledge. We may now correlate what we have so far discussed before going to look at the second or dependent

nature (paratantrasvabhāva) of the Yogācāra. For Nāgārjuna the unenlightened world view coincides with the conventional truth (saṃvṛtisatya) which he equates with samsāra. This is quite clearly the first or imagined nature (parikalpita) of the Yogācāra. Similarly for Nāgārjuna the enlightened world view is the ultimate truth (paramārtha), a non-dual gnosis which equates perfectly with the third or accomplished nature (pariṇiṣpannasvabhāva) of the Yogācāra. This is nirvāṇa. Now, again consistent with Nāgārjuna's position, nirvāṇa and samsāra are not two separate ontological realms of existence. He says there is no difference between the two, and we have suggested the reason for this is that they both represent epistemic orientations towards one reality (tattva).

In the above quoted stanza of Asaṅga it seems the same position is being adopted. For him the second nature (paratantra) is also called the imagination of the unreal (abhūtapari-kalpa). To understand this notion we must quote Asaṅga again.

"The imagination of the unreal (abhūtaparikalpa) exists. There is no duality (dvayaṃ) in it. There is emptiness (śūnyatā) and even in this there is that." (61)

Now, commenting on this curious stanza, Kochumuttam asserts that there are four clear statements contained in it.

- "(i) an assertion of the imagination of the unreal (abhūtapari-kalpo'sti)
- (ii) a negation of duality (dvayam tatra na vidyate)
- * (iv) an assertion of the co-existence of the imagination of the unreal (abhūtaparikalpa) and the emptiness (śūnyatā) (tasyam api sa vidyate). (62)"
- * (iii) an assertion of emptiness (śūnyatā vidyate tu atra)

This is a clear indication that for Asanga the dependent nature (paratantra) does exist (asti) though it is clear that its existence precludes an implication of duality (dvayaṃ). It is in fact empty (śūnya) of such a dichotomy. This is the true sense of emptiness (śūnyatā) in the Yogācāra system.

Here abhūtaparikalpa (=paratantra) is pivotal. It is an uncontaminated vision of things and as such is identical to the accomplished nature (pariniṣpanna). In such a condition all forms of dualistic thought are uprooted and one sees things as they are (yathābhūtam). When thought construction appears there is the imagined nature (parikalpita). This interprets reality as external to self and composed of substantial entities (dharmasvabhāva). In reality things are empty (śūnya) of any imputed own-being (svabhāva).

All of this is quite consistent with our interpretation of Nāgārjuna.

This doctrine is reiterated in the works of Vasubandhu. In the Trisvabhāvanirdeśa we are told:

"That which is known as the dependent (paratantra) depends on causal conditions. The form in which it appears is the imagined (kalpitaḥ) for it is merely an imagination. The perpetual absence of the form in which it (ie. paratantra) appears is to be understood as the accomplished nature (pariniṣpanna) for it is never otherwise". (63)

Similarly in the Triṃśikā Vasubandhu says:

"The accomplished (pariniṣpanna) is the latter's (ie. paratantra) perpetual devoidness of the former (ie. parikalpita)". (64)

In an interesting article on the Paratantrasvabhāva, N. Aramaki (65) has found a number of meanings of this concept as presented by Asaṅga in his Mahāyānasamgraha. Among such meanings the most important from our point of view is that it is (i) the base for the appearance of all entities (sarvadharmapratibhāṣāśraya), (ii) dependent origination (pratītyasamutpāda) and (iii) pertaining to suffering and pertaining to cleansing (samklésāṃśiko vyavadānāṃśikaś ca). (66)

At the moment we will postpone an examination of position (ii), ie. the identity of pratītyasamutpāda and paratantra, until the next chapter which deal with the former concept in some detail. Let us now clarify positions (i) and (iii). We note that paratantra is referred to as both a base (āśraya) for the appearance of things, and that state which gives coherence to the twin notions of bondage and release. In fact positions (i) and (iii) are mutually interconnected and may be explained with reference to what has already been said about the three-natures

Paratantra may, in a sense, be considered under two aspects. In its first it is contaminated by imagination with the result that a world of appearance (pratibhāṣa) is constructed. Appearances are imputed to possess own-being or substantiality when from the ultimate point of view they do not exist. We have seen that appearances cannot come into being without some indeterminate form of existence at their basis. This is why paratantra in its imagined aspect is called the base (āśraya) for the appearance of all entities. Since one is

trapped by imagination into a false view of things leading to suffering paratantra may also be said to pertain to suffering. Looked at in its second aspect, in which it is uncontaminated by the above processes, paratantra is identical to the accomplished nature (pariniṣpannasvabhāva). This may then be referred to as the aspect pertaining to cleansing.

Asanga puts these notions in the following manner:-

"The dependent (paratantra) is on occasion the dependent, on occasion the same is the imagined; and on occasion the same as the accomplished". (69)

and "Samsāra is referred to the dependent nature in its aspect of defilement. Nirvāṇa referred to the same in its aspect of purity". (70)

Expanding, paratantra may in a sense be held as the basis for the arising of all the pairs of concepts which define the distinction between enlightenment and unenlightenment, be they nirvāṇa/samsāra, purity/defilement, paramārtha/saṃvṛti, bliss/suffering, self/non-self etc. (71) As Sthiramati has pointed out, it is impossible to accept something as relative or absolute without recourse to an underlying substance. (72) The only stipulation we need to make is that this basis (āśraya) must not be assumed to have equality of relationship with both elements of the pair. Taking nirvāṇa/samsāra as an example it is clear that samsāra represents a falling away from the basis; a failure to understand it as it is. Nirvāṇa on the other hand is complete identification with the basis since objectivity and subjectivity do not exist at this point. The first aspect then reflects disunity in a way that the second does not.

We may conclude this chapter by noting a surprising similarity of outlook shared by the Yogācāra and Madhyamaka. It has been generally concluded that the two systems are not in harmony, particularly over their respective three-nature and two-truth formulations. It is hoped that the above examination has demonstrated that this is not the case. In Nagarjuna's system we have shown that the two truths implicitly suggest the existence of an ontologically indeterminate existence realm. In consequence Nāgārjuna is saved from a charge of nihilism.

The mechanics of the Yogācāra three-nature doctrine precisely mirrors this, the only difference being that the mid-term (if we may refer to it so) is explicitly included. This makes no difference on close examination, though it has the tendency to open the Yogācāra to the unjustifiable charge of holding to a positive depiction of reality.

Notes

- 1 TRV Murti - The Central Philosophy of Buddhism p 244
 - 2 cf entries :- Samvrtisatya and Paramārthasatya in, E. Conze
Materials for a Dictionary of Prajñāpāramitā . Tokyo (1973)
 - 3 Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā fol 486
ed N. Dutt Calcutta Oriental Series, No 28. London (1934)
(quoted in E. Conze : The Ontology of Prajñāpāramitā, p 126
in Philosophy East & West Vol III p 117-129)
 - 4 E. Conze ibid p 122-4
 - 5 J. Masuda, ed. Saptaśatikā, Journal of the Taisho University
1930, Vols 6-7, part 2, p221
 - 6 Śatasāhasrikā pp 118-119 quoted by Conze. op. cit. p 122
 - 7 Maitreya Chapter IV 43-45. (MC)
in E. Conze & S. Iida: "Maitreya's Questions in the Prajñāpāramitā.
Mélanges D'Indianisme à la Mémoire de Louis Renou p 229-242
- yan Maitreya parikalpitaṃ rūpaṃ idaṃ adṛavyaṃ
drastavyaṃ. Yad vikalpitaṃ rūpaṃ idaṃ vikalpitaṃ rūpaṃ
sadravyatāṃ upādāya sadṛavyaṃ draṣṭavyaṃ na tu
svatantra-vṛttitaḥ. Yad dharmatā rūpaṃ tan naivādravyaṃ
na sadṛavyaṃ paramārtha prabhāvitaṃ draṣṭavyaṃ
- 8 ibid I.1- II.6
atha khalu Maitreya bodhisattvo mahāsattvo Bhagavantam etad
avocat : yadi Bhagavann abhāvōsvabhāvāḥ sarvadharmās tadā
Bhagavan prajñāpāramitāyāṃ caratā bodhisattvena mahāsattvena
bodhisattva śikṣāyāṃ śikṣitu kāmēna yāvad rūpe tāvad
Buddhadharmeṣu kathāṃ śikṣitavyaṃ?
evam ukte Bhagavān... evam aha ... nāmamātrakaṃ
rūpaṃ iti śikṣitavyaṃ ... nāmamātr am yāvad buddhadharma
iti śikṣitavyaṃ
 - 9 cf S. Iida : Reason & Emptiness Tokyo (1980) p 259-269
 - 10 MC III 26
loko samketa vyavahārato Maitreya rūpaṃ asti, na tu
paramārthato
 - 11 Sāṅghinirmocanaśūtra vii 25-27

- 12 MC.IV.39
...yā Maitreya tasmin saṃskāranimitte vastuni rūpamiti
nāmasamjñā samkeṭa prajñaptivyavahāran niśritya rūpa
svabhāvatayā parikalpanā idam parikalpitam rūpaṃ
- 13 MC.IV.40
yā punas tasya saṃskāranimittasya vastuno vikalpamātra
dharmatāyām avasthānatā vikalpa pratītya abhilapanatā
tatra idam nāmasamjñāsamkeṭaprajñaptivyavāharo rūpamiti
- 14 Monadology 14
quoted in Leibniz Philosophical Writings ed G.H.R. Parkinson
London 1973 p.180
- 15 Quoted in S. Iida op cit p 267
- 16 MC.IV.41
yā utpādād vā tathāgatānām anutpādād va sthitaiveyam
dharmānām dharmatā dharmasthititā dharmadhātur yat tēna
parikalpitarupeṇa tasya vikalpita rūpasya nityaṃ nityakālaṃ
dhruvan dhruvakālaṃ niḥsvabhāvatā dharmā nairātmyan
tathatā bhūtakoṭir idam dharmatā rūpaṃ
- 17 Saṅdhinirmocana.vi.6
- 18 MC.IV.44
yad vikalpitam rūpaṃ idam vikalpitam rūpitam sadravyam
upādāya sadravyam draṣṭavyam na tu svatantra vṛttaḥ
- 19 E. Obermiller. The Doctrine of Prajñāpāramitā p 97-98
- 20 in E. Conze & S Iida op cit p 233
- 21 Tsong-kha-pa: Legs-bshad snying-po
Tokyo reprint 150, 203, 4ff
- 22 MMK XXIV 8
dve satye samupāsṛitya buddhānām dharmadesanā
lokasamvṛtisatyam ca satyam ca paramārthataḥ
- 23 MMK XXIV 9
- 24 MMK XXIV 7
atra brumaḥ sūnyatāyam na tvam vetsyi prayojanam
sūnyatām sūnyatārtham ca tata evaṃ vihanyase
- 25 MMK XXIV 16
svabhāvādyadi bhāvanām sadbhāvamanupaśyasi
ahetupratyayān bhāvaṃstvamevaṃ sati paśyasi

- 26 MMK XXIV 19
apratītyasamutpanno dharmah kaścinna vidyate
yasmāttasmādaśūnyo hi dharmah kaścinna vidyate
- 27 M II 75
Avuso nissayabhāvena cakkhuppasādañca ārammaṇabhāvena
catusamuṭṭhānikarūpe ca paṭicca cakkhuvihānaṃ nāma uppajjati
Tiṇṇaṃ saṅgati phasso ti tesam tiṇṇaṃ saṅgatiyā phasso nāma
uppajjati
- 28 MMK XXIV 10
vyavahāraṇaśritya paramārtho na deśyate
paramārthamaṇāgamyā nirvāṇaṃ nādhigamyate
- 29 MMK XXV 19-20
na saṃsārasya nirvāṇatkiṃ cidasti viśeṣaṇaṃ
na nirvāṇasya saṃsāratkiṃ cidasti viśeṣaṇaṃ
nirvāṇasya ca ya koṭih saṃsārasya ca
na tayorantaraṃ kiṃ citsusūkṣmamapi vidyate
- 30 Prasannapadā p 492 l.10-12
Commenting on MMK . XXIV 8
- 31 M. Sprung: The Mādhyamika Doctrine of Two Realities as Metaphysic.
in M. Sprung (ed): The Problem of Two Truths
in Buddhism & Vedānta. Dordrecht (1973) p 41
- 32 MMK XIII 1
tanmṛṣā moṣadharmā yadbhagavānityabhāṣata
sarve ca moṣadharmāṇaḥ saṃskārāstena te mṛṣā
- 33 Bhikkhu Nānanda : Concept and Reality in Early Buddhist Thought
Kandy (1971) p 40
- 34 MMK XIII 8
śūnyatā sarvadr̥ṣṭināṃ proktā niḥsaraṇaṃ jinaiḥ
yeṣāṃ tu śūnyatādr̥ṣṭistānasādhyān babhāṣire
- 35 M. Sprung op cit p 43
- 36 MMK XVIII 2
ātmanyasati cātmiyaṃ kuta eva bhaviṣyati
nirmamo nirahaṃkāraḥ śamādātmatmanīnayoḥ
- 37 MMK XVIII 7

- 38 MMK XVIII 8
- 39 MMK XVIII 9
aparapratyayam śantaṃ prapañcairaprapañcitam
nirvikalpamanānārthametattattvasya lakṣaṇam
- 40 Pitāputrasamāgamasūtra Peking Tibetan Tripiṭaka Vol 23
p215-2 quoted by A. Wayman: Contributions to the Mādhyamika
School of Buddhism, in Journal of the American Oriental Society
Vol 89 (1969) p 149
etāvaca caiva jñeyaṃ yad uta saṃvṛtiḥ paramārthāś ca ...
tatra saṃvṛtir lokapracāratas tathāgatena drṣṭa yaḥ
punaḥ paramārthaḥ so' nabhilāpyaḥ anājñeya aparijñeyaḥ...
yāvaṇ na lābho nālābho na sukhaṃ na duḥkham na yaśo
nāyaśo na rūpaṃ narūpaṃ ityādi
- 41 Chr Lindtner : Atīśa's Introduction to the Two Truths. in
Journal of Indian Philosophy (1981) Vol 9 p 162
- 42 Kumārila : Śloka-vārttika; Nirālambanavāda Section v 6-10. cf.
Kumārila : Mīmāṃsā-śloka-vārttika Rama Shastri Tailanga Manavalli
(ed) Benares (1898)
- 43 cf Y. Kajiyama : Bhāvaviveka, Sthiramati and Dharmapāla. p 200
in Beiträge zur Geistesgeschichte Indiens : Festschrift für
E. Frauwallner Wein (1968) p 193-203
- 44 VV.54-55
ātha na pratītya kiṃ cit svabhāva utpadyate sa kusalaṇām
dharmāṇām evaṃ syād vāso na brahmacaryasya
nādharmo dharmo vā saṃvyavahārāś calaukikā na syuḥ
- 45 Lindtner op cit p 163
- 46 E. Conze : Buddhist Thought in India. Ann Arbor (1967) p 239
- 47 T.R.V. Murti: A Survey of Buddhism. Bangalore (1966) p 346
- 48 Y. Kajiyama : Bhāvaviveka and the Prāsāṅgika School. p 291
in Nava-Nalanda Mahavihara Research Publication Vol 1 (no date)
- 49 Dbu ma' i rtsa ba'i 'grel pa shes rab sgron ma (Prajñāpradīpa-
mūlamadhyamaka vṛtti) Tohoku 3853
Tib, ed. M. Walleser : Prajñāpradīpa (incomplete) Bibliotheca
Indica, New Series, 1396, Calcutta (1914)
- 50 MMK XVIII 8a
sarvam tathyam na vā tathyam
- 51 S. Iida: An Introduction to Svātantrika-Mādhyamaka. PhD Thesis.
University of Wisconsin (1968) p 244 no 16
- 52 cf N. Katz : An Appraisal of the Svātantrika-Prāsāṅgika Debates.
p 257 in Philosophy East & West Vol 26 (1976) p 253-267

- 53 quoted in S. Iida : The Nature of Saṃvṛti and the Relationship of Paramārtha to it in Svātantrika-Madhyamaka. in M. Sprung (ed) Two Truths ... op.cit.
- 54 cf E. Conze & S. Iida op cit p 231
- 55 ibid p 233
- 56 H. Ui: Maitreya as an Historical Personage; in Indian Studies in Honour of Charles Rockwell Lanman (various authors) Cambridge, Mass (1929)
- 57 G. Tucci : On Some Aspects of the Doctrines of Maitreya(nātha) and Asaṅga Calcutta (1930)
- 58 E. Obermiller : The Sublime Science of the Great Vehicle to Salvation, in Acta Orientalia Vol IX (1933) p 81-306
- 59 Asaṅga: Mahāyānasamgraha Ch II v 26ff cf. É. Lamotte: La Somme du Grand Véhicule 2 vols Louvain (1938) p 120ff
- 60 Madhyāntavibhaṅga 1.6 (MV)
kalpitaḥ paratantraśca pariniṣpanna eva ca
arthād abhūtakalpācca dvayaabhāvācca kathyate
cf Madhyāntavibhāgasūtrabhāṣyatīkā of Sthiramati
Part 1 ed V. Bhattacharya & G. Tucci London (1932) p 19
- 61 MV.1.2
Abhūtaparikalpo 'sti dvayam tatra na vidyate
sūnyatā vidyate tu atra tasyām api sa vidyate
ibid p 9
- 62 T. Kochumuttam : Vasubandhu the Yogacarin.PhD Thesis (University of Lancaster) 1978 p 37
- 63 Trisvabhāvanirdeśa (TSN) v 2-3
yaḥ khyāti paratanthro'sah yathā khyāti sa kalpitaḥ
pratyaya adhīna vṛttitvāt kalpanā mātra bhāvataḥ
tasya khyatur yathā akhyānam yā sadā avidyāmanatā
jñeyāḥ sa pariniṣpanna svabhāvo 'nanyathātvataḥ
cf Trisvabhāvanirdeśa of Vasubandhu ed by S. Mukhopadhyaya Calcutta (1939) p 1
- 64 Triṃś.21b
niṣpannas tasya purveṇa sadā rahitatā tu ya
cf Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi: trad. L. de la Vallée Poussin. Paris (1928) p 527
- 65 N. Aramaki : Paratantrasvabhāva (I), a Diagrammatic Account. in Journal of Indian & Buddhist Studies vol XV (1967) p 955-41

66 ibid p 954

69 Mahāyānasamgraha (MS) II.17

g'zan gyi bdañ gi ño bo ñid ni rnam grañs kyis na g'zan
gyidbañ ño / rnam grañs kyis na de ñid kun brtags paḥo/
rnams grañs kyis na de ñid yoñs su grub paḥo/

70 Mahāyānasamgraha (MS) IX i

de la hkhor ba ni g'zan gyi dbañ gi ño bo ñid de kun nas
ñon moñs pañi char gtogs paḥo / mya nan las ḥdas pa ni de
ñid rnam par byañ bañi char gtogs paḥo / gnas nide ñid
gñi gañi char gtogs pa ste/ g'zan gyi dbañ gi ño bo
ñid do/

71 MS II 30

72 Triṃś. bhāṣya (ed Lévi) p 16

ataś cāyam upagamo na yuktikṣamo vijñānaṃ api
vijñeyavat saṃvṛtita eva, na paramārthataḥ iti, saṃvṛtito'py
abhāvaprasaṅgān na hi saṃvṛtir nirupādāna yujyate
cf. S. Lévi : Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi: deux traités de Vasubandhu,
Viṃśatikā et Triṃśikā Paris (1925)

Chapter Seven

The Nature of Reality

We have reiterated many times the fact that Buddhism steers a middle course between the extremes of nihilism (ucchedavāda) and eternalism (śāsvatavāda), since an adoption of either of these two positions inevitably leads to the rejection of the efficaciousness of the Buddhist path (mārga). Since the Buddhists consistently maintain such objections it is hardly surprising that, with regard to causation, a similar rejection of the extreme positions of Indeterminism (yadṛcchāvāda) and Strict Determinism (niyativāda) should be upheld. In the Nikāyas these doctrines are associated with Makkhali Gosāla and Pūraṇa Kassapa respectively, the former maintaining that neither the unenlightened nor the enlightened state has any cause (hetu), while the latter holds to the belief that the "... past, present and future is unalterable and fixed". (1) Since both of these contemporaries of the Buddha deny a positive basis on which a person can exert themselves to gain enlightenment, both of their teachings are called "teachings without a basis" (ahetuvāda) in the Nikāyas. This is because, while the Indeterminists hold that things may arise without cause or reason (adhiccasamuppanna) or in other words are entirely random, the Strict Determinists felt that all the factors in the causal process were completely determined since the beginning of time. Both doctrines consequently make nonsense of both the desire to obtain enlightenment through gradual stages, and the claim of the Buddha to have accomplished such a state in such a manner.

Since the Buddhist must hold a doctrine of causality which allows for the fact of enlightened and unenlightened states he must be more flexible than his two opponents' positions allow.

The Buddhist doctrine of arising in dependence or dependent origination (paṭiccasamuppāda; Sanskrit = pratītyasamutpāda) possesses the above mentioned adaptability since as we shall see it provides both a picture of the world based on causally conditioned entities and allows for the successful operation of the Buddhist path. The first point which we must make clear however is the status of dependent origination. Since it does, as we have already noticed, help to explain the understanding of the deluded and the wise, is it purely subjective? Jayatilleke ⁽²⁾ certainly does not think that this is so, holding that Buddhist scripture itself assigns an objective status to causality. The sūtra itself says:-

"Causation (paṭiccasamuppādo) is said [to have the characteristics of] objectivity (tathatā), necessity, invariability and conditionality." (3)

It is interesting to note in passing that Jayatilleke gives "objectivity" as his translation for the term tathatā, a term to which we will refer again in due course. We shall be in a better position to judge whether or not this is a justifiable translation shortly, but at least it is clear from this scriptural excerpt that, even in the Nikāyas, tathatā is given as a synonym for causation or, as we shall normally translate the term, "dependent origination" (paṭiccasamuppāda).

Other sections of the Nikāyas clearly confirm the fact that dependent origination is not an entirely subjective phenomenon, since it is said to exist independently of its cognition.

"What is dependent origination? On account of birth arises decay and death. Whether Tathāgatas arise or not, this element (dhātu) exists as the fixed nature of things (dhammatthitā), the normal order of things (dhammaniyāmā) or conditionality (idappaccayā). This the Tathagata discovers and comprehends and having comprehended and discovered it, he points it out, teaches it, lays it down, establishes, reveals, analyses, clarifies it and says "look!" " (4)

Even if Buddhas do not exist and dependent origination is not discovered, this process remains the key principle which keeps the world in being. This certainly does not indicate a subjectively idealistic world picture since the process appears to remain in force whether it is cognised or not. We may note in passing again, that dependent origination seems to be being considered as synonymous with the element (dhātu) about which we shall say more later.

What we can say at this point in our examination of the concept paṭiccasamuppāda in the Nikāyas is, firstly that there is no evidence to suggest that the causal process referred to is subjective - this supports Jayatilleke; rather it seems far more likely that the concept of paṭiccasamuppāda is conjoined ^{with} an ontologically existing sphere. Secondly the central Buddhist notions of tathatā and dhātu are intimately connected with it. With regard to the second point, it does seem likely that, through association, the concept of dependent origination must itself be a central Buddhist doctrine.

Such an idea is confirmed by the evidence. One of the most famous stanzas of the Nikāyas equates the central content of the Buddhist teaching (dharma) with the realisation of the fact of dependent origination:

"He who sees dependent origination sees the Buddhist teaching. He who sees the Buddhist teaching sees [the nature of] dependent origination." (5)

The nature of existence, as understood from the point of view of dependent origination (paṭiccasamuppāda), is therefore the discovery of the Buddha which, with the Four Noble Truths, marks him out as an enlightened being. The explication of this discovery provides the substance of the Buddhist teaching. Jayatilleke confirms this impression through his assertion that some of the earliest parts of the Buddhist canon stress the centrality of the causal process, and that these particular sections remain remarkably unchanged when translated into the Mahāyāna context. (6) For instance an early verse of the Vinaya which tells us that:-

"The great recluse (mahāsamaṇo) says that the Tathāgata has spoken of the cause of things, which arise from causes and also of their cessation". (7)

is found in virtually identical form in both the Laṅkāvatārasūtra and the Āryaśālistambasūtra. (8)

While there is little doubt that the concept of paṭiccasamuppāda may be regarded as central to the Buddha's teaching, it may also

be safely said that the doctrine was developed in the course of time. In the earliest strata of the literature the concept is already prominent. The Sutta Nipāta for instance praises "the one who sees paṭiccasamuppāda", (9) but in this particular text no mention is found of the paṭiccasamuppāda formula which contains 12 members (dvādaśāṅga) that is so familiar in later writings. Even in a text as early as the Sutta Nipāta however an incipient form of this 12 membered doctrine can be discerned. Nakamura seems to be the scholar who has done the most to highlight this particular problem within the Suttanipāta. As he points out:

"There [ie. the Atthakavagga of the Suttanipāta] the theory is not set forth in a systematized way, each link (or item) in the same pattern, as in the case of the Twelve Link Dependent Origination, but rather in a crude, disorderly form which betrays its primitive character". (10)

What is of particular interest to us is the way this incipient formula begins. Before the various linkages are enumerated, the first of the classical linkages, ignorance (avijjā), is announced in the following way.

"The world (loka) is shrouded by ignorance (avijjā). On account of avarice (veviccha) and sloth (pamadā) it does not shine". (11)

Reading the metaphor, what seems to be the point here is that the incipient paṭiccasamuppāda formula has as its terminus ad quem the world (loka). Once ignorance (avijjā), the terminus a quo, is aroused the other links follow on inexorably, producing a vision of things which is not entirely in accord with how they really are.

The implication is that when ignorance is eradicated the world will appear in its pristine glory; it will "shine". Again we cannot get away from the fact that once again a doctrinal formulation containing reference to paṭiccasamuppāda strongly indicates the existence of a world (loka). In one way we must disagree with Nakamura's interpretation of this verse however. He holds that, "the term world (loka) means "human beings" collectively". (12) This seems unlikely, for such an interpretation of the verse would ultimately lead to the charge of subjective idealism against its author. *The reason for this is because,* if the term world (loka) refers solely to a subjectively human world view, then, even should such a world be capable of being cleansed of ignorance (avijjā) and its concomitants, the result would still be entirely subjective. As we have already noted, the dependent origination doctrine may not readily be interpreted subjectively since it exists whether it is discovered by a Tathāgata or not. Given this, it would seem that in the present context, the term world (loka) is not tied to a purely human realm, but rather refers to an objectively real existence realm, though it must be remembered that since it will be impossible to determine it as X or not -X, it is not objective in the conventional sense. Again, this interpretation would appear more feasible in the light of the fact that the term crops up in a context in which subtle doctrinal points are unlikely to be dominant since the Sutta nipāta is one of the most ancient Buddhist texts. In view of this, Nakamura's translation of loka appears unduly technical.

In an attempt to more clearly understand the Buddhist theory of causality, let us now turn to an examination of the fully developed

12 link version found in the Nikāyas, bearing in mind that while this represents the classical form of the doctrine, there are other formulae, buried in intermediate strata of the canon, in which the total of links do not add up to twelve. The twelve links or factors are laid down in the following section of the Majjhima Nikāya:-

"When this is that is; through the arising of this that arises, namely [1-2] Conditioned by ignorance (avidyā) are karmic formations (saṃskāra); [3] conditioned by karmic formations is consciousness (viññāna); [4] conditioned by consciousness is name and form (nāmarūpa); [5] conditioned by name and form are the six [internal] bases of consciousness (ṣaḍāyatana), the [five physical organs and the mental organ]; [6] conditioned by the six bases is contact (sparśa); [7] conditioned by contact is feeling (vedanā); [8] conditioned by feeling is thirst (trṣṇā) or desire; [9] conditioned by thirst is grasping (upādāna), [10] conditioned by grasping is existence (bhava); [11] conditioned by existence is birth (jāti); [12] conditioned by birth is old-age and death (jarāmaraṇa) and also sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair. Such is the origin (samudaya) of the whole mass of suffering (duḥkhaskandha)". (13)

The whole process therefore, from ignorance through to old-age and death is, according to this version, an explanation of the second of the four Noble Truths, since all twelve links are said to bring about the origin or arising (samudaya) of suffering (duḥkha). However as an immediate correlate to this formulation the Buddha goes on to enumerate the twelve links in a reverse order, the meaning of which is obviously equivalent to the third of the Noble Truths; the truth of the cessation of suffering (duḥkhanirodha).

"[11/12] Being born, ceasing, becoming old and dying cease ...
[1/2] Being ignorant ceasing, karmic formations cease. When this is not, that is not; This ceasing that ceases ... From the ceasing of ignorance, karmic formations cease [1/2] ...
from the ceasing of being born, old age and death cease [11/12]

and sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair do not arise ...
Such is the ceasing of this whole mass of suffering". (14)

It does appear therefore that this twelve linked dependent origination formula (dvādaśāṅgikapratītyasamutpāda) has two sequences. The first moves off from ignorance (avidyā) which conditions the next member, and so on resulting in old-age and death (jarāmarana). In such a way the origin of the world of suffering is explained. This is compatible with the second Noble Truth. The reversal sequence, however, shows the means by which suffering can be eradicated. By the cessation of ignorance (avidyā) the other eleven factors are incapable of arising. This is basically compatible with the third of the Noble Truths. In fact there are sections of the Nikāyas in which the Buddha states that the doctrines of suffering (duḥkha) and its cessation (nirodha) are the heart of the teaching.

"Formerly, and now also, bhikkhus, it is just suffering and the cessation of suffering that I proclaim". (15)

This seems to be reiterated in the Buddha's instructions to Udāyin in which there is an implicit linkage between the two sequences of the pratītyasamutpāda formula (ie. forward and reverse), and the Buddhist Dharma.

"Wherefore, Udāyin, let be the past, let be the future. I will teach you Dharma. When this is, that is; this arising, that arises. When this is not, that is not; this ceasing, that ceases." (16)

Now on the connection between the Four Noble Truths and Dependent

Origination, Lamotte has written an illuminating article. (17)

He notes the connection between the forward and reversal sequence of pratītyasamutpāda with the second and third truths respectively.

On the four truths he comments:-

"... in dealing with the four Āryasatyas, the Aṅguttara (I. pp 176-177) reproduces, for the first and fourth, the wording of the Sermon of Vārāṇasī, but defines the second by stating the Pratītyasamutpāda in direct order, and the third by the Pratītyasamutpāda in inverse order. Under such conditions, it is difficult to see how one could acquire knowledge of the four Noble Truths without discovering through so doing the law of Conditioned Co-production and vice-versa." (18)

From the fact that the texts make a strong connection between the doctrines of the Four Noble Truths and Pratītyasamutpāda it is clear that the discovery of both is the sine qua non of an enlightened being. The Mahāvastu (19) confirms this when it identifies supreme and perfect enlightenment with knowledge of the Four Noble Truths, the complete destruction of the impurities (āsrava), the Pratītyasamutpāda in direct and reverse order, and the fourfold dharma (ie. impermanence, suffering, non-self, peace).

Now it may be noted that the two sequences of pratītyasamutpāda do not come into the range of the first and fourth Noble Truths and it may be objected therefore that the two doctrines are not fully compatible. If we look at these particular truths however we shall see that there is no real problem. With regard to the former it is clear that it is a bland assertion of a fact, ie. that everything is conditioned by suffering. The first truth therefore does not have the force of an explanatory statement. It is in fact

the second truth which explains the origin of the first. Thus while the first and second members of the Four Noble Truth formulation are traditionally held to be separate, it is clear that the first without the second has little meaning from a soteriological point of view. The second illuminates the first and in a logical sense they collapse into one another. Similarly the relationship between the third and fourth Noble Truths may be simplified. Since the third, in its connection with the reversed pratītyasamutpāda formula, explains the mechanics by which cessation (nirodha) comes about, the fourth truth may be seen as an elaboration of this fact with particular reference to the field of soteriology, for practicing the path (mārga) is equivalent to the gradual bringing about of an end to ignorance (avidyā) and its concomitants. In a sense therefore one may be justified in regarding the Buddha's earlier quoted statement, that he proclaimed simply suffering and its cessation ⁽²⁰⁾, as a reference to two processes, i.e. the arising of ignorance and its cessation. In other words the doctrine of pratītyasamutpāda is quite compatible with the Four Noble Truth doctrine and these two must hereafter be considered as interchangeable formulations representing the central Buddhist understanding of things.

Now each of the twelve links in the classical pratītyasamutpāda formula are said to be:

"impermanent (anicca), conditioned (saṅkhata), that which has arisen dependently (paṭiccasamuppanna), that which has the nature of withering away (khayadhamma), that which has the nature of passing away (vayadhamma), that which has the nature of fading away (virāḍadhamma) and that which has the nature of coming to cease (nirodhadhamma)". (21)

The individual links therefore must not be considered as eternal & ultimate existents, but rather as factors which arise through the principle of dependency (idappaccayatā); the principle by which all the factors are related. Since the links are impermanent (anicca) they are consequently suffering (dukkha) and not self (anattā) for:

"That which is impermanent is suffering (dukkha). That which is suffering is not self (anattā) and that which is not-self is not mine (na mama)... In this way one should see this as it really is (yathābhūtam) with right comprehension". (22)

Now the Abhidharmikas further sub-divided the causal process outlined by the 12 linked pratītyasamutpāda in such a way that the whole of reality may be understood as the interplay between 75 or so factors of existence (dharma), or fundamental building blocks. In consequence dependently originated things, cognized through the eyes of ignorance (avidyā), must for the Abhidharma, be considered as unreal. Such false understanding, identified with the forward sequence of pratītyasamutpādā and hence the Second Noble Truth inevitably leads to suffering (dukkha) and its associated conditions of old age and death (jarāmarana). However, through the abolition of this diseased vision of things, the understanding dawns that dependently originated things are not ultimately real since they are in fact constructed from the true building blocks of reality; ie. the 75 (or so) dharmas. For the Abhidharma therefore the reversal sequence of pratītyasamutpāda brings about the realization that the world of dependently originated things (ie. people, houses etc.) is unreal since the true state of affairs is reflected by the causal interplay of the dharmas. When the Abhidharmika sees things as they are (yathābhūtam) he penetrates

their conventional forms and understands their ultimate dharmic reality.

This is not necessarily how the teachings of the Nikāyas should be interpreted however. This is because as a consequence of his theory the Abhidharmika must accept his ultimately real dharmas as being devoid of suffering (sukha), permanent (nitya) and possessing self (ātman). To use Mahāyānist language, the Abhidharmist is committed to the position that the dharmas possess substantiality or own-being (svabhāva). Such a position was definitely not held in the early period of Buddhist thought where all things (dhammā) are conclusively held to be devoid of self (anattā). (23) It seems likely therefore that when the Buddha talks about seeing things as they really are (yathābhūtam), he is not referring to the dharma theory of the Abhidharma.

It is clear from the texts that a person is only capable of seeing things as they are (yathābhūtam) when in a state of mind inaccessible to the ordinary person. In other words, seeing things as they are (yathābhūtam) is not synonymous with ordinary sense perception. It is a different form of consciousness. Now we are told that:

"It is the true nature of things (dhammatā) that a person in the state of (meditative) concentration knows and sees what really is (yathābhūtam)." (24)

Jayatilleke interprets the above to mean that seeing things as they are (yathābhūtam) is an entirely natural, and therefore not a supernatural occurrence. (25) He is therefore saying that the term

dhammatā simply means "it is natural that ...". This may be true in many instances of the appearance of the word "dhammatā", and in fact Rahula (26) has demonstrated this to be so. However it is difficult to believe that in this particular instance the Buddha is saying that it is natural for people to be in meditative states which lead to seeing things as they are (yathābhūtam), when this is self-evidently not the case. The overwhelming majority of people do not see things as they are, according to Buddhism. What is more likely therefore, in this passage, is that seeing things as they are (yathābhūtam) is equivalent to seeing the true nature of things (dhammatā). This interpretation has the benefit of avoiding Jayatilleke's ingenuous rendering, but also corresponds more with further canonical references to the connection between yathābhūtam and dhammatā.

Following on from our previous quotation the Anguttara Nikāya holds that one who sees things as they are (yathā bhūtam) experiences the knowledge and insight of emancipation (vimutti-nāṇadassana). (27)

This particular attainment is often synonymous with paññā. (28)

One is led to make the conclusion from this, that what is "seen" in paññā must be the true nature of things (dhammatā). For the Abhidharmikas dharmatā would comprise the dharmic constituents of reality, so that seeing things as they are (yathābhūtam) would indicate that the person capable of engaging paññā has penetrated through the outward form into the essential dharmic structure of the object. However it is unclear that yathābhūtam means such a thing in the Suttas. What is more likely is that the vision of dharmatā is a vision of reality in which ignorance (avidyā) has been uprooted, so that things are no longer obscured, but revealed in their true state, ie. as they are (yathābhūtam). Such an understanding

is certainly contained in metaphorical form in the Nikāyas. The statement

"... just as if a man possessed of sight were to observe the reflection of his face in a basin of water disturbed, shaken, tossed about by wind and full of ripples, but fail to know and see (his face) as it really is (yathābhūtam)." (29)

gives the impression of a distinction between a distorted and undistorted vision of the face, leading us to infer that seeing things as they are (yathābhūtam) means seeing things unencumbered by any defect. Now while the Abhidharmic world view obviously coincides with this notion to a certain extent, there is no evidence in the Nikāyas that a view of things devoid of distortion implies the knowledge of the dharmic constitution of reality. Rather the sense being conveyed is one in which a form of the correspondence theory of truth holds good. However this is a correspondence theory with a difference, the difference being that knowledge only corresponds with the external object once a process of meditative training has been undergone. Before such training the external object will be distorted through ignorance and its concomitants. Keith recognises this when he says that:

"The Buddha, like the sage of the Upaniṣad, sees things as they truly are (yathābhūtam) by a mystic potency, which is quite other than reasoning of the discursive type." (30)

We have already noted that:

"... mental concentration is the cause of knowing and seeing things as they are". (31)^s

and that such knowledge is sometimes referred to as pañña (prajñā). We may conclude this argument by asserting therefore that pañña reveals things as they are (yathābhūtam) and that this knowledge is knowledge of the true nature of things (dharmatā). Since such knowledge is totally unobstructed by ignorance (avidyā), and its concomitants, it is ultimately true:

"Knowing things as they are, wherever they are, is the highest knowledge." (32)

It comes about through the application of a form of practice which leads to the destruction of the forward sequence of the pratītya-samutpāda. Taking up Keith's notion of a "mystic potency" however, one must not assume that such a vision corresponds to the Upaniṣadic realisation of the absolute primacy of the monistic Brahman. For the Buddhist prajñā reveals a real world independent of thought construction (vikalpa), and false dichotomy (prapañca), both of which are engendered by ignorance (avidyā). Since ignorance has been eradicated the knowledge of things as they are (yathābhūtam) indicates:

"... what exists as "existing" and what does not exist as "not existing"." (33)

In other words the reversal sequence of pratītyasamutpāda through the destruction of ignorance, destroys the misconception of reality but does not negate reality itself, neither does it replace reality with an ontological absolute such as Brahman.

The canon recognised three forms of prajñā⁽³⁴⁾; that arising from the teaching (śrutamayī), that based on reflection (cintāmayī) and that born from meditation (bhāvanāmayī) though only the last of the three brings about a total and complete freedom from saṃsāra. Commenting on that prajñā which arises through meditative activity, which he calls wisdom devoid of impediment (prajñā anāsravā), Yaśomitra maintains that in such a state the object is perceived directly (pratyakṣārthatvāt), excluding any inductive knowledge (ānumānikajñāna). It is non-subjective (ādhimokṣikajñāna), has an object which is real (bhūtārthatvāt) and is consequently pure (viśuddhā). (35)

One must conclude, from all that has been said, that an objective world, sometimes referred to as the true nature of things (dharmatā) or its synonym dharmadhātu, is revealed to the knowledge of one who has completed the Buddhist path, which consists in engaging the reversal sequence of pratītyasamutpāda.

A hint that the true nature of things relates to a world independent of thought, is contained in the Buddha's condemnation of the idealistic viewpoint of Sāti Bhikkhu, who contends that:

"In so far as I understand the Dharma taught by the Buddha, it is this consciousness (viññāna) itself that runs on fares on, not another". (36)

Now since Dharma is itself a synonym for pratītyasamutpāda, as we have already noted, it seems equally true that the latter should not be understood as the running on of viññāna ie. in a subjective light. It seems that Jayatilleke (37) was correct to assign an

objective existence to pratītyasamutpāda. In its forward sequence it is the cause of a distorted vision of the world equivalent to that of an unenlightened being, while in its reversal sequence it reveals the true nature of things (dharmatā) consistent with the vision of an enlightened being. This true nature of things is sometimes referred to as element (dhātu) or suchness (tathatā).

Let us now turn to the Mahāyāna understanding of pratītyasamutpāda to determine how, or if, it differs from what has already been stated. In the case of Nāgārjuna there is much to recommend the view that pratītyasamutpāda is for him central. He opens MMK by stating:-

"I bow down to the Buddha, the best of teachers, who taught the dependent origination, free from dichotomous thought and auspicious (Śivam), being without destruction or production, neither created nor eternal, neither differentiated nor undifferentiated and without coming or going." (38)

Expanding this key statement one may say that Nāgārjuna accepts the teaching we have already discussed in which the central event in the career of the Buddha was the discovery of dependent origination (pratītyasamutpāda). Nāgārjuna elaborates the doctrine by stating that pratītyasamutpāda should not be understood in a dogmatic sense since this method relies on the construction of false dichotomies. Implicit in such a position is the idea that one must maintain a middle course in order to come to a true understanding of pratītyasamutpāda. This idea is made explicit in the course of MMK so that at one point the Buddhist path is actually connected to pratītyasamutpāda in the sense that correct understanding of this concept is

the goal:

"Dependent origination we call emptiness. This is a metaphorical designation and is, indeed, the middle path". (39)

any attempt to put into words such a realisation being nothing but metaphorical designation (prajñaptirupādāya).

When it comes to a precise understanding of pratītyasamutpāda it is clear that Nāgārjuna rejects the doctrine of the Sarvāstivādin Abhidharma. We have noted that the latter depends upon the presupposition that each factor of existence possesses substantiality or own-being (svabhāva). The problem with such a view is that the causal process implied in the pratītyasamutpāda doctrine runs into difficulties. If things are totally self-existent, how can they be causally related to anything else? This central paradox of the Abhidharmika system therefore is at the crux of Nāgārjuna's argument as presented in MMK, an argument which rejects the innovations of the Abhidharmikas while at the same time preserving the doctrines on pratītyasamutpāda which we have already isolated from the Nikāyas. Thus Nāgārjuna tells his opponent, who one assumes must be putting forward to Abhidharmic position,

"At nowhere and at no time can entities ever exist by originating out of themselves, from others, from both, or from a lack of causes ... In relational conditions the self-nature of entities cannot exist." (40)

Since one must accept dependent origination, and hence causality, [this being axiomatic to the whole Buddhist system], the idea of

self-existent entities (dharmasvabhāva) must be rejected. Entities must consequently be empty (śūnya) of self nature (svabhāva). The opponent seizing on his opportunity contends that if Nāgārjuna denies the self existence of entities, then he must accordingly accept the non-existence of the Four Noble Truths. In other words Nāgārjuna appears as a nihilist. This is an unreasonable charge. In the first place denying the own-being of something by claiming that thing to be empty (śūnya) of own-being does not necessarily imply that it is non-existent. The state of being devoid of own-being (niḥsvabhāvatā) is not a synonym for non-existence Nāgārjuna responds to his opponent by stating that it is he who does not understand the true significance of emptiness (śūnyatā). Nāgārjuna maintains that:

"Any factor of existence which does not participate in relational origination cannot exist. Therefore, any factor of experience not in the nature of śūnya cannot exist". (41)

In fact only the realisation of the emptiness of self existence of entities (dharmas) really allows the positing of dependent origination at all, since the system of the Abhidārmikas, by adherence to own-being (svabhāva), makes nonsense of the Four Noble Truths.

"If everything were of the nature of non-śūnya, then there would be neither production nor destruction ... Where could suffering in the nature of non-relational origination arise? ... The extinction of suffering in terms of self-nature does not happen ... If the way to enlightenment possesses self-nature, then its practice will not be possible." (42)

The acceptance of such a doctrine precludes the notion of Buddhahood

"According to your assertion, anyone who is not a Buddha in virtue of self-existence cannot hope to attain enlightenment even by serious endeavour or by the path of the Bodhisattva". (43)

By implication the Abhidharmika falls into the same camp as those teachers such as Makkhali Gosāla and Pūraṇa Kassapa whose teachings are without a basis (ahetuvāda). Further, by asserting own-being (svabhāva), the Abhidharmikas negate the possibility of a graduated path to enlightenment and preclude the notion of causality as such, since,

"From the standpoint of self-existence, the world will be removed from the various conditions and it will be non-originate, non-destructive and immovable". (44)

At the end of the chapter dealing with the Four Noble Truths in MMK, Nāgārjuna affirms the central idea we have already discussed with reference to the Nikāyas, ie. that the pratītyasamutpāda formula is interchangeable with the Four Noble Truths. Nāgārjuna accepts the centrality of these two doctrines and goes on to add that without an understanding of pratītyasamutpāda the 4 Truths will remain a mystery:

"One who rightly discerns dependent origination will, indeed, rightly discern suffering, its origination, its extinction, and the path to enlightenment." (45)

The implication in all of this must be that whether one understands reality to be comprised of entities such as people, mountains, houses etc. (ie. the commonsense view), or of more fundamental building blocks

such as the dharmic constituents of reality (the position of the Abhidārmikas), one is still attached to an essentialist view of things. These views both rely on the idea of self existent entities possessing own-being (svabhāva) which Nāgārjuna has shown to be erroneous since it does not conform with the central discovery of the Buddha - that things are mutually dependent. This being so the world view of a person holding such a conception is deluded. Only understanding reality in terms of pratītyasamutpāda working on the basis of entities (dharma) devoid of own being (niḥsvabhāvatā) leads, through eradication of ignorance (avidyā), to the seeing of things as they are (yathābhūtam)

In MMK, the twelve fold formula of pratītyasamutpāda is dealt with in the traditional manner, first in the forward sequence and then in the reverse. Once again the forward sequence, beginning with ignorance, is understood to lead to samsāric states of existence.

"Those who are deluded by ignorance create their own threefold mental conformations in order to cause rebirth and by their deeds go through the various forms of life (gati)." (46)

the threefold conformations (tridhāsaṃskārāḥ) being of body, speech and mind. The process initiated by ignorance (avidyā) leads inexorably on to old-age, death etc., as we have seen it do in the formulae of the Nikāyas. Nāgārjuna adds:

"Consequently, the ignorant creates the mental conformations (saṃskārāḥ) which form the basis of samsāric life. Thus the ignorant is the doer while the wise, seeing the true state of things (tattva), does not create." (47)

The initiation of the reversal sequence of pratītyasamutpāda is a necessary preliminary for someone to enter the state of the wise. Through this process one understands the true state of things (tattva). The uprooting of the links in pratītyasamutpāda, a gradual process brought about through the cultivation of the Buddhist path, leads to the extinction of the states of existence characterised by suffering.

"when ignorance ceases mental conformations (samskārah) do not come into being. The uprooting of ignorance is dependent on the knowledge (jñāna) of practicing (bhāvaṇa) [the Buddhist path]. By the cessation of every [link of pratītyasamutpāda] none functions. Thus this single mass of suffering is completely extinguished." (48)

From what we have said, with regard to Nāgārjuna's understanding of pratītyasamutpāda, it seems clear that he follows very closely ~~to~~ the exegesis found in the Nikāyas. Both sources regard the doctrine as central to the Buddhist experience and both regard it as essential to the understanding of the enlightened and the unenlightened state. If one could isolate any innovation in the doctrinal development of the former it would merely be in his implied negative criticisms of the Abhidharmikas and his consequent introduction of the notion of emptiness. While both the Nikāyas and Nāgārjuna recognise the unenlightened state as being characterised by ignorance (avidyā), dichotomous thought (prapañca), thought construction (vikalpa) etc., Nāgārjuna adds the proviso that the enlightened state may not be understood by the Abhidharmic fallacy since all things must, once ignorance has been uprooted, be devoid of, or empty of (śūnya), all conceptions, including the notion of own-being (svabhāva). Only then will the true objective state of things (tattva = dharmatā =

tatha tā be seen as they are (yathābhūtam). For Nāgārjuna then, this is the meaning of emptiness (śūnyatā), which, we have noted already, he uses as a synonym for pratītyasamutpāda. (49) As Yamada says:

"Emptiness (śūnyatā), then, is not another entity or absolute on which dharmas are based or from which phenomenal existences originate, but it is a ... principle of how the most concrete things exist in the matrix of factors of existence, which are related interdependently and which are present at the eternal now and boundaryless here." (50)

When one turns to the doctrine of dependent origination (pratītyasamutpāda) in the writings of the Yogācāra, one is immediately conscious of the desire amongst modern scholars to maintain a radical distinction between the understanding of this concept by Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, and that of the Madhyamaka. Stcherbatsky, for instance, maintains that Asaṅga's Madhyāntavibhāṅga was written to indicate the middle course between the extremes of the Madhyamaka and the Sarvāstivāda. However Stcherbatsky has no textual basis on which to form such an opinion. Sthiramati, commenting on the text reveals that the two extremes being avoided by Asaṅga are firstly the blanket denial of everything (sarvāpavādapratīṣedhārtham) (51) and secondly the belief that form (rūpa) etc. is substantial (dravyata) and hence existing independently of the mind and its concomitants (cittacaittāh). (52) The first extreme is clearly the extreme of nihilism (ucchedavāda), which we have already shown is itself avoided by the Madhyamaka, so Stcherbatsky is quite incorrect in asserting that Asaṅga's doctrine is at odds with the Madhyamaka on this point. There is more reason for maintaining that the second

position is one held by the Sarvāstivāda, but it seems far more likely that when Sthiramati points out that Asaṅga's doctrine avoids extremes he is merely indicating that, along with all other mainstream Buddhist authors, he steers a middle course between the nihilism and eternalism of the non-Buddhist systems. There is no evidence that it is in Asaṅga's mind to condemn the doctrines of other Buddhists.

Asaṅga's position on pratītyasamutpāda is actually tied up with a concept we have already dealt with. This is the imagination of the unreal (abhūtaparikalpa). This term steers clear of the two extremes since it is said to exist, though it is free of duality. (53) In other words, the concept of abhūtaparikalpa is not nihilistic, since it is an existent, yet at the same time it is non-eternal because it is devoid of the subject/object (grāhyagrāhaka) dichotomy which gives rise to the notion of eternal, substantial entities containing own-being (svabhāva). It is devoid, therefore, of the imagined nature (parikalpita svabhāva). At another place abhūta parikalpa is given as a synonym for paratantra svabhāva (54) - the dependent nature; the second of the three natures expounded by the Yogācāra.

We have already dealt with the three natures in the previous chapter. We found that paratantra has a pivotal role in the theory. It can be externalised through imaginative activity as the imagined nature (parikalpitasvabhāva), or in its pristine condition it is necessarily uncontaminated; this circumstance being referred to as the accomplished nature (pariṇiṣpannasvabhāva). The accomplished of course represents a level of knowledge in which independent existence of

self and other are precluded and there is perfect union of knower and known, epistemology and ontology. In this state things are seen as they are (yathābhūtam). This is conveyed by the Triṃśikā:-

"The accomplished nature is the latter's (ie.the dependent nature's) perpetual devoidness of the former (ie.the imagined nature)." (55)

Reality (tattva) may of course be incorrectly cognized through the eyes of ignorance, or, conversely, purged of ignorance so that it is seen as it is (yathābhūtam). One would expect the latter manner of "seeing" to be described by words such as tathatā, dharmatā, śūnyatā etc. if what we have already noted with regard to the pratītyasamutpāda doctrine has also been taken up by the Yogācāra.

This is in fact so. Let us concentrate our attention on one text: the Madhyāntavibhaṅga. This text has an unusual version of the 12 limbed formula. Asaṅga maintains that:

"This world (jagat) is defiled by (i) being concealed, (ii) being raised, (iii) being led, (iv) being seized, (v) being completed, (vi) being trebly determined, (vii) enjoying, (viii) being attracted, (ix) being bound, (x) being orientated and (xi - xii) being subjected to suffering." (56)

and Vasubandhu, in his commentary (bhāṣya) on these two verses, gives the traditional 12 members of the formula as alternatives to the ones above making it perfectly clear what Asaṅga is talking about. This discussion takes place in the context of the dependent nature (paratantra = abhūtaparikalpa) when contaminated by the imagined

nature (parikalpita). Under such circumstances:

"The imagination of the unreal (abhūtaparikalpa) is citta as well as caittas belonging to all the three worlds." (57)

since the imagination of the unreal (abhūtaparikalpa), like the dependent nature (paratantra) is the basis for the arising of ignorance, as has already been remarked in the previous chapter. This

quotation is in fact highly reminiscent of a section of the Daśabhūmikasūtra (58) which is considered canonical by both the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra. That the triple world is synonymous with an unenlightened world view contaminated by the implication of own-being (svabhāva) to entities which is itself conditioned by ignorance (avidyā) is brought out by Sthiramati's commentary on this verse.

"Citta and caittas operate with reference to the own-nature and qualities of the things which though unreal are imagined." (59)

In fact exactly the same sentiments are expressed in the opening stanza of Vasubandhu's Viṃśatikā. Let us now ascertain what relationship, if any, the three-nature doctrine has with the concept of dependent origination. As we have already noted, particularly with reference to the maṅgalasloka of MMK, dependent origination defines the ontological condition of things prior to thought. This state of things is so whether a Buddha exists or not. Using Whiteheadian terminology we may be tempted to suggest that for the Buddhist reality is a process.

We know that another way in which pratītyasamutpāda is presented in the literature is as a forward and reverse sequence, respectively defining the processes of bondage and release. We are now in the

position to reconcile what appears, on the surface, to be two irreconcilable notions. Pratītyasamutpāda, in the first sense of ontological process, is objectified as a mass of discrete, substantial entities. This movement away from initial integrity is put in train by ignorance (avidyā) and leads to suffering (duḥkha). This is the forward sequence of the formula. However through taking the appropriate measures (ie. following the Buddhist path) an individual may destroy his ignorance and restore the original integrity. This involves initiating the reversal sequence and leads to nirvāṇa. In this state no differentiation exists and consequently nirvāṇa is not to be assumed to be a form of knowledge in which external reality is presented to the senses, for in this state epistemology and ontology have been transcended.

"From the non-perception of the duality [of subject/object] there arises the perception of the dharmadhātu. From the perception of the dharmadhātu there arises the perception of unlimitedness". (60)

and this is unsurpassed enlightenment. Here Vasubandhu identifies the perception of the dharmadhātu with the purging of imagination from reality. The imagined nature corresponds to the forward sequence of pratītyasamutpāda. The extirpation of imagination returns the dependent (paratantra) to its pristine condition as the accomplished (pariniṣpanna), for the accomplished is nothing more than the dependent in its non-contaminated form; completely devoid of all dichotomies. The accomplished nature then represents the dawning of prajñā which Vasubandhu terms supramundane knowledge (lokottara-jñāna) since it transcends the world view presented by the imagined nature. Having disrupted the false dichotomies on which such a world view is based this supramundane knowledge, or state of realization, is

"... the pure element (anāsravadhātu), incomprehensible, auspicious and unchangeable, being delightful it is the emancipated body (vimuktikāya) which is also called the dharma of the great sage." (61)

The accomplished nature (pariniṣpannasvabhāva) of the Yogācāra is therefore a concept quite interchangeable with the completion of the reversal sequence of pratītyasamutpāda, both representing identical forms of spiritual attainment. The reversal sequence likewise merely restores the integrity of the initial, indeterminate and undifferentiated condition of things. All the synonyms that we are accustomed to associate with this state, from our earlier researches, are found with reference to the accomplished nature. Vasubandhu for instance says that, since it is totally devoid of any false dichotomies, it reveals:-

"The ultimate state of things (dharmaṇam paramārtha) and this is also (called) suchness (tathatā)". (62)

At this stage one realises that up to now one has taken products of discursive thought to be real (viññaptimātratā), attains an understanding of things devoid of thought construction (nirvikalpajñāna) and sees things as they are (yathābhūtaadarśana). (63)

We noted in the last chapter that Asaṅga held pratītyasamutpāda and paratantra to be synonymous. It is now clear why this is so. They both operate in a way that makes sense of the worldly discrimination between the ignorant and the enlightened state. Ignorance is a separation from them; enlightenment is the re-establishment of unity. The explanation of these two states is undertaken with either pratītyasamutpāda or paratantra at the basis in all the Buddhist writings we have examined, be they the Nikāyas, Nāgārjuna, Asaṅga or Vasubandhu.

All our authors therefore recognise the centrality of pratītyasamutpāda/paratantra that unpredictable state of things which provides the rationale for the arising of bondage/release, svabhāvatā/sūnyatā, samsāra/nirvāṇa, defilement/purification, samvrti/paramārtha, duḥkha/sukha, parikalpita/pariṣṇispanna, etc. The first half of each set represents an epistemic falling away and consequent objectification of the real state of things, while the second, as the uprooting of the first, reveals things in their ultimate state where the distinction between epistemology and ontology no longer holds.

Because of the inherent contradictions of language the state referred to by the second part of the pair is inexpressible (anābhilāpya) and can never be known in the way things of the world are known, since true understanding transcends the subject/object dichotomy. Since it is empty (śūnya) of all predicates one can only speak metaphorically about it;

"Suchness, the extreme limit of existence, the uncaused, absolute-ness, the dharmadhātu; these are summarily the synonyms of emptiness". (64)

or use the apophatic terminology characteristic of negative mysticism.

It is clear that the doctrine of pratītyasamutpāda provides the key to the understanding of the two fold truth, the three nature teachings, and their eventual harmonisation. Pratītyasamutpāda is reality as such, unpredictable in terms of existence or non-existence. This is confirmed by the Buddha's statement that it exists independently of the rising of a Buddha, by Nāgārjuna's maṅgalaśloka of MMK which merely reiterates the previous statement, and by the Yogacara doctrine of the dependent nature (paratantra). In its defiled state this

base proliferates in 12 stages, according to the twelve fold pratītyasamutpāda formula, through the agency of ignorance. This gives rise to saṃsāra, the imputation of own-being (svabhāva) to entities, the conventional truth (saṃvṛtisatya), or the imagined nature (parikalpita), since all are synonymous. However when the 12 stages are reversed, ignorance is uprooted. Hence nirvāṇa, the ultimate truth (paramārthasatya) and the accomplished nature (pariniṣpanna) are achieved. Here again these are all synonymous. Having achieved such a state one understands things as they are, devoid and therefore empty (śūnya) of the previously imputed own-being (svabhāva). They are then seen as mutually dependent (pratītyasamutpāda).

When all is said and done the understanding of the distinction between saṃsāra and nirvāṇa etc. can only come about as the result of following the Buddhist path and not through philosophical discourse. As Nāgārjuna has it:

"All perceptions as well as false dichotomies are [essentially] of the nature of cessation and quiescence. No dharma whatsoever of any kind was ever taught by the Buddha." (65)

For the enlightened reality itself is not an object of knowledge for such knowledge would presuppose articulation. The gnosis of the Buddha has no object. The Buddha is ultimately silent.

- 1 Jayatilleke : Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge p 143 The story of teachings of Pūraṇa Kassa pa are to be found in D.i.53 while that of Makkhali Gosāla crops up at M.ii.408.
- 2 ibid p 447
- 3 Sii26
tathatā avitathatā anaññathatā idappaccayatā ayam vuccati...
paṭiccasamuppādo
- 4 Sii25
Katamo ca paṭiccasamuppādo. Jatipaccayā... jarāmaṇaṇam;
uppādā vā tathāgatāṇam anuppādā vā tathāgatāṇam
ṭhitā va sā dhātu dhammatṭhitatā dhammaniyāmatā
idappaccayatā. Taṃ tathāgato abhisambujjhati abhisameti
abhisambujjhitvā abhisametvā ac ikkhati deseti pañṇapeti
paṭṭhapeti vivarati vibhajati uttanīkaroti passathā
ti cāha
- 5 Mi191
yo paṭiccasamuppādam passati so dhammam passati, yo
dharmmam passati so paṭiccasamuppādam passati
- 6 op cit p 454
- 7 Vin.i.41
ye dhammā hetuppabhavā tesam hetum Tathāgato
aha, tesāṇ ca yo nirodho evaṃvādī Mahāsamaṇo
- 8 Laṅkāvatārasūtra Ed. Nanjio p 444
Āryaśālistambasutra, Ed.Sastri p 26
ye dharmā hetuprabhavā hetum tesam Tathāgato' vadat
tesāṇ ca yo nirodha evaṃvādī Mahāśrāmaṇaḥ
- 9 SN 1033
- 10 H. Nakamura : The Theory of Dependent Origination in its Incipient Stage. p 167 in Buddhist Studies in Honour of Walpola Rahula London (1980) p 165-172
- 11 SN1048
Samkhāya lokasmiṃ parovarāṇi Punnakā ti Bhagavā
yass' iñjitam n'atthi kuhiñci loke
santo vidhūmo anigho nirāso
atāri so jātijaran ti brumi ti
- 12 op cit p 165
- 13 M.i. 261ff (Ma hātanhāsāṅkhayasutta No 38)
Imasmiṃ sati idaṃ hoti; Imass'uppādā idaṃ uppajjati
... avijjā paccayā saṅkhārā ... jāti paccayā jarāmaṇaṇam
sokoparidevadukkhadomanass'upāyāsā sambhavanti ...
evam etassa kevalassa dukkha kkhandhassa samudayo hoti

- 14 ibid (cont)
jāti nirodhā jarāmarāṇa nirodho ... avijjā nirodhā saṅkhāra
nirodho ... Imasmiṃ asati idaṃ na hoti; Imassa nirodhā idaṃ
nirujjhati...
avijjā nirodhā saṅkhāra nirodho ... jāti nirodhā
jarāmarāṇaṃ sokaparidevadukkhadomanass' upāyāsa
nirujjhanti ... evaṃ etassa kevalassa dukkha kkhandhassa
nirodho hoti
- 15 Mi 140
pubbe cāhaṃ bhikkhave etarahi ca dukkhāṅ c'eva
paññāpemi dukkhassa ca nirodhaṃ
- 16 M ii 32
api c'Udāyi, tiṭṭhatu pubbanto, tiṭṭhatu aparanto, dhamma
te dessāmi; imasmiṃsati idaṃ hoti; imass'uppādā
idaṃ uppajjati; imasmiṃ asati idaṃ na hoti; imassa
nirodhā idaṃ nirujjhatīti
- 17 E. Lamotte; Conditioned Co-production and Supreme Enlightenment.
in Buddhist Studies in Honour of Walpola Rahula op. cit. p 118-132
- 18 ibid p 119
- 19 Mahāvastu ii 285
- 20 cf note 15
- 21 S ii 26
katame ca bhikkhave paṭiccasamuppannā dhammā jarāmarāṇaṃ
bhikkhave aniccaṃ saṅkhatāṃ paṭiccasamuppannaṃ khaya dhammaṃ
vayadhammaṃ virāgaḍhammaṃ nirodhadhamma jāti bhikkhave
aniccā...
- 22 S iii 22
Yad aniccaṃ taṃdukkhaṃ, yaṃ dukkhamtaḍ anattā, yaḍ
anattā taṃ n'etaṃ mama n'eso 'haṃ asmi na m'eso attā ti
evaṃ etaṃ yathābhūtaṃ sammappaññāya daṭṭhabbāṃ
- 23 Dhammapada v 279
sabbe dhammā anattā
cf A i 286
- 24 A v 3
Dhammatā esā ... yaṃ samāhito yathābhūtaṃ jānāti passati
- 25 Jayatilleke op cit p420-21
- 26 W. Rahula : Wrong Notions of Dhammatā (Dharmatā), p 181-191
in Buddhist Studies in Honour of I. B. Horner ed L. Cousins
et al. Dordrecht (1974)
- 27 A .v.3 op cit

- 28 Jayatilleke op cit p 421
- 29 S v 123
Seyyathā pi... udapatto vāterito calito bhanto ūmijāto
tattha cakkhumā puriso sakam mukhanimittam paccavekkha-
māno yathābhūtam na jāneyya na passeyya
- 30 A. B. Keith; Buddhist Philosophy in India and Ceylon, Oxford
(1923) p 90
- 31 S ii 30
yathābhūta^ānānadassanassa upanisā samādhi
- 32 A v 37
etad anuttariyam...^ānānam yadidam tattha tattha
yathābhūta^ānam
- 33 A v 36
santam vā atthī ti^ā nassati asantam vā natthī
ti^ā nassati
- 34 D iii 219 & Vibhaṅga 324-325
- 35 Kośavyākhyā pp 580-581
cf U Wogihara: Sphutārthā Abhidārmakośavyākhyā
2 vols Tokyo (1971)
This ref: quoted from É. Lamotte op cit p 127
- 36 M i 256
tathā 'haṃ bhagavatā dhammaṃ desitam ājānāmi yathā
tad ev'idaṃ viññānam sandhāvati saṃsarati anaññan 'ti
- 37 supra note 3
- 38 MMK 1
anīrodhamanutpādamanucchedamaśāsvatam
anekārthamanānārthamanāgamamanirgamam
yah pratītyasamutpādam prapañcopaśamam śivam
deśayāmāsa sambuddhastam vande vadatām varam
- 39 MMK XXIV 18
yah pratītyasamutpādaḥ śūnyatām tām pracakṣmahe
sa prajñaptirupādāya pratipatsaiva madhyamā
- 40 MMK I.V.1 & 3 a
na svato nāpi parato na dvābhyām nāpyahetutaḥ
utpannā jātu vidyante bhāvāḥ kvaçana ke cama ...
na hi svabhāvo bhāvānām pratyayādiṣu vidyate
- 41 MMK XXIV 19
apratītyasamutpanno dharmah kaścinna vidyate
yasmāttasmādaśūnyo hi dharmahkaścinna vidyate

- 42 MMK XXIV 20a, 21a, 23a, 24a
yadyaśunyamidam sarvamudayo nāsti na vyayah ...
apratītyasamutpannam kuto duḥkham bhaviṣyati ...
na nirodhaḥ svabhāvena sato duḥkhasya vidyate ...
svabhāve sati mārgasya bhāvanā nopapadyate
- 43 MMK XXIV 32
yaścābuddhaḥ svabhāvena sa bodhāya ghaṭannapi
na bodhisattvacaryāyām bodhiṃ te'dhigamiṣyati
- 44 MMK XXIV 38
ajātamaniruddham ca kūṭastham ca bhaviṣyati
vicitrābhiravasthābhiḥ svabhāve rahitam jagat
- 45 MMK XXIV 40
yaḥ pratītyasamutpādam paśyatidam sa paśyati
duḥkham samudayam caiva nirodham mārgameva ca
- 46 MMK XXVI 1
punarbhavāya saṃskārānavidyānivṛtastridhā
abhisamṣkurute yāmstairgatim gacchati karmabhiḥ
- 47 MMK XXVI 10
saṃsāramūlān saṃskārānavidvān saṃskartoyataḥ
avidvān kārakastasmāna vidvāmstattva darśanāt
- 48 MMK XXVI 11-12
avidyāyām niruddhāyām saṃskārānāmasambhavaḥ
avidyāyā nirodhastu jñānenāyaiva bhāvanāt
tasya tasya nirodhena tattannābhipravartate
duḥkhaskandhaḥ kevalo'yamevaṃ samyagnirudhyate
- 49 cf MMK XXIV 18 cf. .Supra note 39.
- 50 I. Yamada: Premises and Implications of Interdependence. p 277
in Buddhist Studies in Honour of Walpola Rahula op.cit.p 267-293
- 51 Sthiramati: Madhyāntavibhāgasūtrabhāṣyatīka,ed.V. Bhattacharya
& G.Tucci (1932) London p 9.20
- 52 ibid p 10.9-10
athavā cittacaittasika rūpato dravyatasca santīti yeṣām
drṣṭistesām pratiṣedhārthamuktam
- 53 MV 1.2a
abhūtaparikalpo 'sti dvayam tatva na vidyate cf.Supra Ch6. n.61.
- 54 MVBh1.6
abhūtaparikalpaḥ paratantrasvabhāvaḥ
- 55 Triṃś 21b
niṣpannas tasya purvena sadā rahitatā tu yā

- 56 MV 1 11-12
chādanād ropanācca nayanāt samparigrahāt
pūranāt triparicchedād upabhogācca karsanāt
nibandhanād ābhimukhyād duḥkhanāt kliṣyate jagat
- 57 MV 1.9
abhūtaparikalpaśca citta caittas tridhātukaḥ
- 58 Daśabhūmikasūtra p 49c
cittamātraṃ idaṃ yad idaṃ traidhātukam
- 59 MVBT 1.9
abhūtaparikalpya vastunaḥ svabhāvaviśeṣa
parikalpanayā cittacaittānām pravṛttatvāt
- 60 Tris-vabhāvanirdeśa (TSN) .37
dvayor anupalambhena dharmadhātūpalambhatā
dharmadhātūpalambhena syādvibhūtvā upalambhatā
- 61 Trims.30
sa eva anāśravo dhātur acintyaḥ kuśalo dhruvaḥ
sukho vimuktikāyo 'sau dharmākhyo 'yaṃ mahāmuneḥ
- 62 Trims 25a
dharmāṇāṃ paramārthaśca sa yatas tathatā api saḥ
- 63 cf Vasubandhubhāṣya & Sthiramatiṭika on Trims.28
- 64 MV.1.15
tathatā bhūtakotiś ca animittam paramārthatā
dharmadhātuśca paryāya śūnyatāyaḥ samāsataḥ
- 65 MMK XXV 24
sarvopalambhopaśamaḥ prapañcopaśamaḥ śivaḥ
na kva citkasya citkaściddharmo buddhena desitaḥ

Chapter Eight

The Problem of Idealism

There are many sections of the Pāli Tripiṭaka, which on casual scrutiny, leave the impression that an idealistic line is being put forward. The opening stanza of the Dhammapada, for instance, asserts that things (dharmas) are dependent on mind (manas); this mind being primary while dharmas are secondary. ⁽¹⁾ Similarly, at another point we hear that:-

"By mind (citta) the world is controlled, by mind it is emancipated. By this one element, of the mind alone, are all things secured." (2)

or again:-

"O Bhikkhu, the world is led by mind (citta), by mind is it drawn along. When mind has arisen it (ie. the world) goes under its sway." (3)

There is a strong flavour here of a doctrine which we find much repeated in the Mahāyāna, finding its classic formulation in the Daśabhūmik-
asūtra, to the effect that:-

"This triple world is nothing but mind (cittamātram)". ⁽⁴⁾

Now we have just stated that the evidence of such quotations is not sufficient to make the charge of idealism stick and it will be our present task to examine this problem in a little more detail.

The opening stanza of the Dhammapada continues by claiming mind (citta) to be the base for defilement and purification⁽⁵⁾, a doctrine which is supported by reference to other sections of the Tripitaka. Thus

"By the defilement of the mind (citta) are beings defiled; by the purification of the mind (citta) are beings purified." (6)

We understand from this therefore, that the mind (citta/manas/vijñāna - since according to the Buddha all terms are synonymous⁽⁷⁾), itself, is capable of understanding things from the defiled or the purified point of view depending on its own condition. This is entirely in conformity with the understanding we arrived at in the last chapter during our consideration of the general features of the pratītyasamutpāda formula in both the Hināyāna and the Mahāyāna. Things (dharma) themselves are not totally constructed by mind, but rather the mind has a structure which permits two basic epistemological orientations towards an external reality. As we have reiterated many times already, when the mind operates under the condition of ignorance (avidyā), then the world picture becomes distorted as the result of a complex of karmic causes - this is the aspect of defilement; however when ignorance has been eradicated the mind operates in its wisdom (prajñā) mode, where transformations of one kind or another cease to come into being and things appear as they are (yathābhūtam).

What becomes apparent is that Buddhism, since it accepts the possibility of a revolution in the way we actually see the world, may not be easily defined in terms abstracted from Western philosophical jargon. This is because Western systems both secular and religious generally

fail to accept the notion of the perfectibility of man to the extent employed in the East. Buddhism, in consequence, may only be so defiled when small portions of it are examined in vacuo. In a partial sense we may decide that the Buddhist understanding of the workings of the unenlightened mind approximates to certain sense-datum theories of contemporary philosophy, while again we may feel that the treatment of the enlightened state is conducive to a more realistic interpretation. However the overall package presented by Buddhist thought as a whole has a structure quite different to that of mainstream Western thought. We will be wiser therefore to treat this pattern of thought in a different manner.

For the Buddhist, external reality exists, but not in a way which can be usefully articulated from the soteriological point of view. The mind similarly exists, though the precise nature of its form of existence is likewise problematic. The mind does seem to possess a variable structure. We may imagine it as a mirror which, under certain conditions [ie. those conducive to wisdom (prajñā)], produces an accurate image of externality. However should conditions become inappropriate, the structure of the mirror loses its immaculacy, becoming dislocated and distorted, consequently producing images much the same as those generated by the crazy mirrors popular in fairgrounds today. Extending our metaphor a little more, we may add that the clear, uncontaminated mirror would be responsible for a pure reflection while the distorted mirror would appear intimately connected with defilement, ie. a distorted reflection, along the lines already noted in our Buddhist context.

The early Buddhists themselves employ just such a system of metaphors

to account for the enlightened and unenlightened states. In the Nikāyas we may note as an important seminal statement the fact that:-

"This mind, O monks, is luminous though contaminated by adventitious defilements; that mind, O monks, is luminous since it is cleansed of adventitious defilements". (8)

The notion of a naturally luminous mind is a metaphor quite analogous to the clear mirror we constructed above and was in fact an image used not only by the Sthaviras but also the Mahāsāṃghika, Andhaka and Vibhajyavāda. (9) A very similar idea, found in the Chinese Āgamas, also has its root in the Pāli Tripiṭaka.

"Beings are defiled by the impurities of the mind and purified by the cleansing of the mind". (10)

The cleansed mind of this verse is undoubtedly the same as the luminous mind (prabhāsvara citta) of the previous extract and it is interesting in this connection to note that Monier-Williams, in his Sanskrit-English dictionary, gives "enlightened" as one of the meanings of prabhāsvara. It seems reasonable to assume then that the term "luminous" is a metaphor for enlightened when in connection with the notion of mind, and there is therefore no good reason to hold the prabhāsvara citta to be some sort of monistic absolute with a strongly idealistic flavour, such as Śāṅkara's Brahman. This would be totally unexpected anyway considering the traditional opposition of Buddhism to the Upaniṣadic systems.

Another synonym for the enlightened mind, very often associated

with prabhāsvara citta is the innate mind (citta prakṛti). Takasaki holds that such a concept was rejected by the Sarvāstivāda, but was nevertheless accepted by many schools including the Theravāda, Vaibhāṣika, Vatsīputriya and the Mahāsāṃghika. (11) The Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā actually equates the two in the statement that "the innate nature of mind is luminous"⁽¹²⁾, and doctrines describing the mind (citta) in this manner are found throughout the history of the Mahāyāna, as well as in the earliest texts.

Other longer recensions of the Prajñāpāramitā extrapolated from the luminous mind (prabhāsvara citta) concept to the notion that the mind is devoid of the contamination of the defilements in its enlightened state.

"Sāriputra said, "What is it that the luminous mind consists of?" Subhūti replied, "The luminosity of the mind O Sāriputra is such that it is neither associated with passion nor non-associated with it. It is neither associated with hate, delusion, the irruptions, the obstructions, the residues, the hindrances and the false views nor non-associated with them." (13)

It is interesting to note here that we have a neither ... nor relationship between the luminous mind and the various contaminants and May makes the pertinent comment:-

"De telles formules contradictoires apparaissent fréquemment dans les Prajñāpāramitā et dans les ouvrages Mādhyamika", elles s'y réfèrent toujours au rapport sui generis qui existe entre la vérité empirique et la vérité absolue. Dans le cas particulier, la pensée (citta) peut-être associée, en vérité relative, avec les passions qui, rappelons-le, sont adventices (āgantuka), c'est-à-dire existent exclusivement sur le plan du relatif. Mais, en vérité absolue, l'autonomie de la pensée, sa limpidité, sa luminosité sont parfaites. On retrouvera dans le Vijñānavāda ce double point de vue, appliqué au vijñāna". (14)

May indicates the connection between this particular line of thought and the two truth doctrine of the Madhyamaka. There is also an implicitly continuous development to be drawn out here. From May's statements one may trace a coherent line of thought leading from the Nikāyas, through Prajñāpāramitā and Madhyamaka which reaches its conclusion in the Yogācāra/Vijñānavāda. This is of course the line of development we have argued for throughout this thesis.

While Nāgārjuna does not himself make the connection between the conventional truth (saṃvṛti) and the mind contaminated by adventitious defilements (āgantukakleśa), it is abundantly clear, particularly with reference to what has been said in Chapter Six above, that the conventional is the mentally constructed. This seems to be the gist of the Prajñāpāramitā texts, in particular the later ones when saṃvṛti is mentioned, and is certainly the sense of the Yogācāra notion of the imagined nature (parikalpitasvabhāva). In its uncontaminated, innately luminous, condition the mind reveals things as they are (yathābhūtam) which the Prajñāpāramitā & Madhyamaka term the ultimate point of view (paramārtha), and the Yogācāra (and incidentally the Maitreya chapter of the Prajñāpāramitā) calls the accomplished nature (pariṇiṣpannasvabhāva). Since we have noted that, in their representative works, the authors of these "schools" acknowledge an intermediate ontological term which gives efficaciousness to the two states of mind, we must conclude that the doctrine of luminous mind (prabhāsvaracitta) does the same. In other words, while it may be understood that the innate character of the mind is such that it gives an accurate picture of the world, this does not preclude the ubiquitous possibility that such a state of the mind may be adversely conditioned such that the picture

accessible becomes far from accurate.

In another Mahāyāna text, the Samādhirājāsūtra, the concept of the luminous mind is linked to the inverse pratītyasamutpāda formula such that the luminosity of mind only appears once the conceptions (samjñā) which give rise to name and form (nāma-rūpa) etc. have been suppressed. ⁽¹⁵⁾ This clearly supports our viewpoint and, with what has already been said so far, conclusively demonstrates the fact that the luminous mind is not a monistic absolute besides which all other existents have a dream-like status. It is rather an epistemic condition of mind, in which the processes associated with the unenlightened state have ceased. This being so it is sometimes referred to as no-mind. Quite apart from textual evidence the doctrine cannot be in any way indicative of monism or idealism on grounds purely connected with internal consistency. If one accepts, and this appears to be axiomatic in Buddhism, that the vast majority of sentient beings, since they are bound to the cycle of birth and death (samsāra) and subsequently labour under the conditions of ignorance (avidyā), are unenlightened while at the same time holding out the possibility of enlightenment, one is consequently forced to hold that there must be two possible states of mind; one veridical, the other not so. Now we noted in the previous chapter that Buddhism rejects those teachings without a basis (ahetuvāda), such as the Ājīvaka doctrines, which suggest that things came about independently of causes. Since the luminous mind (prabhāsvara citta), though possibly innate, is still nevertheless only fully operative in a small minority of sentient beings (ie. the enlightened), it cannot be a state of mind shared by all,

for the corrolary of this would be that all beings are enlightened, which we have already admitted is axiomatically not so. The ignorant being moves to a state of wisdom (prajñā) by means of a gradual process, this being the Buddhist path, and not through no cause at all. This being so the luminous mind, since it is not fully shared by all in its fully operative sense, cannot be an all encompassing psychic entity like Jung's collective unconscious, but must refer to the condition of an individual's mind at a certain stage of spiritual development.

It may be argued that the contaminations of its luminosity, since they are adventitious (āgantuka), are never essentially part of the mind and in consequence its innate nature is never really defiled. Such a position would undoubtedly be adopted by some Vedāntist schools but this idea sits poorly on the Buddhist tradition. Firstly, preserving the innate nature of mind deemphasises the disjunction between the enlightened and unenlightened state which as we have noted is axiomatic, and secondly, although it seems possible on the surface to construct a number of idealist positions, both monistic and pluralistic, from such a doctrine one is still left with the problem of the defilements. Since they come from without they may not be mental phenomena and one is left wondering what status they have. By accepting both an external reality, and individual minds capable of two fundamental epistemic orientations to that reality, some of the problems we have encountered disappear, since adventitious defilement may then be resolved to be the result of a mind, in its delusory mode, making initial contact with external reality. Of course this begs the question of how

the delusory process started in the first place, but this and questions of a similar order, are never seriously entertained by the Buddhist tradition. The story of Malunkyaputta's questions and the Buddha's refusal to answer proves this point. Rather than speculating on questions concerning origins the Buddha relates a story of a man who, rather than accepting treatment for his ills, prefers to ask questions and consequently dies.

Before turning to the complex problem of whether in the Yogācāra the doctrine of mind gives rise to idealism, let us deal with one further doctrine of early Buddhism which has sometimes provoked such a charge. This is the teaching concerning the "limb of existence" (bhavāṅga). Now this term only occurs in one section of the Pāli canon ⁽¹⁶⁾ where it is said to precede reflection (āvajjana) in the process of perception, but it is nevertheless extremely widespread in post-canonical writings, particularly the Milindapaṇḥa, Visuddhimagga and the Abhidhamma commentaries. However, the main purpose of the doctrine is to demonstrate that there is a continuous mental stream persisting throughout an individual's life processes which can be used to explain memory, the survival of a being throughout numerous lives, and the karmic consequences of past actions. A doctrine which only accepts the momentary sequence of self-contained points of consciousness is of course unable to do this adequately. The recognition of the need for such a concept can be found in canonical references to the stream of consciousness (vinnaṇasota), which seems to perform the same function as bhavāṅga does in the later literature.

"... he understands a man's stream of consciousness (vinñāṇasota) as uninterrupted at both ends and supported both in this world and in the other world". (17)

It is the vinñāṇasota, then, which allows the progress from one existence into another while still retaining an idea of continuity, and this concept seems, in the early literature, to provide the psychological counterpart to the stream of existence (bhavasota), a notion which

"give(s) expression to the Buddhist philosophical concept of flux, of life considered as a flowing stream, never the same for any two consecutive moments (Si.15 & Siv. 128)". (18)

However, there is little evidence in the early material that the authors had given much thought to the implications of their theories of mind. For instance, we find little speculation concerning the problems raised by the condition of mind of a person in deep sleep or deep meditation, and its subsequent coherence with the standard theory of vinñāṇasota. In other words, if the mind is a sequence of thought points, never the same for any two consecutive moments, how does it become re-established once the flow is interrupted by deep sleep, etc.?

Such speculation was common among the Brahmanic thinkers who held that the state of deep, dreamless, sleep (suṣuptāvasthā) coincided with the primordial state of things (prāgavasthā); the corollary being that a state such as deep sleep, since it corresponds with truth, is ultimately real.

"when a man sleeps he becomes united with that which is, Somya; he has gone into his own self." (19)

One cannot help but speculate, although there is little hard evidence to support such a view, that the Buddhist notion of bhavāṅga represents an attempt to explain deep psychological processes in response to Brahmanic argumentation, without at the same time falling into the absolute monist position of the Upaniṣadic sages. The latter would have been quite out of the question as the Buddhists would have been

"... anxious to avoid making of bhavāṅga an unrelated, anoetic consciousness. To regard mind as the source of consciousness would be alien to the spirit of early Buddhism. Mind was always a conditional relationship. There could be no such thing as unconditioned mind... Consciousness always involves reference to an object". (20)

It is in the Milindapañha (c.100AD) that the problem seems first to have been tackled. Replying to the King's inquiries about the psychology of dreams and sleep, Nāgasena states that, for a man entered into a state of deep sleep, his thought (citta) has gone into bhavāṅga.⁽²¹⁾ Now it should be noted that, in this example, the term bhavāṅga is only used with reference to the problem of dreams and deep sleep and it would be unjustified in this instance to extend its use to questions concerning the carrying of karmic effects throughout long periods of time or the continuity of consciousness in the cycles of samsāra. Bearing this in mind, one may spot an important difference between the theory of bhavāṅga and Upaniṣadic notions. For the Brahmanic tradition a person in deep sleep is united with the true nature (svarūpa) of Brahma ṅ, which is pure being (sat).⁽²²⁾ However

in the present theory when the mind (citta) has gone to bhavāṅga in the condition of deep sleep, such a state is merely a limb or aspect (aṅga) of the universal flux of becoming (bhava). As Sarathchandra points out:-

"The word [ie bhavāṅga] had ... the necessary dynamic import to distinguish it from the ideas of soul in the Upaniṣads and other systems of Indian thought". (23)

Bhavāṅga therefore avoids reference to any soul-theory through its close association with the dynamic theory of causation (pratītyasamutpāda) characteristic of Buddhism, while at the same time providing the possibility of understanding the continuity of consciousness and its concomitants. It does in fact seem probable that the elaboration of a comprehensive theory of mind along these lines was precipitated by arguments with rival schools, since:-

"For the Buddha the matter was of no consequence. He was only intent upon showing that empirical consciousness was evil and could be stopped and that intuitional consciousness [ie prajñā] could be cultivated. He was not concerned with the problems of survival, and as far as it mattered to him, deep sleep might have been a mere physical state. But it was not possible for his adherents to maintain silence in the face of persistent questioning, particularly when all other systems were developing an elaborate metaphysic of their own." (24)

Now it would be a great mistake to take bhavāṅga to be equivalent to a permanent subconscious state as understood by contemporary Western psychological theory. In the Abhidharmic texts, in which the term appears frequently, it is quite clear that bhavāṅga is cut off when ratiocination takes place. Bhavāṅga merely represents

mind in a passive condition, free from any thought processes (vīthimutta). When the mind becomes active bhavāṅga becomes cut off (bhavaṅgupaccheda) and a new state known as the process of cognition (vīthicitta) takes over. Bhavāṅga therefore is not a condition of mind underlying the cognitive processes, and therefore once cognitive processes begin, bhavāṅga ceases, only to return when cognition has ceased.

Here we have a connection with the concepts of luminous mind (prabhās-varacitta) and innate mind (cittaprakṛti), since when in a state of bhavāṅga or vīthimutti the Kathāvatthu ⁽²⁵⁾ holds that the mind is in its natural condition (pakaticitta), while the commentaries identify it as shining (pabbassara) and natural (pakati). ⁽²⁶⁾ It appears that bhavāṅga represents a pure, uncontaminated phase of mental activity to be distinguished from those periods in which cognition is actively taking place, which for the un-enlightened person by definition involves ignorance (avidyā) and consequently produces karma. Abhidharmic treatises confirm this. We find that they hold the consciousness of a new-born child to be of the essential nature of bhavāṅga which flows undisturbed after birth until it is disrupted by the first burst of conscious thought precipitated by perception. From then on all conscious activities follow the same pattern. Thus according to the Abhidhammatthasangaha:-

"When a visible object enters the focus of vision, at the first moment of its existence, it would have no effect on the percipient(1). Next there is a vibration of the stream of bhavaṅga (bhavaṅgacalana) for two moments, and a consequent interruption of the flow (2,3). There is no bhavaṅga any more, and instead there begins a conscious process, the first step of which is the moment of adverting (āvajjana 4). In the subsequent moments there follow in succession the visual impression (cakkhuvinnāna,

5), recipient consciousness (sampaṭṭicchana, 6), investigating consciousness (santīraṇa 7), determining consciousness (voṭṭhabbana, 8), seven moments of full perception (javana, 15), and finally two moments of retention or registering consciousness (tadārammaṇa, 17). This completes the seventeen moments and after that bhavaṅga begins to flow again until it is interrupted by a stimulus". (27)

Now the exact period of time, supposed by the Abhidhārmikas to be 17 thought moments taken for this process to be completed, is of no particular importance to our present enquiry. However, the basic structure of this schema is, since it confirms our previous work. Bhavaṅga is disturbed by an external stimuli which ultimately leads to a period of full perception (javana). Now javana is held to have the property of volition (cetanā); in other words it gives rise to future karmas. In fact the relevant texts break down the seven javana moments into three groups depending on their power to generate future karmas. The first moment of the seven is said to be weakest since it lacks any sustaining force and the karmic effect of this must necessarily operate in the present life only. The last moment is second weakest, its karmic effect only having the power to extend to the immediately subsequent life. The effects of the five remaining moments however are strong and held to operate at any time in the life continuum up until the final passing away (parinirvāṇa).

What is of interest in this doctrine from our point of view is the basic structure given to cognition. The flow of bhavaṅga is interrupted, initiating a process which leads progressively to karma generating perception (javana), after which the stream of consciousness lapses

back into bhavāṅga. This description must refer to the process undergone by a mind conditioned by ignorance (avidyā), since for an enlightened being the twelve factors of pratītyasamutpāda have been uprooted and future karmas are not produced. One must assume, therefore, that for an enlightened being who sees things as they are, javana is either inoperative, or that it operates but without leaving any dispositions which lead to future action. Deciding this question is complex and leads us back to the essential difference between the Buddhist and Upaniṣadic concepts of mind.

S. Z. Aung ⁽²⁸⁾ makes the comment that some authorities on the Adhidharma are of the opinion that javana never obtains in the dream process. Sarathchandra ⁽²⁹⁾ points out that dreaming is "regarded as a cognitive process with the exception that it occurs through the door of the mind" (manodvāra) rather than as in the previous example in which it takes place through the door of one of the five external senses (pañcādvāra), ie. the eye. Dreaming, therefore, according to Aung's authorities, would not be karma generating since javana does not obtain, even though a thought object is held to have been presented to consciousness through the door of mind (manodvāra). In such a theory dreaming must approximate to the state of understanding available to an enlightened being, since both seem capable of cognitions, though neither generates karmas as a consequence. The Abhidhārmika tradition of Śri Lanka ⁽³⁰⁾ does not agree with this. In its view, the obtaining of javana is not dependent on waking or dreaming but rather on the intensity of the stimulus involved in initiating a process of cognition. In other words karma may obtain whether someone is awake or asleep.

The overall impression of bhavāṅga related doctrines is that they represent an attempt to address some of the objections raised by Upaniṣadic theories of mind without generating identical theories under a different guise. Unfortunately accepting the challenge of the soul theory of the Brahmanas while at the same time proposing a personal continuity represented by bhavāṅga, leads anyone who pursues that path of argumentation, three-quarters of the way towards the Upaniṣadic position. The only way to camouflage the close proximity of the two is for the Buddhist to propound a concept which remains deliberately difficult to pin down, and this seems to be what happened. Bhavāṅga was postulated to explain psychic continuity during deep sleep and subsequently the carrying on of karmic factors, yet it is said to be cut off (bhavaṅgupaccheda) during cognition; so how can it represent a "life continuum"? It corresponds to the function of the Upaniṣadic soul (ātman) in that it is undisturbed in deep, dreamless sleep but differs since it ceases to exist when cognition arises. Under most conditions, when bhavāṅga is cut off by a stimulus which leads to cognition, processes take place which result in the generation of future acts. However when ignorance (avidyā) is uprooted this does not appear to happen, yet someone having reached such a state is said to see things as they are (yathābhutam), implying that there is cognition, though it is non-karma generating. In the state of undisturbed bhavāṅga the mind is said to be innate (prakṛti) and shining (prabhāsvara) yet this may be blemished by adventitious defilements (āgantukakleśa). By its impreciseness bhavāṅga clearly has become a device to protect Buddhist notions of moral and psychic continuity, while at the same time rejecting the soul theory of the Upaniṣads.

It seems clear that some idea of mental continuity probably pre-dates the rise of the Mahāyāna. What then does Nāgārjuna have to say on the subject? There is actually little positive evidence for Nāgārjuna's adherence to a doctrine of psychic continuity in his writings, but there again, there is no evidence to suggest the opposite. We have noted that time and again he supports traditional postures and there is no reason to think that he does otherwise in this case. Certainly, it was common for schools of the proto-Mahāyāna to develop notions which served the same purpose in their system that bhavāṅga does in the systems we have already mentioned. The Mahāsāṃghikas, for example, held to the idea of a root consciousness (mūlavijñāna) visualised as the support (āśraya) of the visual consciousness (cakṣurvijñāna) and other sense consciousnesses in much the same way as the root of the tree provides support for its leaves, branches etc. (31) Along similar lines the Mahīśāsakas distinguished between three different groups of skandhas. The first were held to be instantaneous (kṣaṇaskandha), the second to endure throughout a lifetime (ekajanmāvadhisikandha), while the final group were supposed to endure until the end of samsāra (samsārakoṭiniṣṭhaskandha) ie. until pari-nirvāṇa is achieved. In his Karmasiddhiprakaraṇa, Vasubandhu notes these doctrines and holds these particular conceptions to fulfill the same function as the idea of bhavāṅga (which he attributes to the Tāmrāparṇīyas). Ultimately they are synonymous with his concept of a store-house consciousness (ālayavijñāna).

"Dans les sūtras du Tāmrāparṇīyanikāya, ce Vijñāna (ie. ālayavijñāna) est nommé bhavāṅgavijñāna; dans les sūtras du Mahāsāṃghikanikāya, mūlavijñāna; les Mahīśāsakas le nomment samsāraniṣṭhaskandha".(32)

Commenting on these various attempts to introduce continuity into psychic processes over extremely long periods of time Conze holds:-

"All these theoretical assumptions are attempts to combine the doctrine of "not-self" with the almost instinctive belief in a "self", empirical or true. The climax of this combination of the uncombinable is reached in such conceptual monstrosities as the "store-consciousness" (ālayavijñāna) of Asaṅga and a minority of Yogācārins, which performs all the functions of a "self" in a theory which almost vociferously proclaims the non-existence of such a "self". The "store-consciousness" is a fine example of "running with the hare and hunting with the hounds". (33)

Conze's judgement that the doctrine of ālayavijñāna is a conceptual monstrosity clearly derives from his Prāsaṅgika leanings and a strong opposition to Brahmanism in any shape or form. However are his opinions borne out by textual evidence? As we have already said Nāgārjuna's known writings contain no treatment of conceptions such as bhavāṅga, while his only possible criticism of the Yogācāra notion of ālayavijñāna is to be found in the almost certainly incorrectly attributed Bodhicittavivaraṇa (34) which contains a seering wholesale indictment of Yogācāra doctrines as such. This seems particularly strange considering the fact that there is no evidence to support the use of the term Yogācāra as a denotation for a school of thought at the time of Nāgārjuna. Candrakīrti, writing at least 400 years after Nāgārjuna, does certainly quibble with the Yogācāra. His opposition is based on the fact that, from an ultimate point of view, there is no Buddhist teaching at all.

"What hearing and what teaching (can there be) of the syllableless Dharma ? Nevertheless the syllableless (anākṣara) is

heard and taught by means of superimposition (samāropa).” (35)

From his point of view the ultimate doctrine cannot be articulated, although at the conventional level (saṃvṛti) articulation can convey pragmatic truths. In other words all articulated truth must by definition be conventional. He claims that the Yogācāra disregard such a convention by holding their doctrines to be true from the ultimate point of view. By doing so, they are led astray. In fact throughout his critique of the Yogācāra he never disagrees with their doctrine from the point of view of conventional truth

(saṃvṛtisatya), he does not hold it to be *incorrect or false (mithyā)*, *but rather shows it to be a provisional position* on the road to no position. As Olsen says:-

“... it might be said that for Prāsaṅgika Mādhyamika all terms of justifiable provisional meaning, whether ālaya or cittamātra, or tathāgatagarbha, can be defended as pragmatically useful conventional truth, but the terms of final, explicit meaning are always negational : emptiness, non-origination ... No positive statement whatsoever can have final meaning.” (36)

The criticism would be all very well if the Yogācāra of Vasubandhu/Asaṅga held the views attributed to it by Candrakīrti, but this is just not so. They do in fact agree with him that all dogmas must be, by definition, non-ultimate. They hold that the ālayavijñāna itself be overthrown on the path to nirvāṇa and the idea that the doctrine of Vijñaptimātra or cittamātra implies the ultimate and sole existence of mind as Candrakīrti, and many modern scholars along with him suggest, is laughable, as will be demonstrated by investigating the relevant materials.

For Vasubandhu the ālayavijñāna performs a similar function to that of bhavāṅga in other schools. It explains the continuity of thought after deep sleep and demonstrates how the mind can maintain its functioning after the attainment of cessation (nirodhasamāpatti). In fact in his Karmasiddhiprakaraṇa he uses the fact of nirodhasamāpatti as his prime proof for the existence of the store-consciousness (ālayavijñāna). For him this samāpatti is a state with mind (sacittaka) as against the position of the Vaibhāṣikas who hold it to be non-mental (acittaka) - the complete annihilation of mind and mental activity. To account for the rising of the mind after such an experience the Vaibhāṣikas maintain that the power of the thought moment prior to nirodhasamāpatti is sufficient to explain the continuation of thought once this state has ceased. Vasubandhu objects to such a contention. He holds that the samāpatti is a state which is acittaka in the sense that the six categories of consciousness (ṣaḍvijñānakāya) do not proceed, but is sacittaka in the sense that an underlying consciousness, the maturing consciousness (vipākavijñāna), does continue to operate. (37) This maturing consciousness (vipākavijñāna) is a synonym for the ālayavijñāna and this quite clearly performs the task that bhavāṅga accomplishes in other systems.

Rahula has conclusively demonstrated that the idea of an ālayavijñāna is not itself a novel idea for the Yogācāra. (38) The term ālaya is found many times in the Tripitāka of the Theravādins. Asaṅga himself maintains that the idea is known in the Śrāvakayāna, which is his general term for the Hīnayāna, and he refers to a passage from the Ekottarāgama to back this point up. (39) Lamotte has been able to find the parallel passage in the Pāli.

"Mankind are fond of the ālaya, O bhikkhus, like the ālaya, rejoice in the ālaya; with the Tathāgata they pay honour to the Dhamma, they listen and pay an attentive ear to perfect knowledge." (40)

Actually the term ālaya crops up a number of times in the Pāli canon and the commentaries explain it to mean "attachment to the five sense-pleasures". (41) The ālaya then is craved after by mankind and involves implication in the world of sense enjoyment. Consequently it has no ultimacy. In fact the expression "uprooting of the ālaya" (ālayasamugghāta) is employed in the Pāli as a synonym for Nirvāṇa, (42) while in another place Nirvāṇa is said to be "without ālaya" (anālaya) (43) Ālaya is destroyed on the path to nirvāṇa according to these early teachings. Since it does not survive the process of enlightenment it cannot be said in the ultimate sense to be truly existent. We have seen that bhavāṅga is a concept of the same order. It provides a continuous background on which to explain "personal" identity throughout existences, though since its operation is associated with the generation of karma one must assume that in the enlightened state it either ceases to function, or its mode of functioning is dramatically altered.

In his analysis of viññānaskandha Asaṅga makes the following observation:

"What is the aggregate of consciousness (viññānaskandha)? It is mind (citta), mental organ (manas) and also consciousness (viññāna). And there what is mind (citta)? It is the ālayaviññāna containing all seeds (sarvabījaka) impregnated with the perfumings (vasanāparibhāvita) of the skandhas, dhātus and āyatanas... What is the mental organ (manas)? It is the object of ālayaviññāna, always having the nature of self notion

(manyanātmaka) associated with the four defilements, viz., the false idea of self (ātmadr̥ṣṭi), self-love (ātmāsneha), the concept of "I am" (asmimāna) and ignorance (avidyā)... What is consciousness (vijñāna)? It consists of the six groups of consciousness (ṣaḍvijñānakāya), viz. visual consciousness (cakṣurvijñāna), auditory (śrota) - olfactory (ghrāṇa) - gustatory (jihvā) - tactile (kāya) and mental consciousness (manovijñāna)." (44)

Vasubandhu offers an identical scheme though he has it that manas, etc. are all evolved from consciousness by a process known as the transformation of consciousness (vijñānapariṇāma). This transformation (pariṇāma) or maturation (vipāka) also takes place in three stages, the first being the ālayavijñāna which is said to contain all the seeds of defilement (sarvabījaka).

"It (ie. ālayavijñāna) exists as a flow, (ever changing) like a torrent. Its cessation occurs in attaining arhat-ship". (45)

This seems much the same as the Hīnayāna notion of bhavāṅga. The ālayavijñāna is a repository of karmic seeds due to reach fruition before parinirvāṇa. It therefore provides the necessary psychic continuity without at the same time assuming the proportions of the Brahmanic self; it ceases to function at the attainment of arhatship. The statement that it flows onwards like a torrent links us firmly into the traditional understanding of mind as in a state of continuous flux. Commenting on the idea of evolution (pariṇāma), Sthiramati maintains:

"Transformation means change (anyathārva). At the very moment at which the moment of cause comes to an end, the effect, different from the moment of cause, comes into being. This is transformation." (46)

Sthiramati is simply reiterating the classic notion of the mind in a condition of ignorance (avidyā). It is conditioned by the cause-effect relationship implicit in the forward sequence of the pratītyasamutpāda formula.

Going on to the second and third transformations, Vasubandhu repeats what Asaṅga has already said. He does, however, add that the mind organ (manas), the second transformation, is entirely absent in

nirodhasamāpatti and for an adept on the supra-mundane path (lokottaramārga), ⁽⁴⁷⁾ while with regard to the six groups of consciousness which comprise the third transformation, the mind consciousness (manovijñāna) is continually in operation apart from certain exceptions:

"The five vijñānas rise in the root vijñāna (mūlavijñāna = alayavijñāna) in accordance with the circumstantial cause (pratyaya), either together or alone; just like waves in the water. At all times there is the rise of mind consciousness with the exception of unconsciousness (āsamjñika), the two kinds of attainment (ie asamjñisamāpatti & nirodhasamāpatti), unconscious sleep and faint". (48)

While this may certainly held for the Trīṃśikā many scholars have felt less convinced of the position of its companion work, the Viṃśatikā. In his dicussion of this text Dasgupta, for instance claims it to teach that:-

"...all appearances are but transformations of the principle of consciousness by its inherent movement and none of our cognitions are produced by any external objects which to us seem to be existing outside of us and generating our ideas." (49)

Similarly, and more recently, May claims:-

"La Vimśatikā est une sorte d'introduction au système, plutôt critique que constructive... Avant d'exposer en détail sa propre doctrine de l'idéalisme absolu, l'auteur s'attache à réfuter les objections..." (50)

The latter author maintains that Vasubandhu is constructing a system of absolute idealism, thereby repudiating the possibility of the existence of things independent of consciousness, while the former, though less explicit on this point, gives implicit affirmation to such an interpretation throughout the rest of his essay.

More convincingly, in view of our own interpretation, Kochumuttam has argued that while Vimśatikā contains:-

"A strong polemic against belief in objects (artha), it is very easily mistaken for a polemic against belief in things as such." (51)

Kochumuttam goes on to suggest that the correct way to understand Vasubandhu's epistemological position in this text is as a transformational theory of knowledge (52). What he seems to mean here is that Vasubandhu holds knowledge to be, in some sense, a transformation of independently existing realities. In such a way Vasubandhu avoids the unwelcome consequences of subjective idealism and the realistic theories of the Vaiśeṣikas and Kāshmirā-Vaibhāśikas, both of whom he argues against in the Vimśatikā.

One of the principal problems for the realist is making sense of dreams, illusions and hallucinations. Vasubandhu accepts that such experiences can be fully coherent, being determined both as regards space and time. Such coherence he explains to be the result of the maturation of impressions (vāsanā) in consciousness itself. It does not therefore require appeal to extra-mental entities to explain extra-sensory experiences. The overall message of the early part of the Vimśatikā then is that the correspondence theory of knowledge will not hold in these special circumstances. It follows that:-

"Experience does not guarantee one-to-one correspondence between concepts and extra-mental objects... Experience starts not with extra-mental objects, but with consciousness, which alone can supply the forms of subjectivity and objectivity which are necessary presuppositions of any experience in the state of samsāra." (53)

The most important section of the Vimśatikā deals with a doctrine common to all our authors, be they Nāgārjuna or Asaṅga. This is the notion of the non-substantiality of persons and things (puṅgaladharmānairātmya). Vasubandhu tells us that when the Buddha spoke about the 12 bases of cognition (āyatana), six of which are supposed by the Abhidharmikas to be external (bāhyāyatana), the Enlightened One spoke with a hidden meaning:-

"Conforming to the creatures to be converted the World-honoured One with secret intention said there are bases of cognition, visual etc., just as (there are) beings of apparitional birth." (54)

In other words, the naively realistic belief that there are sense organs and corresponding objects is not true from the ultimate point of view. The purpose of the Buddha's secret intention is further expanded:-

"By reason of this teaching one enters into the non-substantiality of person; again by this teaching one enters into the non-substantiality of things with regard to their imagined nature." (55)

Expanding on this in his autocommentary (vṛtti) Vasubandhu introduces the important distinction between the imagined (parikalpita) and the ineffable (anābhilāpya) natures of things:-

"The theory of the non-substantiality of dharmas does not mean that dharmas are non-existent in all respects, but only in their imagined nature. The ignorant imagine the dharmas to be of the nature of subjectivity and objectivity, etc. Those dharmas are non-substantial with reference to that imagined nature and not with reference to their ineffable nature which alone is the object of the knowledge of the Buddhas... Thus through the theory of representation-only (viññaptimātra) the non-substantiality of dharmas is taught, not the denial of their existence." (56)

His critique of the atomic theory of the Vaiśeṣikas and the

notion of aggregates peculiar to the Kashmira-Vaibhāsika school of Buddhism in stanzas 11-15 of Vimśatikā indicates Vasubandhus view that all speculative theories, such as the above, are generated by the imaginative tendencies of the mind and do not therefore correspond with reality. It is worth noting here that this is precisely the same assessment of speculative thought as is found in Nagarjuna's condemnation of the own-being of dharmas (dharmasvabhāva) in MMK Ch.15.

The sense of Vimśatikā 16:-

"Perception (can occur without extra-mental objects) just as it happens in adream, etc. At the time that perception occurs the corresponding object is not found. How can one then speak of its perception." (57),

is simply, as Kochumuttam concludes:-

"...the object arrived at in perception is never the thing-in-itself, but only the image constructed by the mind." (58)

In the light of the foregoing, and since Vasubandhu has affirmed the existence of the ineffable nature of dharmas which is the object of the knowledge of Buddhas alone, we can with some degree of certainty claim that our interpretive scheme of two epistemological orientations to an indeterminate ontological existence realm fits this text. It is clear then that the imagined natures (parikalpita ātmanā) and the ineffable natures (anabhilāpya ātmanā) correspond to the parikalpita and pariniṣpanna svabhāvas of the trīsvabhāva theory of the Yogācāra, bearing in mind our often repeated proviso that pariniṣpanna is the complete identification with the ontological existence realm (=paratantra) when the latter is free from the contamination of the imagined (parikalpita). It is interesting to note here that Kochumuttam⁽⁵⁹⁾ sees such a doctrine as here presented in Vimśatikā as a seminal influence on the fully developed theories of the Pramāṇa of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti. This school holds that

the moment of perception (pratyakṣa) is essentially pure and devoid of imagination (kalpanāpoḍha). It is consequently incommunicable. On the other hand such a situation is not able to stop at this point for the unenlightened. A process follows initial perception leading to distortion by the action of a multitude of thought constructions (vikalpa). We have noted previously that Leibnitz makes exactly the same distinction (60). In the context of our overall thesis Vasubandhu's distinction between two states of knowledge is entirely appropriate and we can therefore agree with Kochumuttam's suggestion that the epistemology of Vimśatikā constitutes a transformation theory of knowledge. For the unenlightened transformation results in a world view with a status approximate to a dream. A Buddha on the other hand is awake and sees things as they are (yathābhūtam):-

"...the apparent object is a representation. It is from this that memory arises. Before we have awakened we cannot know that what is seen in the dream does not exist."(61)

Since the awakened state is a possibility, and the object of cognition in this state (if one can speak of cognition in its normal sense in such an elevated condition) is the ineffable nature of dharmas we suggest here that the Vimśatikā here gives tacit support to an indeterminate ontological existence realm as the source of both the enlightened and unenlightened state.

In the final stanzas of the text Vasubandhu explains the mechanics of operation of ignorance while at the same time demonstrating conclusively that he is not a solipsist. It is clear then that in v.18 there is an explicit statement that a plurality of individual, though mutually conditioning, streams of consciousness do exist and that this situation is itself responsible for the ignorant world picture of the unenlightened:-

"The representations of consciousness are determined by mutual influence of one(individual) on another..." (62)

which the autocommentary (vr̥tti) glosses:-

"...because a distinct representation in one stream of consciousness occasions the arising of a distinct representation in another stream of consciousness, each becomes determined, but not by external objects." (63)

This strikes a surprisingly modern tone in the writings of such an ancient writer, though Vasubandhu quickly reverts to a more magical view of things by suggesting in the next few stanzas, again to justify the existence of a plurality of individual streams of consciousness, that a magician may have the ability to cause another being to have a particular dream through the power of the former's thoughts (64).

Vasubandhu concludes his Vimsatikā in a sober manner, noting that:-

"This treatise on the mere representation of consciousness has been composed by me according to my ability; It is not possible however to discuss this (theory) in all its aspects. It is known only to the Enlightened One." (65)

He seems therefore to accept the constraints put on him by the recourse to language, and if the text appears as possessing an excessively idealistic flavour this seems to be principally because he has allowed himself to expand provisional talk more fully than a strict Prāsaṅgika would permit.

There is no question here of a doctrine suggesting the sole existence of mind (cittamātra), as is so often attributed to the Yogācāra.

Vasubandhu has not left the mainstream of Buddhist thought to suggest that perception arises through no cause, or even that the causes for the arising of perception can be contained entirely within the mental sphere. This is not subjective idealism. Vasubandhu clearly points out that the sense consciousnesses, or evolved consciousnesses (pravṛttivijñāna) only arise in accordance with a cause (pratyaya).

The cause is objective, as it has already been shown to be throughout the history of the development of Buddhist doctrine. In fact this

theory of the threefold evolution of consciousness bears a striking resemblance to the theory of cognition discussed in connection with bhavāṅga. We saw in the latter theory that an external stimulus caused a perturbation in the flow of bhavāṅga giving rise to a series of changes which led to both perception (with concomitant distortion) and its consequence: the generation of karma. The karma generated by such a process "abides" in bhavāṅga as the cause of future actions up until the time of parinirvāṇa at which time bhavāṅga seems to cease. Exactly the same sequence is maintained in the Yogācāra system. An external stimulus provokes the evolution of ālayavijñāna, the resulting process "perfuming" (vāsaṇa) this root consciousness (mūla-vijñāna) in such a way that it acts as a store of all the seeds (sarvabīja) of previous actions until arhatship is attained, at which point the ālaya itself comes to an end.

That this must be so is backed up by Asanga quoting with approval an excerpt from the Samyuktāgama to the effect that the five skandhas are devoid of self (anātma), etc. (66) This corresponds with the usual statement that the skandhas, and in this case we are dealing particularly with vijñānaskandha, are marked by suffering (duḥkha), impermanence (anitya), and non-self (anātma). Now since he clearly shows the ālayavijñāna to be but one, even though the most fundamental, evolute of the vijñānaskandha, we must assume that for Asanga the ālaya itself is conditioned by these three marks of existence. Ālayavijñāna then is just the Yogācāra term for the stream of consciousness (vinñāṇasota) we have already encountered in the early literature. It progresses like a stream, never the same from moment to moment, in a constant state of flux conditioned

by ignorance until its momentum is impeded by the effort to destroy that ignorance but putting the pratītyasamutpāda into its reversal sequence through the application of the Buddhist path. This leads to a revolution at the basis (āśrayaparāvṛtti), ie. a revolution in the ālaya.

Until this point has been reached cognition is still contaminated with the adventitious defilements and one does not realise the true meaning of representation only (vijñaptimātra). Only the achievement of vijñaptimātratā is true enlightenment and in such a state one finally understands that all previous understanding was subjective (cittamātra, vijñaptimātra) since it was based on thought construction (vikalpa), dichotomous thought (prapañca) etc. generated by a mind conditioned by ignorance after contact with external realities. In such a condition thought constructions were taken to be real, and things were not seen as they are (yathābhūtam). Enlightenment consists in the destruction of this subjective world view which results in the three domains of existence (tridhātu). All the original authorities we have examined, be they Hīnayānist, Nāgārjuna, Vasubandhu or Asaṅga hold to such a position. Enlightenment then is the destruction of the diseased mind in its manifold forms but at the same time may not be understood as total non-existence. Vasubandhu sums up such a realisation in his treatment of vijñaptimātratā:

"This is no-mind (acitta) and no-perceiving, and this is wisdom (jñāna) beyond this world. This is the revolution at the basis (āśrayaparāvṛtti) at which the two fold wickedness [the defilements of emotion and intellect] = kleśāvaraṇa and jñeyāvaraṇa

are removed. This is the realm of no out-flow (anāsrava). It is inconceivable, virtuous and unchangeable. This is bliss, the body of emancipation. It is said to be the dharma (body) of the great sage." (67)

This is clearly nirvāṇa. Vasubandhu actually agrees with Candrakīrti that in the last analysis it is inconceivable (acintya), and in consequence inarticulable. It is the total suppression of the working of the vijñānaskandha since it is no-mind (acitta), but at the same time Vasubandhu avoids the implication that it is non-existence, since he holds such a state to represent wisdom (jñāna). As the result of the destruction of the avarāṇas no further defilements are produced. For Yamada:

"Here the vijñāna turns into supra-mundane jñāna, transcendental wisdom in the higher level of the religious realm. In the jñāna there is no more conceptualisation regarding Self and Elements." (68)

There is nothing here that Nāgārjuna could have any objection to on our interpretation, and I believe we have clearly shown that whatever differences there may have been between the early period of Buddhist thought and that reflected by Nāgārjuna and the brothers Vasubandhu and Asaṅga, it is one of stress and not of essential discord.

Notes

- 1 Dhammapada ed. Ven. Dhammarama in Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient Vol LI (1963) p 239
manopubbangamā dhammā manoseṭṭhā manomayā
manasā ce paduṭṭhena bhāsati vā karoti vā
tato naṃ dukkhaṃ anveti cakkham va vahato padaṃ
- 2 S i 39
cittena nīyati loko, cittena parikissati
cittassa ekadhammassa sabbeva vasam anvagūti
- 3 A ii 177
cittena kho bhikkhu loko nīyati, cittena parikkassati
attassa uppannassa vasam gacchati
- 4 Daśabhūmika, ed. J. Rahder Louvain (1926) p 49E
cittamātram idaṃ traidhātukaṃ
- 5 Supra n.1
- 6 S iii 151
cittasarīlesā bhikkhave sattā saṃkilissanti
cittavodānā sattā visujjhanti
- 7 S ii 95
yam ca kho etaṃ bhikkhave vuccati cittam iti pi mano iti
pi viññāṇam iti pi ...
- 8 A i 10
pabhassaram idaṃ bhikkhave cittaṃ taṃ ca kho
āgantukehi upakkilittanti pabhassaram idaṃ bhikkhave
cittaṃ taṃ ca āgantukehi upakkilesehi vippamuttan ti
- 9 A. Bureau : Les sectes bouddhiques du Petit Véhicule. Saigon
(1955) p67-68, 147, 175, 194
- 10 Samyukta Nikāya (PTS: S iii 151)
cittasamkleśāt sattvāḥ saṃklīsyante, cittavyavadānād
viśuddhyante cf. supra n.6.
- 11 J. Takasaki: A Study of the Ratnagotravibhāga. Rome (1966)
p 34 n. 57
- 12 Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā: ed. Vaidya Darbhanga (1960)
p 3.18
prakṛtiś cittasya prabhāsvarā
- 13 Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā: ed. N. Dutt. London (1934)
p. 121.14-122.3
prakṛtiś cittasya prabhāsvarā. Śāriputra āha: kā punar
āyusman Subhūte ittasya prabhāsvaratā? Subhūtirāha
yad āyusman Śāriputra cittaṃ na ragāgeṇa saṃyuktam

na visamyuktam nadveseṇa ...na mohena... na paryuttānaih...nāvaranaih...nānuśyaih...na samyojanaih... na drṣṭikṛtaih samyuktam na visamyuktam iyam Śāriputra cittasya prabhāsvaratā

- 14 J. May: La Philosophie Bouddhique Idéaliste, p 273; in Asiatische Studien Vol XXV (1971) p 265-323
- 15 Samādhirājasūtra in ed. N. Dutt; Gilgit Manuscripts Srinagar, Calcutta 1941-1954 (in 3 vols)
Vol II 2, p300.9-10
yasya co mṛduki samjñā nāmarūpasmi vartate
agr̥dhr̥am nāmarūpasmi cittam bhoṭi prabhāsvaram
- 16 Abhidharmmapiṭaka; Patthānapakarana PTS Vol II, p.34,159,160 & 169
- 17 D iii 105
purisassa ca vinnāṇasotam pajānāti ubhayato
abbotchinam idhaloke patitṭhitā ca paraloke
patitṭhitā ca
- 18 Encyclopedia of Buddhism, ed. G. P. Malasekera; Ceylon, Government Press, 1961-65
Vol III Fascicle I p.17 "Bhavaṅga"
- 19 Chandogya Upanisad VI.8.1
yatra itat puruṣaḥ svapiti nāma satā Somya tadā
sampanno bhavati; svam apīto bhavati
- 20 Encyclopedia of Buddhism op cit p.19
- 21 Milindapaṇḥa p.299 (PTS)
middhasamārūhassa maharāja cittam bhavaṅgagataṃ hoti
- 22 cf. Brahmasūtra II 1.9
- 23 E. R. de S. Sarathchandra: Bhavaṅga and the Buddhist Psychology of Perception, p.96-97 in University of Ceylon Review Vol 1 (1943) p.94-102
- 24 Encyclopedia of Buddhism op cit p.18-19
- 25 Kvu p 615
- 26 AA i 60; DhsA 140; KvuA 193
- 27 From Abhidhammatthasangaha Ch IV, which summarises the stages:-
ettāvata cūddasavīthi cittuppado dvebhavangacalanāni
pubbeva atītakam ekacittakkhaṇam iti katvā sattarasa
cittakkhaṇāni paripūrenti
Quoted in Sarathchandra op cit p 99
- 28 S. Z. Aung: Compendium of Philosophy PTS p 47

- 29 Sarathcandra op.cit. p 101
- 30 ibid p 101-2
- 31 For information on these analogues of bhavāṅga cf. L. de la Vallée Poussin : Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi. Paris (1928) p 178ff
- 32 Karmasiddhiprakaraṇa ed. Takakusu, xxxi, p 785 col 1 quoted in L. de la Vallée Poussin ibid. p 178 n 2
- 33 E. Conze Buddhist Through in India London (1962) p133-4
- 34 cf Chr. Lindtner : Nagarjuniana p 193ff
- 35 Madhyamakāvātāra p 178
yi ge med paḥi chos la ni /nan pa gaṅ daṅ ston pa gaṅ /
hgyur ba med la sgro btags pa /hon kyan nan zin ston pa yin/
cf L. de la Vallée Poussin ed p 265
- 36 R. F. Olsen : Candrakīrti's critique of Vijñānavāda. p.410 in Philosophy East and West Vol 24 (1974) p 405-411
- 37 On this problem cf. N. Hakamaya : Nirodhasamāpatti- its Historical Meaning in the Vijñaptimātratā System. in Journal of Indian & Buddhist Studies Vol 23 (1975) p33-43
- 38 W. Rahula : Ālayavijñāna. in Middle Way Vol XXXIX (1964) p 55-57
- 39 Mahāyānasamgraha [Lamotte trans] p 26
- 40 A ii 131
ālayarāmā bhikkhave pajā ālayaratā ālayasammuditā, sā
tathāgatena anālaye dhamme desiyamāne sussūyati sotam
odahati aññācittam upaṭṭhāpeti
- 41 MA ii 174
ālayarāmāti sattā pañcasu kāmāguneṣu ālayanti
- 42 A ii 34
madanimmadano pipāsavinayo ālayasamugghāto vaṭṭupacchedo
tanhakkhayo virāgo nirodho nibbānaṃ
- 43 S. iv. 372
yo tassāyeva tanhāya asesavirāganirodho
paṭinissaggo mutti anālayo
- 44 Abhidharmasamuccaya ed. Pradhan. Visva-Bharati (1950) p11-12
The same definition is more briefly stated in Mahāyāna-
sūtralamkāra p 174 (xix 76):
cittam ālayavijñānam, manas tadālambanam ātmadrṣṭyādi
sampraynktaṃ, vijñānanaṃ saḍ vijñānakāyah

- 45 Triṃś 4d-5a
tac ca vartate srotasaughavat
tasya vyāvṛttir arhatve
- 46 Triṃś bhāṣya 16. 1-2
ko'yam parināmo nama anyathātvam kāraṇa kṣana
nīrodha samakālah kāraṇa kṣanavilakṣaṇaḥ
kāryasyātmalābhah parināmah
- 47 Triṃś 7b-d
...arhato na tat na nirodhasamāpattau mārgē
lokottare na ca
- 48 Triṃś 15 & 16
pañ cānām mūla vijñāne yathā pratyayaṃ udbhavaḥ
vijñānānām saha na vā tarangānām yathā jale
manovijñāna sambhūtiḥ sarvadāsamjñikād ṛte
samapāttidvayān middhām mūrccanād apy acittakāt
49. S.B.Dasgupta: Philosophical Essays. Calcutta (1941) p.198
50. J.May: La Philosophie Bouddhique Idéaliste. p.296-297
51. T.A.Kochumuttam: Vasubandhu the Yogacarin. p.25-26
52. ibid p.202
53. ibid p. 209
54. Viṃś. 8
Rūpādi āyatanam astitvam tad vineya janam prati
Abhiprāya vaśād uktam upapāduka sattvavat
55. Viṃś. 10
Tathā pudgala nairātmya praveśo hi anyathā punah
Deśanā dharmā nairātmya praveśaḥ kalpita ātmanā
56. Viṃś.vrtti 10
Na khalu sarvathā dharmo nāsti iti evam dharmā nairātmya
praveśo bhavati. Api tu "kalpita ātmanā" (Viṃś.10). Yo bālair
dharmānām svabhāvo grāhya grāhakādiḥ parikalpitas tena
kalpitenā ātmanā teṣāṃ nairātmyaṃ na tu anabhilāpyena ātmanā
yo buddhānām viśaya iti. Evam vijñaptimātrasya api vijñapti
antara parikalpitenā ātmanā nairātmya praveśāt vijñaptimātra
vyavasthāpanayā sarva dharmānām nairātmya praveśobhavati
na tu tad astitva apavādāt.
57. Viṃś.16
Pratyakṣa buddhiḥ svapnādaḥ yathā sa ca yadā tadā
Na so'rtho dr̥ṣyate tasya pratyakṣatvam katham matam

58. op.cit.225
59. ibid
60. supra Ch.6, n.14
61. Vims.17
Uktam yathā tadabhāsa vijñaptiḥ smaranam tatah
Sv̄pne dṛgviṣayābhāvam nāprabuddho'vagacchati
62. Vims.18
Anyonya adhipatitvena vijñapti niyamo mithah
63. Vims.vṛtti.18
64. Vims.19 and vṛtti
65. Vims.22
Vijñaptimātratā siddhiḥ svasakti sadṛśi mayā
Kṛta iyaṃ sarvātha sa tu na cintya buddha gocarah
66. Abhidharmasamuccaya op cit p 15
This quotation may be traced to Siii.142
... māyūpamā ca viññānam...
67. Triṃs 29 & 30
acitto'nupalambho'sa^u jñānam lokottaram ca tat
āśrayasya parāvṛttir dvidhā dauṣṭulya hānitaḥ
sa eva anāsravo dhātur acintyaḥ kuśalo dhruvaḥ
sukho vimuktikāyo 'sau dharma ākhyo'yam mahāmuneḥ
68. I. Yamada : Vijñaptimātratā of Vasubandhu.p 171
in Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society (1977) p 158-176

CONCLUSION

It is now possible to construct a model (represented diagrammatically in the attached fold-out diagram) to explain the interconnections, and hence the essentially identical structure, of the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra understanding of the enlightened and unenlightened states and their consequent relationship with reality.

There is an ontological existence realm which can not however be predicated. Any attempt to do so is doomed to failure since such an attempt is ultimately associated with a dichotomised world view based on abstractive tendencies of a mind infected by ignorance. Since language itself is so infected it will be impossible to state the precise status of reality. Such a definition is itself dependent on basic dichotomies such as existent or non-existent. This being so we are forced, bearing in mind what has been said, to refer to that state of affairs uncontaminated by the processes of thought as an Ontologically Indeterminate Realm. What is clear is that this is not to be understood in a monistic sense. The opposition of Buddhism in general to the Brahmanical systems precludes this. All the Buddhist authors we have studied acknowledge this realm to be dependently originated (pratītyasamutpāda) in the sense that it is not composed of separate entities but rather exists as a flux of mutually conditioned processes. It may be understood as truth (satya) since it is the ground of being (sat), and is often referred to as thatness (tattva). In the Madhyamaka it is not referred to by name, for obvious reasons connected with the Madhyamaka theory

of language, but this does not mean that its presence may not be inferred in the writings of Nāgārjuna, etc. In fact without such an existence realm at the basis of Nāgārjuna's system, these teachings lose their coherence. The Yogācāra is less reticent at providing a name, but again clearly recognises the provisional nature of such denotation. In line with earlier Buddhist tradition reality is characterised in its aspect of dependence and hence, in the Yogācāra, it is termed the dependent (paratantra).

Now this central, ontologically indeterminate existence realm may be understood as the base (āśraya) for the arising of the purified and the defiled vision of the world. These visions are quite clearly ~~the~~ enlightened (bodhi) and ignorant (avidyā) respectively. The latter is intimately conditioned by thought construction (vikalpa) and dichotomous mental tendencies (prapañca), which themselves mutually condition the language process (nāmarūpa/prajñapti). As a result the mind of an unenlightened being (viññāna) misinterprets reality as a conglomeration of entities (dharma) each capable of independent existence (svabhāva). In such a situation the mind continually constructs a picture of reality from which there is no escape (samsāra), which is inherently unsatisfactory (duḥkha) and leads to suffering. Such a situation is elucidated in the forward sequence of the 12-linked pratītyasamutpāda formula, and is termed conventional truth (saṃvṛti-satya) by the Madhyamaka, and the imagined nature (parikalpitasvabhāva) amongst the Yogācārins.

On the other hand all the systems we have examined hold out the possibility of emancipation from this vicious circle through the

destruction of ignorance. By putting into practice the Buddhist path (mārga), and in consequence refraining from philosophising, unenlightened consciousness (viññāna) may be extirpated, and gnosis (jñāna/prajñā) encouraged to flower. Such a transformation, since it is intimately connected with the destruction of the factors associated with ignorance and its concomitants, is adequately represented by the reverse pratītyasamutpāda formula. When this process is successfully completed one enters nirvāna and sees things as they are (yathābhūtam). Thought construction no longer operates (nirvikalpañāna) and one comes to know the true nature of things (dharmatā). One is at peace (śānta). Such a state is of course not knowledge in the conventional sense since it is empty (śūnya) of the preconceptions, such as the dichotomies between self and others, being and non-being, which provide the ground for the unenlightened state. It is to be understood as the total destruction of all the factors associated with ignorance. Nirvāṇa then is inaccessible ^{to} the domain of language and thought. This is what emptiness (śūnyatā) signifies. Again both the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra are agreed on this schema. For the former the enlightened state is referred to as the ultimate truth (paramārthasatya), while for the latter it is the accomplished nature (pariniṣpannasvabhāva). In the writings of both groups this condition is to be understood as the complete identification of knower and known such that when one talks of this as a state of mind one recognises the provisional nature of the statement.

There can be no doubt that what has been outlined above represents an ontological and epistemological schema shared equally by Madhyamaka and Yogācāra and on the basis of this general agreement one will

be cautious when dealing with scholarly evaluations which highlight essential discrepancies between the two. In this thesis then it is hoped that a model involving an ontologically indeterminate existence realm and two associated epistemological orientations has been successful in underlining the essential harmony of the thought of Nāgārjuna, Aśaṅga and Vasubandhu, particularly when seen against the background of earlier developments in Buddhist philosophy.

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ABBREVIATIONS

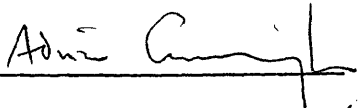
- A : Aṅguttara Nikāya. Pali Text Society 6 vols. London 1959-61.
- AK : Abhidharmakośa . de la Vallée Poussin edition
- CS : Catuhstava cf. Lindtner: Nāgārjunaiana, p.121-162.
- D : Digha Nikāya Pali Text Society, 3 Vols London 1960-67.
- J.I.B.St. : Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies
- J.I.P. : Journal of Indian Philosophy
- M : Majjhima Nikāya Pali Text Society, 3 Vols. London 1
- MCB : Mélanges Chinois et Bouddhiques
- MMK : Mūlamadhyamakakārikā . de la Vallée Poussin edition
- MS : Mahāyānasamgraha. LaMotte edition
- MV : Madhyāntavibhāgākārikā Lévi and Yamaguchi edition.
- P.E.W. : Philosophy East & West
- S : Samyutta Nikāya Pali Text Society, 6 Vols. London 1960
- Sn : Sutta Nipāta Pali Text Society
- SS : Śūnyatāsaptati cf Lindtner : Nāgārjuniana p.31-69.
- T : Taishō Shinsū Daizōkyō (canon bouddhique, édition révisée de l'ère Taishō) ed. J. Takakusu and K. Watanabe. Tokyo 1924-1935, 100vol.
- Trims: Trimsīkākārikās . Lévi edition
- TSN : Trisvabhāvanirdeśa . Mukhopadhyaya edition.
- U : Udāna Pali Text Society
- Vin : Vinaya Pali Text Society London 5 vols 1879-1883.
- VV : Vigrahavyāvartanī . Johnston and Kunst edition.
- YS : Yuktiśaṣṭikā cf. Lindtner : Nagarjuniana p 100-120.

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