

**The Nonduality of
Nonconceptual Wisdom and Conceptual Cognition:
A Study of
the Tathāgatagarbha Teaching in the
*Anūnatvāpūrṇatvanirdeśa-parivarta***

By

Chung Hung Henry Shiu

A Thesis Submitted in Conformity with the Requirements for
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy,
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Abstract

Although the doctrine of *tathāgatarbha* can be traced to the teaching of an innately pure luminous mind (*prakṛtiś cittasya prabhāsvarā*) in early Buddhist teachings, the *Anūnatvāpūrṇatvanirdeśa-parivarta* (*AAN*) is often considered one of the earliest Buddhist scriptures that explicitly expound the teachings of the *tathāgatarbha*.

The central message of the *AAN* focuses upon the non-increase and non-decrease nature of the *dharmadhātu*. This brings out the idea of the *dharmadhātu* as a totality which transcends all dualistic notions. Translated into Chinese by Bodhiruci in 525 CE, the *AAN* is now extant only in Chinese translation (*Taishō* no. 668). Unfortunately, no serious studies have ever been conducted on this *sūtra* in Western scholarship. The precise relationship between the *tathāgatarbha* and the two Mahāyāna traditions, Madhyamaka and Yogācāra, is also worth investigating in detail. The thesis will argue that the *tathāgatarbha* is not a separate school in Indian Buddhism. It will then study the historical issues relating to the *AAN*, followed by a philosophical investigation of its teachings. The thesis will also undertake an “external” consideration of the doctrinal

relationship between the *AAN* and a number of *sūtras* and *śāstras*. It will also incorporate a study of Bodhiruci (菩提流支), of the Northern Wei (北魏) dynasty, who translated the *AAN* into Chinese, as well as the first complete English translation of the *AAN* from its extant Chinese version.

This study may provide an alternative view on the *tathāgatagarbha* theory. The thesis will argue that the *tathāgatagarbha* is referring to be an aspect of all experiences. This means that all beings are by nature having a dimension of the mind not fully realized, and it is yogic meditative practices that enable the practitioners to develop an awareness of the enlightenment which is always implicit in our consciousness.

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Acknowledgements

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presentation of the hermeneutics of a particular Tibetan Buddhist tradition, I find it more appropriate to examine the *tathāgatagarbha* texts, and allow the teachings to speak for themselves in my translation and presentation of similar ideas from various scriptures, based on the inspiration drawing from my learning and practicing of the Nyingma tradition. In other words, this thesis is not intended to introduce a polemical note to *tathāgatagarbha* teaching. Nonetheless the result of my examination of the *tathāgatagarbha* texts does reflect the doctrinal position of the Dzogchen tradition of the Nyingma school.

My academic mentors have also contributed directly to my approach to Buddhist studies through Western scholarship. Professor Leonard Priestley, with whom I undertook my first undergraduate course in Buddhist studies at the University of Toronto, has been most inspiring and captivating in his presentation of Nāgārjuna's philosophy and philosophical Daoism. Were it not for the insightful understanding, skilful teaching and encouragement of Master Tam and Professor Priestley, I would never have switched from my planned study in the medical field to pursue a lifetime dedication in Buddhist studies. It is a pity that I have not been able to study Pudgalavāda Buddhism with him, though the many years of studying under him, from my undergraduate studies to the masters program, and to the completion of this thesis, has been a truly memorable experience.

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tradition he was initiated into. During our conversation, the ketchup from my veggie dog accidentally fell onto the cover of the book. I exclaimed, “Bhante, I just polluted my *Buddha Nature*,” but since the cover was a plastic one, I could easily wipe that away without a trace. Bhante replied, “Luckily it was only an adventitious one.”

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Abbreviations

<i>AMS</i>	<i>Aṅgulimālya-sūtra</i>
<i>AAN</i>	<i>Anūnatvāpūrṇatvanirdeśa-parivarta</i>
<i>BBJ</i>	<i>Buzeng bujian jing</i> (不增不減經)
<i>FXL</i>	<i>Foxing lun</i> (佛性論)
<i>DSFJWCBL</i>	<i>Dasheng fajie wuchabie lun</i> (大乘法界無差別論)
<i>DSQXL</i>	<i>Dasheng qixin lun</i> (大乘起信論)
<i>MPN</i>	<i>Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra</i>
<i>MSA</i>	<i>Mahāyānāsūtrālaṃkāra</i>
<i>RGV</i>	<i>Ratnagoṭravibhāga</i>
<i>SMD</i>	<i>Śrīmālādevīsīṃhanāda-sūtra</i>
<i>TGS</i>	<i>Tathāgatagarbha-sūtra</i>
T	Taishō shinshū daizokyō edition of the Chinese Tripiṭaka

Introduction

Although the study of the *tathāgatagarbha* theory gained little attention in Western academic circles before 1931 when E. Obermiller produced the first English translation of the *Ratnagoṭravibhāga* based on its Tibetan version, the teaching itself is without doubt one of the most central and important tenets in Mahāyāna Buddhism. Soon after Obermiller's pioneer work, followed by the discovery of the fragmentary manuscripts of the *Ratnagoṭravibhāga* in Central Asia in 1935 and the full text recovered in the following year from a Tibetan monastery, notable studies and English translations of *tathāgatagarbha* texts appeared in the succeeding seventy years. Some of the most significant are the studies and English translations of the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* in 1932, the *Ratnagoṭravibhāga* in 1966, and the *Śrīmālāsimḥanādasūtra* in 1974, by D.T. Suzuki, Takasaki Jikidō, and Alex Wayman, respectively. A number of illuminating studies by William Grosnick, John Keenan, Sallie King, Diana Mary Paul, and David Seyfort Rugg, *et al.* have also been published. There are also inspiring studies on the "Buddha-nature" concept as developed in China by Whalen Lai, Liu Ming-wood, and others, as well as ground-breaking studies on the various Tibetan hermeneutical views on the *tathāgatagarbha* in the works of S.K. Hookham, John Pettit, Cyrus Stearns, and Paul Williams.¹ In spite of these important contributions, the quantity of the studies on the *tathāgatagarbha* remains small, particularly when compared to the voluminous research conducted on, for example, the Madhyamaka philosophy. Although many Mahāyāna *sūtras*, such as the *Prajñāpāramitā*, the *Avataṃsaka*, the *Mahāratnakūṭa*, are available in

¹ Refer to the bibliography for full references to these works.

English translation, many of the most important *tathāgatagarbha* scriptures, including the *Aṅgulimālya*, the *Dhāraṇīśvararāja*, the *Jñānālokālamkāra*, as well as the focus of the present thesis, the *Anūnatvāpūrṇatvanirdeśa*, still have not received due attention from modern scholars in their study of the *tathāgatagarbha*. None of these texts is as yet available in English translation.

In the study of the Madhyamaka tradition, the concept of “emptiness” (*śūnyatā*) is sometimes interpreted by Western scholarship as a rather nihilistic view of reality², although the remarkable works of Edward Conze, R.C. Jamieson, Ian Charles Harris, C.W. Huntington Jr., Christian Lindtner, David Seyfort Ruegg, Mervyn Sprung, Frederick Streng, *et. al.* do not display any hint of such a misunderstanding. Nevertheless, there also have been assumptions incorrectly made concerning the antithetical relationship between Madhyamaka and Yogācāra, as the latter tradition is

² Theodore Stcherbatsky, in *The Conception of Buddhist Nirvāṇa*, summarizes the misunderstanding of the Madhyamaka tradition as a form of nihilism in early Western academic works by H. Kern, H. Jacobi, M. Walleser, A.B. Keith, and I. Wach as follows: “The Mādhyamikas are called the most radical Nihilists that ever existed. When compared with Vedānta, it has been asserted that negation has a positive counterpart in that system, whereas there is none in the Mādhyamika. Negation in the latter is represented as its ‘exclusive ultimate end (Selbstzweck).’” (p. 43). In more recent scholarship, David Burton writes in his *Emptiness Appraised: A Critical Study of Nāgārjuna’s Philosophy*: “My interpretation here should be distinguished from that of T. Wood. Wood argues that Nāgārjuna is self-avowedly a nihilist. I claim, by contrast, that Nāgārjuna probably did not see himself as a nihilist, but that it is arguable that, given the principles of his philosophy, he was a nihilist nevertheless.” (p. 90) In addition, F. Tola and C. Dragonetti in *On Voidness: A Study on Buddhist Nihilism* state: “The Mādhyamika school has to establish and demonstrate its ‘nihilistic’ thesis against other philosophical and religious, Buddhist and non-Buddhist schools, which adopt realistic positions. ... As a result of this abolishing and negative process we have referred to, we have the *impression* that, where the empirical reality previously existed, a huge ‘voidness’, ‘emptiness’ is being done, is coming forth, is remaining. That ‘voidness’, that the abolishing analysis *seems* to leave behind itself before us, is absolutely different from empirical reality, since in it there exist no element, no manifestation, no category, that are proper of the empirical reality and which one by one have been eliminated by the abolishing Mādhyamika dialectic. That ‘voidness’ is the true reality, that has manifested itself after the elimination of the false appearance which constitutes the empirical reality.” (pp. xvi to xviii)

often understood as representing an idealistic stream of Buddhist thinking. Ian C. Harris states:

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*). On the other hand the Madhyamaka maintains a non-committal attitude towards ontology.³

In addition, the seven-year debate between Candragomin and Candrakīrti, well known through Tāranātha's *rGya gar chos 'byung (History of Buddhism in India)*,⁴ as well as Mādhyamikas' criticisms of the *viññānavāda* or "consciousness-only" position of the adherents of the new development of the Yogācāra tradition after Dignāga and Dharmapāla, might further confirm the impression that Madhyamaka and Yogācāra are two opposing traditions upholding drastically different views concerning reality. These two "schools" of Mahāyāna Buddhism are then often treated as upholding two kinds of philosophy that are seen to be irreconcilable. As Madhyamaka and Yogācāra are identified as two distinct schools in Indian Buddhism, the *tathāgatagarbha* teaching is sometimes similarly identified as yet another stream of Buddhist thought which posits an Absolute Reality⁵, resulting in a tripartite philosophical relationship of Madhyamaka, Yogācāra, and *tathāgatagarbha*.⁶ It is accepted that in the history of Chinese Buddhism, there was a period when the *geyi* (格義), or "matching terms," practice was adopted to interpret Buddhist teachings from the perspective of philosophical Daoism. It makes one suspect that if the foregoing understanding of Mahāyāna Buddhist teachings is the result

³ Ian Charles Harris, *The Continuity of Madhyamaka and Yogācāra in Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism*, p. 7.

⁴ Cf. Lama Chimpa & A. Chattopadhyaya, trans. *Tāranātha History of Buddhism in India*, pp. 203-206.

⁵ See, for example, David Burton, *Emptiness Appraised: A Critical Study of Nāgārjuna's Philosophy*, p. 11.

⁶ See chapter 2 below.

of a practice of matching Western philosophical concepts to them, the result has been a distortion of the original intent of these teachings. Although a thorough re-examination of the relationship of the three systems of thought is not the intention of this thesis, to gain a correct understanding of the doctrinal implication of the *tathāgatagarbha* it is necessary to understand how it is related to Madhyamaka and Yogācāra. In order to accomplish this, a brief overview of the continuity and the delicate relationship of the latter two traditions is imperative.

This thesis proposes a thorough study of a short *tathāgatagarbha* text, the *Anūnatvāpūrṇatvanirdeśa* (*AAN*). Western scholarship has paid scant attention to the *AAN*, although most scholars are aware that this text has been quoted frequently in the *Ratnagoṭravibhāga*. The lack of interest is perhaps because of its conciseness in length. It is the shortest text on the *tathāgatagarbha* teaching, and is only extant in one Chinese translation. Neither of these factors forms a strong incentive for a philosophical or philological study of the text, approaches that are favored by many modern scholars. To base a Ph.D. dissertation on such a short piece of writing might be regarded as a challenging task. However, since my interest is not philological studies, I intend to construct a thesis more on historical and philosophical grounds rather than dedicating the task to a translation of a *tathāgatagarbha* text of more elaborate length, although such an endeavour is by no means less important.

It is reasonable to assume that meditations and doctrinal teachings were never separated in the traditional practice of Buddhism in India, though there were some cases

when Buddhism was transmitted to other East Asian countries in which the two intertwined components were nevertheless separate. This is evident, for example, in the Kyo and Son distinction in Korean Buddhism. The *tathāgatagarbha* teaching, as this thesis will argue, is one that is intrinsically related to the Buddhist meditative practice in the complete revelation of the innate enlightened qualities within all sentient beings. It concerns both the embodying in one's own experience of such an awakening experience as it truly is and always has been, and communicating and relating such an experience to other beings, whether deluded or enlightened. In this regard, the teaching can be studied in connection with the closely related general Mahāyāna teaching of the *bodhicitta*, as well as the understanding of the precise relationship between *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*, the seemingly contrasting concept of the Buddhas participating in both the unconditioned and the conditioned realms simultaneously, and the doctrine of the three *kāyas* of the Buddhas. This thesis stresses that the *tathāgatagarbha* should not be approached as a philosophical or even metaphysical discourse concerning a substantial entity or an object that functions as a generative monism. Rather, if interpreted according to the way it was presented in the Indian Buddhist texts, the teaching is a soteriological, as well as an epistemological, device that leads the practitioners to the realization of Buddhahood. This is a state of being nondual with the reality that is nonconceptual, unconditioned. It is in a sense always present, "permanent" (*nitya*), "eternal" (*dhruva*), "blissful" (*sukha*), "quiescent" (*śiva*), and "steadfast" (*śāśvata*).

The thesis therefore opens with an investigation of how the *tathāgatagarbha* was interpreted in the Buddhist texts, as opposed to the way it has been treated in modern

scholarship. The various descriptions of the *tathāgatagarbha* as a potential, an ontological substance, an ultimately existing entity in an embryonic state, and so on, are all modern speculations about the teaching resulting from a study of the teaching through the lens of Western philosophy. For example, the *tathāgatagarbha* has been variously interpreted by some Japanese scholars, such as Matsumoto Shirō and Hakamaya Noriaki, as a “locus” or a “topos.” These are, however, all modern interpretations that are not found in the Buddhist texts. In the first chapter, therefore, a clarification is undertaken on how the *tathāgatagarbha* is defined and understood in the Mahāyāna *sūtras*. Attention will also be paid to related concepts, such as “mind of innate purity” (*prakṛtipariśuddhacitta*) and *dharmakāya*, in the Buddhist texts.

Chapter two will be an examination of how the *tathāgatagarbha* is related to the two Mahāyāna traditions. The thesis will argue that the *tathāgatagarbha* is not a third, separate school in Indian Buddhism. The teaching is presented mainly through Buddhist *sūtras* understood to belong to the “third turning of the wheel” mentioned in the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra*, and hence is said to be of “definitive meaning” (*nītārtha*) as opposed to other teachings that are only “provisional” (*neyārtha*). As such, this corpus of literature is seriously adopted by the Yogācāra tradition,⁷ which also considers itself as

⁷ Donald W. Mitchell remarks in his *Buddhism: Introducing the Buddhist Experience*: “The writers of the *Tathāgata-garbha* literature were aware of the *Perfection of Wisdom Sūtras* and knew of Mādhyamika philosophy. Today, scholars argue that these writers, like many other Buddhists at that time, were concerned with the negative impression conveyed by the notion of ‘emptiness.’ They felt that the notion of emptiness focused just on the *lack* of independent selfhood and did not do justice to the positive and *full* nature of enlightened experience. So, their *sūtras* stressed the Awakening to one’s Buddha potential that exists within as a luminous treasure waiting to be discovered. The followers of the second Mahāyāna school, Yogācāra, also shared this concern about Mādhyamika. They may well have been influenced by the *Tathāgata-garbha* texts.” (p.140)

propounding the third cycle of the Buddha's teachings. As there exists no separate lineage of masters and disciples in India concerned only with the "*tathāgatagarbha*" teaching, and all exegetical literature on such teaching is traditionally ascribed to the masters of the Yogācāra tradition, there is sufficient evidence to indicate that the *tathāgatagarbha* is not a separate school. It is a body of literature propounding a teaching that, at least in the eyes of the Yogācāra practitioners, is related closely to the gnoseological and soteriological model of achieving Buddhahood laid down by Maitreya, Asaṅga, and Vasubandhu.⁸ On the other hand, it should not be seen as contradictory to the Madhyamaka teachings either. It is to be hoped that these discussions will shed light on the delicate relationship that exists between the three systems of teaching in Mahāyāna Buddhism.

The main investigation of the *AAN* begins in chapter three. The historical issues relating to the *sūtra*, including its reception and translation in the Chinese and Tibetan traditions, and its Sanskrit title given in the *Ratnagoṭravibhāga*, will be examined. Thereafter issues more difficult to determine with confident accuracy, such as tracing the origin and the dating of the text, will be pursued. It would seem probable that the text, or

⁸ John Makransky points out in *Buddhahood Embodied: Sources of Controversy in India and Tibet*: "The *DDV* [i.e. *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga*] is an important source of information on the Yogācāra theory of fundamental transformation (*āśrayaparāvṛtti*). ... Its yogic and philosophical models are closely related to those found in the *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra* (*MSA*), *Madhyānta-vibhāga* (*MAV*), *Abhisamayālamkāra* (*AA*), and *Ratnagoṭravibhāga* (*RGV*), all of which are ascribed by the Tibetan tradition to Maitreya, in part, undoubtedly, because of the apparent close relationship between these texts. ... And the *RGV* is the most detailed Indian commentary on the theory of Buddha-nature (*tathāgatagarbha*). In a number of places these texts draw on a common substratum of ideas, primarily Yogācāran ideas (such as *āśrayaparāvṛtti*, the fivefold model of the yogic path, the four *samādhis* of the *prayoga mārga* leading to *nirvikalpa-jñāna*, *citta-prakṛti-viśuddhi*, and *trikāya* terminology)." (p. 65)

the prototype of it, was originally orally transmitted among members of the Mahāsāṅghika sect, but its compilation took place somewhere in Central Asia around the third century C.E. The question of the modern practice of dating the *composition* of the Buddhist texts will be examined, as this system of dating totally ignores the history of oral transmission before these texts were *compiled*. Consequently, any schema that attempts to list a chronological development of a body of literature, such as that of the *tathāgatagarbha* teaching, cannot be seen as accurately recording how these texts originated. This will influence the treatment of the relationship of the *AAN* to other *tathāgatagarbha* texts such as the *Tathāgatagarbha* and the *Śrīmālāsīmhanāda*, and will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

The third chapter, concerned primarily with the historical research relating to the *AAN*, will be followed by a chapter that focuses on a philosophical investigation of the teachings as presented in the text. It will begin with a structural analysis, followed by an examination of the main themes of the *AAN*. The fifth chapter will embody a study of the central notion of the teaching of “no increase and no decrease” (*anūnatvāpūrṇatva*) as it is handled in other Mahāyāna texts, thereby expanding our understanding of the *AAN*. The chapter will conclude with an investigation linking the central tenet of the *AAN* with the Mahāyāna Buddhist practice. In this chapter an attempt will also be made to establish at what stage of realization a practitioner would be enabled to experience directly the notion of “no increase and no decrease,” as opposed to learning about it as objective information. The *AAN* teaches that it is a perverted view to think of a sentient being leaving the *sattvadhātu* in entering *parinirvāṇa*, so that there is a “decrease” in the

sattvadhātu and an “increase” in the *nirvāṇadhātu*. This teaching echoes a passage in the *Udāna*:

And just as whatever rivers in the world, monks, run into the great ocean and whatever showers fall upon it from the air, the great ocean is not known to be lessened or filled by that, so, monks, however many monks attain Parinirvana in the realm of Nirvana (*nibbānadhātu*) without residue, the realm of Nirvana is not known to be lessened or filled by that.⁹

The views of “increase” and “decrease” are dualistic notions that arise from the ignorance of the nondual (*advaya*), nonconceptual (*avikalpa*) reality, termed “*ekadhātu*” in the *AAN*. Within this awakening experience of *ekadhātu* (loosely translated as “one realm”), all phenomena are neither the same nor different, but they are of one taste (*ekarasa*). It is a direct, intuitive experience of things, conditioned (*saṃskṛta*) or unconditioned (*asaṃskṛta*), just as they truly are. Furthermore, one can go a step further and argue that the achievement of Buddhahood is not attained through “increase” or by developing anew the Buddha qualities, which are said to be already present within all sentient beings no matter how defiled they are in the realm of *saṃsāra*; it is also not attained through the “decrease” of truly existing defilement, which is in reality illusory and is only adventitious. In other words, there is really *nothing* to decrease or eliminate. A similar idea is found in the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, where it is stated:

Here there is nothing to be removed
And absolutely nothing to be added;
The Truth should be perceived as it is,
And he who sees the Truth becomes liberated. (1.154)

⁹ Leonard C.D.C. Priestley, *Pudgalavāda Buddhism: The Reality of the Indeterminate Self*, p. 179. Cf. P. Steinthal, ed., *Udāna* (London: Pali Text Society, reprinted 1982), p. 55.

The Essence [of the Buddha] is [by nature] devoid
Of the accidental [pollutions] which differ from it;
But it is by no means devoid of the highest properties
Which are, essentially, indivisible from it. (1.155)¹⁰

This is also similar to what the *Saptaśatikā-Prajñāpāramitā* states:

Just that, O Lord, is the development of perfect wisdom, where there is neither the stopping of the dharmas of an ordinary person, nor an acquisition of the Buddha dharmas.¹¹

It is thus said to be erroneous to believe that there is increase or decrease in the *sattvadhātu* or *nirvāṇadhātu*, or that qualities (*guṇa*) should be added and defilements (*saṃkleśa*) should be removed if Buddhahood is to be attained.

Having undertaken an “internal” examination of the teachings of the *AAN*, including possible misinterpretations, the thesis will go further, undertaking an “external” consideration of the doctrinal relationship between the *AAN* and a number of *sūtras* and *śāstras*. Chapters six to nine will incorporate a study of the *AAN* in relation to four texts that are widely accepted as “early *sūtras* on the *tathāgatagarbha* teaching.” These are the *Tathāgatagarbha*, the *Śrīmālāsīmaṇāda*, the *Aṅgulimālya*, and the *Mahāparinirvāṇa*. A brief discussion of other *sūtras* expounding the doctrine of the *tathāgatagarbha* will be found in chapter ten. It will be then concluded by a short chapter which summarizes the difficulties and problems of dating these *sūtras* on the *tathāgatagarbha* thought. Following the study of the related *sūtras*, chapters twelve to fifteen will undertake a

¹⁰ Takasaki Jikidō, *A Study on the Ratnagotravibhāga*, pp. 300-301. The original Sanskrit reads:
nāpaneyam ataḥ kiṃ-cid upaneyam na kiṃ-cana / draṣṭavyam bhūtaṃ bhūta-darśi vimucyate //
śūnya āgantukair dhātuḥ sa-vinirbhāga-lakṣaṇaiḥ / aśūnyo 'nuttarair dharmair avinirbhāga-lakṣaṇaiḥ //
(E.H. Johnston edition, p. 76).

¹¹ Edward Conze, *Selected Sayings*, p. 117.

comparative study of the *AAN* and four treatises (*śāstra*), namely, the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, the *Dasheng fajie wufenbie lun* (大乘法界無分別論, **Mahāyānadharmadhātvaśāstra*), the *Foxing lun* (佛性論, **Tathāgatadhātuśāstra*), and the *Dasheng qixin lun* (大乘起信論, **Mahāyānaśraddhōtpādaśāstra*). The *AAN* is more directly related doctrinally to these *tathāgatagarbha* texts; this does not mean however that a similar relationship cannot be observed to other texts such as the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*, the *Dhāraṇīśvararājasūtra*, etc., where the relationship seems to be more distant.

Because this thesis examines the *tathāgatagarbha* teaching as it was understood in the Indian tradition, the treatment of the *tathāgatagarbha* theory or the *AAN* in the Chinese Buddhist schools such as the Tiantai (天台) or the Huayan (華嚴) will not be attempted. This does not mean, however, that the *AAN* does not exert profound influence on Chinese Buddhism. Indeed, the teachings such as the *ekadhātu* and the identification of the *sattvadhātu* with the *dharmakāya* play an important role in the formation of the Huayan systematization of its distinctive philosophies, including the interpenetration of the noumenon (*li*, 理) and the phenomena (*shi*, 事), the “dependent-origination of the *dharmadhātu*” (*fajie yuanqi*, 法界緣起), the notion of one is many and many are one, etc.

Finally there will be a general “conclusion” of the thesis. The appendix section will contain the first complete English translation of the *AAN* from its extant Chinese version, the *Foshuo buzeng bujian jing* (佛說不增不減經), and a study of Bodhiruci (菩提流支), of the Northern Wei (北魏) dynasty, who was responsible for producing the Chinese translation of the *AAN*.

Various methods have been necessary to bring this thesis to fruition. It has involved philosophical investigation into the teachings of the *AAN* and the *tathāgatagarbha* theory in general, though without a “matching” with Western philosophical concepts. Furthermore a philological examination of the possible mistranslation of the *AAN* by Bodhiruci, cross-checking various passages with those cited in the Sanskrit and Tibetan versions of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* has been deemed necessary. A historical survey of the compilation of the *AAN* in relation to other *tathāgatagarbha* texts and of the biographical accounts of Bodhiruci has also been undertaken. What makes this thesis distinct from other studies of the *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine is that, while its exploration of the teachings of the *AAN* is by nature a philosophical one, it never ignores their soteriological significance. In other words, the examination of the philosophical meaning of the content of the *AAN* is not conducted at the expense of overlooking the possible relationship between these teachings and the meditative practice of Mahāyāna Buddhism. This thesis therefore considers the text of the *AAN* from both the soteriological and the epistemological perspectives. Indeed, to practising Buddhists through the ages, the notion of the *tathāgatagarbha* is not simply a philosophical problem that needs to be wrestled with; the adoption (or the rejection) of this doctrine also entails drastic differences in the style and the framework of spiritual cultivation in order to lead towards perfect enlightenment.

The present thesis therefore attempts to answer the following questions: How is the *tathāgatagarbha* related to more general Mahāyāna notions such as the *bodhicitta* and the

three *kāyas* of the Buddhas? Is the *tathāgatagarbha* conditioned or unconditioned? What are the *sūnya-tathāgatagarbha* and the *asūnya-tathāgatagarbha*, and how do they relate to one another? What are the central tenets of the *AAN*? Are these teachings uniquely found in the *AAN* or they can also be seen in other Buddhist texts? How is the *AAN* related to other *tathāgatagarbha* scriptures? In what ways do later treatises make use of the *AAN*? At what stage would the notion of “no increase and no decrease” be attained on the Bodhisattva path towards perfect enlightenment? It is hoped that the thesis contributes to the developing field of studies of the *tathāgatagarbha* in modern academia. Furthermore, it is to be hoped that it will provide a new perspective and create renewed interest in understanding the importance of the teaching in Mahāyāna Buddhism and in placing this teaching firmly within the framework of Buddhist meditation. It also aims at providing an answer to the critical voices that proclaim this teaching to be “non-Buddhist,” by demonstrating how the criticism is directed at the *tathāgatagarbha* because of a misguided understanding of the text.

Chapter One: The Nature of the *Tathāgatagarbha*

“Tathāgatagarbha” as a Bahuvrīhi or a Tatpuruṣa Compound

Throughout the last century, many Buddhist scholars have attempted to understand the nature of the *tathāgatagarbha*. Most of them have explored the etymology of the term and various translations of “*tathāgatagarbha*” have been produced. For example, English translations of the compound are given by Takasaki Jikidō, Brian Brown, Alex Wayman, E. Obermiller, as “matrix of the Tathāgata,” “Tathāgata-embryo,” “embryo of the Tathāgata,” “essence of the Tathāgata,” and “germ of the Tathāgata,” respectively.¹² These translations are based, broadly speaking, on a grammatical analysis of “*tathāgatagarbha*” either as a possessive compound (*bahuvrīhi*) or a determinative compound (*tatpuruṣa*): in the former case, it means “possessing the *tathāgatagarbha*,” whereas in the latter case, it means “being the *tathāgatagarbha*.” Underlying these translations, implicit in their choice of interpreting the compound as a *bahuvrīhi* or a *tatpuruṣa*, is the question of whether one should understand the *tathāgatagarbha* as “container” or “content.” David Seyfort Rugg, in his *magnum opus*, *La Théorie du Tathāgatagarbha et du Gotra: Études sur la Sotériologie et la Gnoséologie du Bouddhisme*, suggests that in most cases “*tathāgatagarbha*” is used in the *tathāgatagarbha* literature as a *tatpuruṣa*. However, he also observes that the compound can also be

¹² Diana M. Paul has summarized some of these different translations in *The Buddhist Feminine Ideal*, pp. 47-50.

interpreted as a *bahuvrīhi*,¹³ and that the use of the compound “*tathāgatagarbha*” as a *bahuvrīhi* is historically earlier than its occurrence as a *tatpuruṣa*.¹⁴ Paul J. Griffiths, on the basis of his study of the *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra*, further proclaims that to take the compound “*tathāgatagarbha*” as a *bahuvrīhi* is “on both safer and more properly Buddhist ground,” and that this reading seems to be what the *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra* (*MSA*) intends to convey.¹⁵ In fact, there are also other scholars, such as Nakamura Hajime¹⁶ and Michael Zimmermann, who prefer to treat the “*tathāgatagarbha*” as a *bahuvrīhi* compound. Zimmermann makes a detailed examination of the various possible ways of interpreting the compound as a *bahuvrīhi* and as a *tatpuruṣa*, while noting the possible problems in each of these interpretations, though he finds that “[the] most ‘natural’ analysis of the compound would be as a *bahuvrīhi*.”¹⁷ Such a diverse interpretation of the compound in modern scholarship is owing to the wide semantic meaning of the term “*garbha*.”

¹³ For example, “*tathāgatagarbha*” is used as a *bahuvrīhi* in the *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra* (ix. 37). See D. Seyfort Rugg, “The *gotra*, *ekayāna* and *tathāgatagarbha* theories on the Prajñāpāramitā according to Dharmamitra and Abhayākaragupta,” pp. 287-288.

¹⁴ David Seyfort Rugg 1969, pp. 499-516.

¹⁵ Paul J. Griffiths, “Painting Space with Colors,” p. 63. Griffiths also states: “If one does interpret the compound *tathāgatagarbha* as a *tatpuruṣa*, the [*Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra*]-*bhāṣya* would here have to be translated ‘all living beings are the embryo of the Tathāgata’ --- and this suggests something very different from the claim that all livings *have* the embryo of the Tathāgata. The former is the stronger claim: if all living beings have as their defining characteristic Buddhahood *in potentia*, then the claim that all living beings will inevitably become Buddha will usually also be pressed, and along with this will go a concomitant ontological or metaphysical devaluation of the obstacles to becoming Buddha. If, on the other hand, one interprets verse 37 to say that living beings possess the embryo or germ of the Tathāgata, then it remains possible to deny that all beings will become Buddha and to give the defilements and passions that might prevent them from becoming so a more prominent place.” (*ibid.*)

¹⁶ Nakamura Hajime, *Shinbutsu bukkyō jiten*, p. 413.

¹⁷ Michael Zimmermann, *A Buddha Within: The Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra*, p. 43.

It has been suggested by modern scholars that the “*garbha*” in “*tathāgatagarbha*” can be interpreted in various different ways, as “womb,” “embryo,” “inside, middle, interior of anything,” “interior chamber,” “germ,” “seed,” “essence,” and so on. The Chinese translation of the term “*garbha*” is rather standardized, as “*zang*” (藏), which means “receptacle” or “storage,” while the Tibetan rendering of the term as “*snying po*,” which means “essence,” “heart,” or “centre,” is also consistent in the Tibetan canon.¹⁸ Brian Brown comments that the “dual aspect of the *garbha* concept as both ‘embryo’ and ‘womb’ has remained somewhat problematic in the development of the theory, and especially among the various Chinese, Tibetan, and Western translators.”¹⁹ It is interesting to note that such an intense debate on the meaning of “*garbha*” as “embryo” or “womb” has, to the best of my knowledge, never taken place in India, China, Japan, or Tibet. It also seems that the only place where we find a detailed definition of the meaning of “*garbha*” in the Chinese canon is the *Foxing lun*, the authorship and the Chinese translation of which are attributed to Vasubandhu and Paramārtha respectively. In the *Foxing lun*, we are actually given multiple meanings of “*garbha*” --- as the “contained” (*saṃgrhīta*, 所攝藏), as that “which is hidden” (*upagūḍha*, 隱覆藏), and as the “container” (*saṃgrahaka*, 能攝藏):

¹⁸ One might deduce from the Chinese and Tibetan translations of the term “*tathāgatagarbha*” that the “*garbha*” is understood in the Chinese tradition as a “container” but as “contained” in the Tibetan tradition. Alex and Hideko Wayman, for example, remarks that “[t]he ‘womb’ interpretation is prevalent in Chinese translations of the term *tathāgatagarbha*... The Tibetan translation, *sñin po*, which means ‘heart,’ ‘pith,’ ‘essence,’ seems to agree with the ‘interior’ interpretation of *garbha*” (p. 42, n. 75). However, one should also notice that in Buddhahadra’s Chinese translation of the *Tathāgatagarbha-sūtra*, the phrase “*sarvasattvās tathāgatagarbhāḥ*” is rendered as “一切眾生有如來藏,” which clearly takes the *tathāgatagarbha* as “contained” rather than the “container.” So, the Chinese rendition of “*tathāgatagarbha*” as “*rulaizang*” (如來藏) does not necessarily mean that “*garbha*” is interpreted as a “container.”

¹⁹ Brian Brown, *The Buddha Nature*, p. 14.

First, with regard to [the meaning of] the “contained,” the Buddha explains that it is in accordance with the abiding-nature of *tathatā* that all sentient beings are *tathāgatagarbhas*²⁰. ...

Second, with regard to [the meaning of] that “which is hidden,” since the [nature of] the Tathāgata is itself hidden and not manifested, it is therefore named “the hidden.” ...

Third, with regard to [the meaning of] the “container,” it refers to the moment when all Buddha-qualities (*guṇas*), which are more numerous than the sands of the Ganges, at the fruition-stage, abide in the *tathāgatadhātu* as they should, [and hence it is so named] because all [Buddha qualities] are epitomized [as if they were in a container].²¹

The explanation here, on the one hand, reflects the bifurcation of interpreting this term in modern scholarship as either a “container” or the “content,” while on the other, it also illustrates the central idea of the *tathāgatagarbha* as a pure dimension of all minds concealed or hidden by the adventitious defilements.

The wide semantic range of the compound, as suggested in the *Foxing lun*, could lead us to see that its application might be used simply as a metaphor that is intended to be paradoxical in order to prevent readers from attempting to give the compound *tathāgatagarbha* a single meaning, as “the embryo of the Tathāgata,” “the womb of the Tathāgata,” or some similar equivalent. It is probably misleading to try to limit the entire semantic range of the meaning of “*tathāgatagarbha*” to one single interpretation throughout the *tathāgatagarbha* literature. Griffiths points out that the

²⁰ “All sentient beings are *tathāgatagarbhas*” is intended here as a literal translation of the Chinese “一切眾生是如來藏”. However, it should probably be better translated as “all sentient beings possess the *tathāgatagarbha*,” as it would be naturally understood that the *tathāgatagarbha* is “contained” in all sentient beings, which seems to be what this passage tries to convey.

²¹ 一所攝名藏者，佛說約住自性如如，一切眾生是如來藏；二隱覆為藏者，如來自隱不現，故名為藏；三能攝為藏者，謂果地一切過恒沙數功德，住如來應得性時，攝之已盡故。(T1610, 795c-796a)

Mahāyānasūtrālamkārabhāṣya, ascribed to Vyavadātasamaya, introduces two key compounds to explain the verse “*sarveṣāṃ aviśiṣṭāpi tathatā śuddhim āgatā / tathāgatavṃ tasmāc ca tadgarbhāḥ sarvadehināḥ*” (9:37): the compound “*tadviśuddhisvabhāva*” is used to modify “*tathāgata*,” and the compound “*tathāgatagarbha*” is used to modify “*sarve sattvāḥ*”; Griffiths gives us an interesting observation that the Tibetan translation “appears to take the first compound as a *tatpuruṣa* and the second as a *bahuvrī*.”²²

As Seyfort Ruegg, Griffiths, Zimmerman, and Paul have given us detailed surveys of the possible renditions of *tathāgatagarbha* both as a *bahuvrīhi* and a *tatpuruṣa* compound, the present thesis does not plan to replicate their work here. An examination of the various options for interpreting the *tathāgatagarbha*, as Seyfort Ruegg and Zimmermann suggest, shows that the most natural way to understand the compound *tathāgatagarbha* which is in accord with its doctrinal meaning seems to be a *bahuvrīhi* one, but we are by no means limited to that. Whether “*tathāgatagarbha*” should be interpreted as a *tatpuruṣa* or a *bahuvrīhi* should really be dependent on the context of the passage.²³ Wayman also points out that in the *Guhyagarbhatantra*, the term *garbha* is defined as “womb” (*kukṣi*), “embryo” (*bhrūṇa*) and “centre” (*madhyama*), and this clearly shows that the author of the *Guhyagarbhatantra* was prepared to understand

²² Paul J. Griffiths, “Painting Space with Colors,” pp. 62-3.

²³ Brian Brown has made a similar comment in *The Buddha Nature* that “the *Tathāgatagarbha* is susceptible of various terminological nuances, all of which depend upon the perspective from which it is considered. ... Its implicit intention has not been to expose any contradictory ambivalence but rather, to expound the *garbha*’s inherent richness as both active potentiality leading to its own inherent finality (and thus, as “embryo”), and its simultaneous status as universal maternal determinant (and thus, as “womb”).” (pp. 14-15)

“*garbha*” differently in different contexts.²⁴ Wayman’s observation, however, seems to have gone unnoticed by other modern scholars. This suggestion is interesting in the way that “centre” also carries the meaning of the “quintessence” or the “heart” --- this is reflected in the *Laṅkāvatāra* which identifies the *tathāgatagarbha* as the *hṛdaya* (heart, essence) of the wisdom of the Buddhas,²⁵ as well as in the Indo-Tibetan translators’ rendering the term into Tibetan as *snying po*. The “centre” (*madhyama*), of course, is also the way the Buddha describes what reality is. In this way, the compound *tathāgatagarbha* can also be loosely interpreted as “containing the quintessence of the Tathāgata,” or, to take it even further, “containing the quintessence of the Tathāgata’s realization of reality as the Middle Way (*madhyamāpratipad*).”

Our attempt to define “*tathāgatagarbha*” as either a *bahuvrīhi* or a *tatpuruṣa* compound, and hence trying to establish a single English translation to cover both the doctrinal meaning of the term as well as the meanings of such rich similes of the *tathāgatagarbha*, illustrated in the nine similes of the *TGS*, is therefore doomed to fail and is misleading. On the basis of the wide semantic range of “*tathāgatagarbha*,” the term is therefore left untranslated in this thesis. Just as there are no perfect English translations for *saṃsāra*, *nirvāṇa*, or *sūnyatā*,²⁶ it is also very difficult to find an English equivalent for the term “*tathāgatagarbha*”. To translate “*tathāgatagarbha*” as “embryo

²⁴ Wayman & Wayman, *The Lion’s Roar of Queen Śrīmālā*, pp. viii-ix.

²⁵ See, for example, v. 60 of chapter 2 of the *Laṅkāvatāra*, as well as the section following the discussion of the seven kinds of *paramārtha* in the same chapter.

²⁶ In the case of *sūnyatā*, for example, the common English translations such as “emptiness,” “voidness,” or even “openness” cannot cover its full range of meaning. Neither is “cyclic existence” a good English translation for *saṃsāra*. However, it should also be noted that the meanings of these technical terms do not lie in the Indian language; one has to learn what these terms mean in the context of various forms of Buddhism, no matter whether they are in their Pali or Sanskrit original, or in Chinese, Japanese, or English translation.

of the Tathāgata,” for example, not only results in a limitation to understand the compound as a *bahuvrihi* only, but it might also be misleading in the way that it carries the connotation that refers to something undergoing a process of development into its fullest form. All *tathāgatagarbha* literature, however, agrees on the point that sentient beings, no matter how defiled, possess the *tathāgatagarbha* in its fullest, and the meditative practice is a process to “reveal” what is immanent, not to develop something that is not already fully endowed. The *Tathāgatagarbhasūtra* (*TGS*) for example states:

Thus, good men, I use the Buddha vision to see into all sentient beings, who are dwelling in the defilements of desire, hatred, and ignorance; they have the Tathāgata-wisdom, Tathāgata-eyes, and Tathāgata-bodies, sitting cross-legged, immovable. Good men, all sentient beings, although encased in the defiled bodies of various destinies, have the *tathāgatagarbha* always without pollutants, replete with virtues and marks not different from me.²⁷

Although we find in the *TGS* the similes of the pit of a mango and a poor woman bearing a noble son, both suggesting the growth of something into maturity, we should be careful to note that the metaphor of “growth” here refers to the progression on the path of revealing the ever-present innate purity as it actually is. In other words, it is the manifestation of the *dharmakāya* which is in its obscured form and is implicit in our consciousness before full enlightenment, a process of revealing what is potential to actual; hence, it is not the acquisition of something which is not already present, or the development of something which is not already in its fullest and most complete form. This process of removing obscurations of the innate *dharmakāya* is known in the

²⁷如是善男子，我以佛眼觀一切眾生，貪欲恚癡諸煩惱中，有如來智如來眼如來身，結加趺坐儼然不動。善男子，一切眾生雖在諸趣煩惱身中，有如來藏常無染污，德相備足如我無異。(T666, 457c)

Yogācāra tradition as “transformation of basis” (*āśrayaparivṛtti*). Vasubandhu comments on this process of fundamental transformation in his *Dharmadharmatāvibhaṅga-vṛtti*:

Although there has been a fundamental transformation (*āśrayaparivṛtti*) [at full enlightenment], nothing has undergone an actual change²⁸. ... [T]he innate luminosity (*prakṛti prabhāsvaraṃ*) in fundamental transformation (*āśrayaparivṛtti*) is not previously nonexistent. Rather, through the appearance of adventitious obstructions, it did not appear, just like the impurity [in the analogy of the sky], the lack of splendor [in the analogy of the gold], and the lack of clarity [in the analogy of the water]. That is all. When the [innate luminosity] is freed from those [obstructions], it appears. From this, through that transformation, the real nature of things (*dharmatā*) comes to appear; but by its appearing it is not [newly] generated, nor is it created. Because there is no [creation] of it, the real nature of things (*dharmatā*) and the fundamental transformation consisting of it (*tadprabhāvitāśrayaparivṛtti*) are permanent (*nitya*).²⁹

This comment is closely related to the teaching in the *Śrīmālādevīsīṃhanādasūtra* (*SMD*) that the “Dharmakāya of the Tathāgata when not free from the store of defilement is referred to as the Tathāgatagarbha.”³⁰ Accordingly, the real nature of things (*dharmatā*) and the innate luminosity (*prakṛti prabhāsvaraṃ*) of sentient beings are not previously nonexistent. All sentient beings already possess the *dharmakāya* in an obscured form (*samālā tathatā*); this obscured form of *dharmakāya* is named “*tathāgatagarbha*.”

²⁸ The phrase “nothing has undergone an actual change” translates the Tibetan “*rnam par ’gyur ba’i chos can ma yin pa*,” which literally means “there is no quality-holding transformation-form.”

²⁹ John Makransky, *Buddhahood Embodied*, p. 91.

³⁰ Wayman & Wayman, p. 98.

The Tathāgatagarbha is Not an Ātmavāda Doctrine

The teaching of *tathāgatagarbha* suggests that Buddhahood is achieved through revealing the pure dimension of our mind as a result of removing the defilements of dualistic and conceptual attachment. Therefore, all the positive and affirmative descriptions of the *dharmakāya* are identical with the attributes of the *tathāgatagarbha*. And hence, the *tathāgatagarbha*, just like the *dharmakāya*, is said to be permanent (*nitya*), steadfast (*śāśvata*), eternal (*dhruva*), and blissful (*sukha*); it is also beyond the realm of the conditioned (it is the *asaṃskṛta-dhātu*) and all that is caused. As the *dharmakāya* pervades everything throughout the entire cosmos, the *tathāgatagarbha* is also said to be the support (*ādhāra*) of *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*.³¹

Because of the positive descriptions of the *tathāgatagarbha* as “permanent,” “eternal,” and “not empty,” and so on, the *tathāgatagarbha* might easily be misinterpreted as an ontological entity, a truly existing entity, or as a generative monism. What is perhaps surprising is that the *tathāgatagarbha* is also sometimes spoken of as a “Self” (*ātman*), as is found in the *SMD* and the *Laṅkāvatāra*, which makes it sound like a substantial entity, and has even led some scholars to accept that the *tathāgatagarbha* is a non-Buddhist teaching. As Seyfort Rugg has already pointed out, the idea of *tathāgatagarbha* as an “*ātman*” is completely different from the idea of the Vedāntic

³¹ The *Śrīmālādevī-sūtra* says, “The Tathāgatagarbha is permanent, steadfast, eternal. Therefore, the Tathāgatagarbha is the support, the holder, the base of constructed [Buddha natures] that are nondiscrete, not dissociated, and knowing as liberated from the stores [of defilement]; and furthermore is the support, the holder, the base of external constructed natures that are discrete, dissociated, and knowing as not liberated” (ibid., pp.104-5).

ātman.³² This is similar to “emptiness” (*śūnyatā*), the state of being of all phenomena as having no own-nature (*svabhāva*): although it is not an entity or another real existence in all things, it is nevertheless described as the *svabhāva* of all things, by “good Mādhyamikas” such as Nāgārjuna and Candrakīrti. For example, Candrakīrti states in his *Prasannapadā*:

Just that which is the phenomenality (*dharmatā*) of phenomena (*dharma*) is their intrinsic form (*svarūpa*). Then what is this phenomenality of phenomena? The own-being (*svabhāva*) of the phenomena. What is this own-being? Their nature. And what is this nature? That which is emptiness (*śūnyatā*). What is this emptiness? Lack of own-being (*naiḥsvābhāvya*). What is this lack of own-being? Thusness (*tathatā*). What is this thusness? Being thus (*tathābhāva*), unalterability, perpetual constancy. For the non-arising for ever of fire and so on, because it is not factitious (*akṛtrima*), because it is independent of anything else, is said to be own-being.³³

In this instance, the meaning of *svabhāva* is clearly different from what the Madhyamaka attempts to refute.³⁴ Seyfort Ruegg’s masterly argumentation of his delineation of the differences between the use of *ātman* in the positive references of the *tathāgatagarbha* and in the Vedāntic belief not only draws attention to the idea that the *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine should not be interpreted as an *ātmavāda* in the Vedāntic sense, or according to the common tendency to represent Buddhism simplistically as a system that upholds the dogma of *nairātmya* and *śūnyatā*; he also implicitly illustrates the danger of the practice

³² D. Seyfort Ruegg, “The Buddhist Notion of an ‘Immanent Absolute’ (*tathāgatagarbha*) as a Problem in Hermeneutics,” in Tadeusz Skorupski, ed., *The Buddhist Heritage*, pp. 229-245.

³³ Translation by Leonard Priestley, unpublished. Cf. Candrakīrti’s *Prasannapadā*, Chapter 15, p. 264.

³⁴ See also Nāgārjuna’s *Acintyastava* vv. 44-5; Alex Wayman, “The Mahāsāṃghika and the Tathāgatagarbha (Buddhist Doctrinal History, Study 1),” p. 43.

of understanding Buddhist doctrines without paying attention to the rich Buddhist hermeneutical tradition and the importance of the soteriology and gnoseology of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Florin Giripescu Sutton also warns us that “to take the Garbha concept literally, that is, to believe in its real, ontological substance, would amount to confusing Tathāgata-garbha with the Hindu Ātman, or Self (the sin of believing in metaphysical Eternalism).”³⁵

In addition, Brian Brown gives us an understanding of the *tathāgatagarbha* in the direction of “self-explicating knowledge”:

The *Tathāgatagarbha* is not to be understood as the object of a knowledge external to it, existing formally and formerly outside it; it is rather, self-explicating knowledge itself. The embryo as realized Absolute Body [*dharmakāya*] is simultaneously comprehended and comprehending; it is the point where the embryo knows itself as it is inherently in itself, as empty (*sūnya*) of all the defilement stores, but not empty (*aśūnya*) of the innumerable Buddha natures. ... If it is originally understood as an object of faith, and therefore an object of consciousness, the *Tathāgatagarbha* must ultimately be considered as the movement towards its perfect self-realization and thus, as object of self-consciousness.³⁶

David Kalupahana, likewise, explains the *tathāgatagarbha* in a similar fashion:

What early Buddhism looked upon as a non-cognitive state of rapture (*samādhi*, *jhāna*) now becomes the stage of Tathāgata (*tathāgatabhūmi*) or the womb of Tathāgata (*tathāgatagarbha*). It is a state of ultimate experience totally free from discrimination (*nirvikalpa*) and imagelessness (*nirābhāsa*), and hence is referred to as *nirvikalpaka-samādhi*, the highest experience a practitioner of yoga

³⁵ Florin Giripescu Sutton, *Existence and Enlightenment in the Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra*, p. 78.

³⁶ Brian Brown, *The Buddha Nature*, p. xvi.

(*yogācārin*) can hope to achieve. ... In another context, the “womb of Tathāgata,” which is a synonym for the non-defiled and non-momentary *ālaya*-consciousness, is described as being bright and pure by nature (*prakṛti-prabhāsvara-viśuddha*). This brings the conception of *ālaya*-consciousness dangerously close to the theory of self (*ātmavāda*) advocated by the heretics. The *Laṅkā* responds with the following statement:

No, Mahāmati, my teaching relating to the *garbha* is not the same as the theory of self of the heretics. For the Tathāgatas, Mahāmati, having formulated the instruction on the *tathāgatagarbha* in terms of emptiness (*sūnyatā*), limit of existence (*bhūtakoti*), freedom (*nirvāṇa*), non-arising (*anutpāda*), absence of a mysterious cause (*animitta*) and the unestablished (*apraṇihita*), etc., teach the doctrine pointing to the *tathāgatagarbha*, the sphere of non-discrimination and imagelessness, in order to eliminate the anxiety on the part of the ignorant toward a theory of non-substantiality (*nairātmya*).³⁷

It is therefore not difficult to understand why the *tathāgatagarbha* is explained in the *Śrīmālādevīsīmaṇādasūtra* and the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* as “to be realized personally” (*pratyātma-vedanīya*), and is nonconceptual (*avikalpa*), nondual (*advaya*), inconceivable (*acintya*) to the minds of ordinary sentient beings, not an object of inference, and is therefore beyond reasoning and speculative investigation. In the *AAN*, the *SMD*, the *Laṅkāvatāra*, the *Ratnagoṭravibhāga (RGV)*, and in other *tathāgatagarbha* texts, it is explicitly stated that the *tathāgatagarbha* is the “domain (*gocara*) of the Tathāgata” or the “object (*viśaya*) of the Tathāgata.” In the *SMD*, for example, it is explained that: “The *tathāgatagarbha* is the domain of the Buddhas; it is not the domain of any Śrāvaka

³⁷ David Kalupahana, *History of Buddhist Philosophy: Continuities and Discontinuities*, pp. 180-182.

or Pratyekabuddha. As for the meaning of the Noble Truth concerning the *tathāgatagarbha*, this *tathāgatagarbha* is profound and subtle, the Noble Truth explained is also profound and subtle, difficult to see, to understand, and cannot be conceptualized. [It is] not the domain of speculations.”³⁸ Here, the *tathāgatagarbha* is said to transcend the conceptual realm of ordinary beings and the limited understanding of the Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas, because it can only be realized by a mind with nonconceptual wisdom and is nondual with the *dharmadhātu*. In other words, the *tathāgatagarbha* can be understood as a metaphorical designation of a dimension of all minds which is inconceivable (*acintya*) to the dualistic and conceptual minds of ordinary sentient beings. Only a Buddha can realize the *tathāgatagarbha* fully and completely, and such a state of realization is the *dharmakāya* of the Tathāgata.

The *tathāgatagarbha* is therefore the innate potential that always exists in the minds of ordinary sentient beings to achieve perfect Buddhahood. In the *Ratnagotravibhāga (RGV)*, “defiled Thusness” (*samalā tathatā*) is treated as synonymous with the *tathāgatagarbha*, whereas the “undefiled Thusness” (*nirmala tathatā*) is taken to be synonymous with the *dharmakāya*. The relationship between *samalā tathatā* and *nirmala tathatā* as discussed in the *RGV* is precisely that between *tathāgatagarbha* and *dharmakāya*. It is in this sense that the *RGV* identifies the *tathāgatagarbha* as an

³⁸ 如來藏者，是佛境界，非諸聲聞獨覺所行。於如來藏說聖諦義，此如來藏甚深微妙，所說聖諦亦復深妙，難見難了不可分別，非思量境。-- T310, 676c; Cf. Wayman & Wayman, *The Lion's Roar of Queen Śrīmālā*, p. 96. For the *AAN*'s explanation of the *tathāgatagarbha*, see the translation of the text in the appendix of this thesis.

“essence” (*dhātu*) in the fourth *vajrapada*.³⁹ The *dhātu* is further explained as the cause (*hetu*) of Tathāgatahood, so the *tathāgatagarbha* can then be understood as the cause of the attainment of *dharmakāya*. Brian Brown summarizes the causal relationship between *tathāgatagarbha* and *dharmakāya* as follows:

...the major thrust of the scripture is its insistence upon the bivalent character of the Absolute Body (*Dharmakāya*), on the one hand freed from the store of defilement and on the other, non-free and concealed by it; in this latter condition it is organically conceived as embryonic. Therefore, though never explicated as such the *Śrī-Mālā*'s terminological designation of “embryo” establishes a causal link between the *Tathāgatagarbha* and its resultant finalized state as Absolute Body (*Dharmakāya*).⁴⁰

A similar idea can be found in the *FXL*, that states:

Tathatā is the same in all heretics and the beings of *icchāntikas*; this is named the *tathāgatagarbha* only until the adventitious defilements have been eradicated. Therefore it is said that all sentient beings possess the *tathāgatagarbha*.⁴¹

In the *Laṅkāvatāra*, the *tathāgatagarbha* is further discussed in conjunction with the *ālayavijñāna*. It is said that:

Mahāmati, if there were no *tathāgatagarbha* referred to as *ālayavijñāna*, then, in the absence of the Tathāgatagarbha referred to as *ālayavijñāna*, no evolution, no deterioration would take place ... Mahāmati, this domain of Tathāgatagarbha

³⁹ The translation of *dhātu* as “essence” follows Takasaki. The basic meaning of *dhātu* is element or category. Cf. Takasaki, *A Study on the Ratnagotravibhāga*, pp. 141-144.

⁴⁰ Brian Brown, *The Buddha Nature*, p. 8.

⁴¹ 如在一切邪定聚及一闍提諸眾生中本無差別，若至客塵滅後說名如來藏，故說一切眾生為如來藏。(T1610, 808b). The phrase “若至客塵滅後說名如來藏” can be translated as “this is named the *tathāgatagarbha* only when the adventitious defilements are eradicated”, but it does not make sense: it should be named the *dharmakāya* when the adventitious defilements are eradicated. So here, following the suggestion of Professor Leonard Priestley, I take *ruozhi* (若至) as representing “*yāvat*”, which can mean “until.”

“*ālayavijñāna*” is intrinsically pure, but is impure because it has been defiled by the adventitious defilements going with the discursive view of all the Disciples, self-Enlightened ones, and heretics. Not so the Tathāgatas! They have direct perception of that domain, like a myrobalan fruit [manifesting (itself)] on the palm of the hand.⁴²

On the precise relationship among the *tathāgatagarbha*, *ālayavijñāna*, and *dharmakāya*, Ye shes sde’s *lTa ba’i khyad par* invites our special attention. Ye shes sde was a famed eighth-century Tibetan translator who composed one of the earliest doxographical texts (*grub mtha’*) in Tibet. In this work, he quotes the *’Phags pa dung phreng gi mdo*⁴³ to clarify that: “When the *tathāgatagarbha* has not yet become clear, it is *ālayavijñāna*. But when it has become clear, it is *dharmakāya*.”⁴⁴ This way, the *tathāgatagarbha* is identified as the obscured form of *dharmakāya*, and it is named *ālayavijñāna* as long as the obscuration remains.

Buddhahood is characterized by the nondual awareness of the infinitely vast *dharmadhātu*; it is the coming to awareness of the unconditioned *tathatā*, which is always present, without abandoning the conditioned: *saṃsāra* is *nirvāṇa* and *nirvāṇa* is *saṃsāra*; *saṃsāra* is not apart from *nirvāṇa* and *nirvāṇa* is not apart from *saṃsāra*. Nonduality of *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa* is realized only by the “wisdom of equality” (*samatājñāna*) of the Buddhas. In other words, the teaching that *nirvāṇa* is already implicitly contained within *saṃsāra* is only realized by the Buddhas. The *tathāgatagarbha*, which can be seen as a

⁴² Translation quoted from the “Introduction” section of Wayman & Wayman, *The Lion’s Roar of Queen Śrīmālā*, p. 52. Cf. Nanjio Bunyin, ed., *The Laṅkāvatāra sūtra*, pp. 222-3; D.T. Suzuki, trans. *The Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*, pp. 192-3.

⁴³ This *sūtra* has yet to be identified.

⁴⁴ The Tibetan reads: *de shin gshegs pa’i snying po gsal bar ma gyur pa’i tshe ni / kun gzhi zhes bya’o // gsal bar gyur pa’i tshe ni chos kyi sku zhes bya’o zhes gsungs so//* (sDe dge, Jo: 218b)

connecting principle of *nirvāṇa* within *saṃsāra*, is therefore also known only to the Buddhas, as the “object” (*viṣaya*) or “domain” (*gocara*) of the Tathāgatas. It can be deduced from this that the *tathāgatagarbha* is indeed “the support (*ādhāra*) of *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*,” not because it is an ontological substratum that truly exists, but because it is an implicit aspect of all minds, whether enlightened or deluded, and whether the *tathāgatagarbha* is realized or not. As Brian Brown puts it, it is the support of *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa* as “that which alone is capable of experiencing suffering, and thus manifests itself as reactivity against the pain of phenomenal existence, and a simultaneous intentionality toward the emancipation of *nirvāṇa*.”⁴⁵ This also means that all beings are by nature having an aspect or dimension of the mind not fully realized, and it is yogic meditative practices that enable the practitioners to develop an awareness of the enlightenment which is always implicit in our consciousness and in everything around us. Thus, the *tathāgatagarbha* can also be understood as an aspect of experience. The doctrine of *tathāgatagarbha* teaches that all sentient beings possess an obscured awareness of Thusness; in other words, the *tathāgatagarbha* is the unrealized *dharmakāya* implicit within our consciousness. Being fully aware of this implicit enlightenment is thus the realization of the *dharmakāya*, and hence only the Buddhas realize the *dharmakāya*, which is defined in the *RGV* as both the entire body of the Buddha’s teaching and the pure realm of enlightenment, the *dharmadhātu*.

⁴⁵ Brian Brown, *The Buddha Nature*, p. 5.

On this definition of the *dharmakāya*, we also find a similar idea dealing with the “five divisions of the *dharmakāya*” in the *Pusa yingluo benye jing* (菩薩瓔珞本業經). Here the *dharmakāya* is discussed in terms of morality (*śīla*), *samādhi*, *prajñā*, liberation (*vimukti*), and [the Buddha’s] wisdom [of liberation] (*jñāna*).⁴⁶ The first three of the five divisions are a summary of the teachings of the Buddha, while the last two are the embodiment of the state of enlightenment. John Makransky summarizes his investigation into the meaning of *dharmakāya* as used in the Indian Yogācāra texts as follows:

- 1) *dharmakāya* = the collection (*kāya*) of Buddha’s excellent qualities (*anāsravadharmāḥ*);
- 2) *dharmakāya* = the substratum (*kāya*) of excellent qualities or the basis (*kāya*) of sovereignty over all phenomena (*sarvadharmāḥ*);
- 3) *dharmakāya* = that which embodies the real nature of things, the embodiment (*kāya*) of the real nature of things (*dharmatā*) in knowledge.⁴⁷

Because of the wide semantic range of both the components of *dharmakāya*, “*dharma*” and “*kāya*,” the meaning of *dharmakāya* spans a wide range of possible interpretation, and carries with it extraordinarily rich doctrinal meanings.⁴⁸ In general, however, the *dharmakāya* can be understood as the Buddha’s enlightened wisdom that realizes the nondual, nonconceptual, and unconditioned reality as it is. To be more specific, however, *dharmakāya* is not only the “subjective” wisdom that recognizes the reality, but rather it represents the concept of the nondual oneness of the *dharmadhātu* realized as well as the

⁴⁶所謂五分法身，戒除形非、定無心亂、慧悟想虛、解脫無累、無累知見一切眾生無縛，為知見解脫故，諸法虛空無二故。(T1485, 1013c)

⁴⁷ John Makransky, *Buddhahood Embodied*, p. 5.

⁴⁸ For a detailed investigation of the meanings of *dharmakāya*, and its relationship with the *rūpakāya(s)*, see John Makransky, *Buddhahood Embodied*; Paul Harrison, “Is the *Dharma-kāya* the Real ‘Phantom Body’ of the Buddha.”

wisdom that realizes it; it is a description of a nondual experience which belongs exclusively to the domain of those who are perfectly enlightened. Paul Harrison shares with us an observation that:

...even recent writers on the subject of the Trikāya have continued to ignore such basics as Edgerton's observations concerning the use of *dharmakāya* as an adjective in early and middle Mahāyāna *sūtras*, and have therefore obscured more than one important moment in the development of the concept. Too ready to assimilate all occurrences of the term to a particular understanding of the nominal *dharmakāya* of the developed Trikāya theory, they have misconstrued many key passages, thereby collapsing what may have been centuries of gradual doctrinal development, into a single incoherent theoretical position. Further, this incoherency has become enshrined in the standard English translations of key Mahāyāna *sūtras*, to the extent that it now goes unchallenged by some of the leading lights of Buddhist studies.⁴⁹

The same critique can in fact be applied to the study of the *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine. In fact, in the above discussion, the connection between the *dharmakāya* and the *tathāgatagarbha* is clearly seen. It is then not surprising that most of the *tathāgatagarbha* texts, such as the *AAN*, the *SMD*, the *RGV*, identify the *tathāgatagarbha* as the *dharmakāya*. For example, in the *AAN*, it is said:

Śāriputra, this profound matter is the ultimate truth (*paramārtha-satya*); the ultimate truth is the *sattvadhātu*; the *sattvadhātu* is the *tathāgatagarbha*; the *tathāgatagarbha* is the *dharmakāya*. The *dharmakāya* which I explained is nondiscrete and inseparable from the inconceivable Buddha *dharmas*, the

⁴⁹ Paul Harrison, "Is the *Dharma-kaya* the Real 'Phantom Body' of the Buddha?", p. 74.

Tathāgata's qualities (*guṇa*) and wisdom (*jñāna*) which are more numerous than the sand of the Ganges.⁵⁰

This *dharmakāya*, as emphasized in the citation, is not separate from the Tathāgata's qualities (*guṇa*), just as the unconditioned aspect of the Buddha wisdom is inseparable from its conditioned aspect as the Buddha's compassion. In relation to the *dharmakāya*, the conditioned aspect is manifested as the *rūpakāyas*, viz., the *sāmbhogikakāya* and the *nairmāṇikakāya*. This model of the three *kāyas* of the Buddha recalls unique Mahāyāna teachings such as the idea that the conditioned *saṃsāra* is not apart from the unconditioned *nirvāṇa*, and *nirvāṇa* is not apart from *saṃsāra*, and the intricate relationship between the two aspects of *bodhicitta*. In other words, the nondual wisdom of the Buddhas is embodied in the *dharmakāya*, which spontaneously manifests itself in the conditioned world through the *rūpakāyas*, as its subsequent wisdom of spontaneous compassion.

The Two Aspects of the Tathāgatagarbha, the Three Kāyas, and the Bodhicitta

As evident in the *SMD*, the inseparable qualities (*guṇa*) and (subsequent) wisdom of the Buddhas are spoken of as the non-empty aspect of the *tathāgatagarbha*:

⁵⁰ 舍利弗，甚深義者即是第一義諦；第一義諦者即是眾生界；眾生界者即是如來藏；如來藏者即是法身。舍利弗，如我所說法身義者，過於恒沙不離不脫不斷不異、不思議佛法如來功德智。(T668, 467a)

Lord, the wisdom of the emptiness of the *tathāgatagarbha* is of two kinds: Lord, the empty-*tathāgatagarbha* which is separate, discrete, and different from the store of all defilements; Lord, the nonempty-*tathāgatagarbha* which is inseparable, nondiscrete, and not different from the inconceivable Buddha *dharmas* which are more numerous than the sands of the Ganges.⁵¹

This amounts to stating that the empty-*tathāgatagarbha* is the *dharmakāya*, the Buddhas' wisdom (*jñāna*) that naturally and intuitively embodies the emptiness of all phenomena.

It follows then that the nonempty-*tathāgatagarbha* is the function (*vṛtti*) and the qualities (*guṇa*) of the Buddhas as manifested through the *sāmbhogikakāya* and the *nairmāṇikakāya*. In other words, the notion of the *tathāgatagarbha* can be seen through the three *kāyas* of the Buddhas: the empty aspect of the *tathāgatagarbha* is the innate purity of the mind, the nonconceptual gnosis, which conjoins with the ever-present *dharmatā* as one and realizes all phenomena as *sūnya*; this is known as the *dharmakāya*. The non-empty aspect of the *tathāgatagarbha* refers to the functioning of this nonconceptual gnosis in the conditioned and conceptual realm. Such functioning is regarded as the Buddha's *dharmas* and qualities (*guṇa*); this is known as the *rūpakāyas* (*sāmbhogikakāya* and *nairmāṇikakāya*).

As the three *kāyas* are not separable but are one, so are the two aspects of “empty” and “non-empty” of the *tathāgatagarbha*, and hence the wisdom and compassion of the *bodhicitta*. Yogācāra literature also emphasizes that the three *kāyas* can never be separate, and, according to the *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra*, they are collectively

⁵¹ 世尊，有二種如來藏空智：世尊，空如來藏，若離若脫若異一切煩惱藏；世尊，不空如來藏，過於恒沙不離不脫不異不思議佛法。(T353, 221c)

described as the functioning of the *dharmadhātu* (*dharmadhātuvṛtti*).⁵² As Makransky puts it:

...while ontologically one, Buddhahood is both functionally and epistemologically divided into three: *dharmakāya* as only Buddhas know it (= *svābhāvikakāya*), and *dharmakāya* in its twofold manifestation to others (as *sāmbhogikakāya* and *nairmāṇikakāya*).⁵³

The teaching of the *tathāgatagarbha*, then, shows to practitioners that the real nature of the mind is luminous, undefiled, unconditioned, and nonconceptual. Nonetheless this luminous mind, or “no-mind”, as the *Prajñāpāramitā* literature names it, incessantly manifests itself as a conditioned operation and interacts with the phenomena with which it comes into contact. In other words, the mind, as it truly is, is at once both unconditioned and conditioned. To the perfectly enlightened ones, the conditioned aspect does not become an obstacle to recognizing the unconditioned purity. Ordinary sentient beings, deluded by the conditioned aspect of the mind and construing an imaginary subject-object dichotomy between the mind and what it perceives, are said to have the undefiled aspect of the mind concealed by sheaths of defilement. Such a state of mind is known as the *ālayavijñāna*. But those defilements are insubstantial, nothing more than the result of unreal imagination, and are therefore said to be “adventitious.” It is therefore not surprising to see that one of the central tenets in the *AAN* is the claim that the *sattvadhātu* is the *dharmakāya*, and vice versa. It is out of such a realization of the nonduality of the two that the *ekadhātu* is spoken of. In other words, the *AAN* is not postulating a truly existing, ontological and monistic “basis” that gives rise to or

⁵² Cf. The *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra*, chapter nine; see also Paul Griffiths, *et al.*, *The Realm of Awakening*, pp. 14-26.

⁵³ John Makransky, *Buddhahood Embodied*, p. 87.

generates all secondary phenomena – an idea known as “*dhātu-vāda*” criticized by the scholars of Critical Buddhism.

A similar understanding can also be applied to the teaching of the two kinds of wisdom of the Buddhas: the nondual, pure domain, or the “nonconceptual wisdom” (*nirvikalpañāna*), never exists independently of their “subsequent wisdom” (*pr̥ṣṭhalabdhañāna*). The two kinds of wisdom are, of course, nondual and are of one taste (*ekarasa*) to the perfectly enlightened ones, and hence to speak of the wisdom of the Buddhas as being of a more fundamental kind and a “subsequent” kind is indeed not strictly accurate; it is only a conventional measure⁵⁴ to speak of the two kinds of wisdom. On the “path of meditation” (*bhāvanāmārga*) of the Bodhisattvas, it is said, for example, in *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra* 14.42 and 14.43:

Next, on the “path of meditation,”
In the remaining [nine] stages,
One is engaged diligently
In the practice of the two kinds of wisdom.

That of the nonconceptual wisdom
Purifies the Buddha *dharmas*;
That of the phenomenal things as established
Matures the sentient beings.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ By “conventional” (*saṃvṛti*), I do not mean the understanding of it as an “inferior” metaphysical view as found in contemporary Western scholarship, but rather a “skillful means” (*upāya*) that relates to the soteriological practices leading towards the realization of the “ultimate” (*paramārtha*). Cf. John Schroeder, “Nāgārjuna and the Doctrine of ‘Skillful Means’,” pp. 559-583.

⁵⁵ *tato 'sau bhāvanāmārge pariśiṣṭāsu bhūmiṣu / jñānasya dvividhasyeha bhāvanāyai prayujyate // nirvikalpaṃ ca tajñānaṃ buddhadharmaviśodhakaṃ / anyad yathāvyavasthānaṃ sattvānāṃ paripācakaṃ //* (Surekha Vijay Limaye edition, p. 276)

“The phenomenal things as established” (*yathāvyavasthāna*), according to the commentary of Sthiramati, refers to the “subsequent pure worldly wisdom” (*rjes las thob pa dag pa 'jig rten pa'i ye shes*).⁵⁶ Such a conventional designation does help us understand the inconceivable character (*lakṣaṇa*) of the Buddha’s wisdom. The Buddhas are said to have attained the steadfast realization of Thusness (*tathatā*) through the perfect attainment of the nonconceptual wisdom (*nirvikalpajñāna*). The “content” of the enlightenment of the Buddha, being the empty, nondual, and nonconceptual *nirvāṇa*, is conjoined with the wisdom of such enlightenment; in other words, what realizes and what is realized are of one taste. If Thusness is always abiding, whether a Buddha is born or not, so is this nonconceptual wisdom. On the other hand, however, the Buddha’s mind also functions and operates in the samsaric world. The Buddha’s cognition of all worldly phenomena perceived through the nonconceptual wisdom is known as the “subsequent wisdom.” The latter kind of wisdom, however, is necessarily “conceptual,” for the acts of reading, talking, preaching, establishing the *vinaya*, and so forth, cannot be nonconceptual acts in themselves. In other words, the enlightening activities of the Buddhas to liberate sentient beings seem to be necessarily “conceptual” in the eyes of ordinary sentient beings. These enlightening “conceptual” acts, however, are conducted through the attained nonconceptual wisdom and are therefore not limited to their nature of conceptuality. The enlightening activities, then, are spontaneous compassion flowing

⁵⁶ Sthiramati’s commentary on the *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra*, the *mDo sde rgyan gyi 'grel bshad*, is extant in its Tibetan translation only. The cited explanation reads: *gzhan ni zhes bya ba la ye shes gnyis pa ni zhes bya ba'i don to // ye shes gnyis pa ni ji ltar rnam par 'jog pa'i ye shes te / ye shes des sa bcu so so'i mtshan nyid dang yon tan la sogs pa so sor ma 'dres pa kho nar so sor 'jog bye brag 'byed pa'o // de 'ang gang zhe na / 'jig rten las 'das pa rnam par mi rtog pa'i ye shes kyi rjes las thob pa dag pa 'jig rten pa'i ye shes te / des ni sems can la chos bstan pa dang / mngon par 'tshang rgya ba la sogs pa bstan pa'i sgo nas // sems can rnam par smin par byed do// (sDe dge, Phi 279b)*

out of the unconditioned (*asaṃskṛta*) state of perfection united with a realization of Thusness. In the Yogācāra literature, this nonconceptual wisdom is also identified as the *dharmakāya*, the embodiment of the reality of all phenomena realized by the Buddhas of the three times. On the other hand, the “subsequent wisdom” that gives rise to spontaneous activities, reflected through such nonconceptual wisdom, is identified as the *rūpakāya* of the Buddhas.⁵⁷ Ye shes sde quotes the *Suvarṇaprabhāsa-sūtra* in his *lTa ba'i khyad par* to express a similar understanding of the three *kāyas* as follows:

The *Ārya-suvarṇaprabhāsa-sūtra* states, “Although it seems as if they [the two *rūpakāyas*] conceptualize, indeed there is no conceptualization in Thusness (*tathatā*). Although the number [of the *kāyas*] are said to be three, indeed there is nothing [to be differentiated] as three.”⁵⁸

The “conceptual” activities and perceptions, not arising in perfect union with the nonconceptual wisdom, would lead to the non-cognition of what they truly are, and hence ignorance would condition cravings; therefore the conceptuality would become the defilements (*kleśa*) concealing the ever-present, undefiled, nonconceptual wisdom which is nondual with the undifferentiated Thusness.⁵⁹

The interpretation of the Buddha’s wisdom as operating simultaneously in the conditioned and the unconditioned realms does indeed conform to Mahāyāna teachings such as the *apraṭiṣṭhita-nirvāṇa*, the undifferentiation of *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*, the concept of the *ekadhātu*, the teaching of the Two Truths, and the notion of the *bodhicitta*.

⁵⁷ For the details of these two identifications, see chapter nine of the *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra*.

⁵⁸ 'Phags pa gser 'od dam pa'i mdo las kyang / rtog pa yod pa 'dra' mod kyi / de bzhin nyid la ni rtog pa med do / gsum du bgrang ba med do zhes gsungs so // (sDe dge, Jo 219b)

⁵⁹ The Yogācāra tradition has detailed explanations of these two aspects of the Buddhas’ wisdom and the relationship between them. For a detailed examination of the Yogācāra works on this twofold wisdom of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, see John Makransky, *Buddhahood Embodied*, pp. 90-104.

The mechanism of the twofold, yet nondual, wisdom of the Buddha is not a concept that is easy to comprehend, but to state it as an analogy, it is rather like the relationship between “music” and the musical notes played on an instrument (or an ensemble, an orchestra or a human voice). The abstract feeling of “music” is inseparable from the sounds produced by the instruments; yet the production of sounds from instruments does not necessarily produce music. Music, on the other hand, does not exist apart from the sounds produced. A maestro would naturally play the notes of a score, with skill and technique, through the musical ideas in his mind. An amateur, however, is likely to be so caught up by the notes, or so busy trying to play the notes accurately, so that the music behind the score is overlooked or forgotten. The Buddha is analogous to the maestro in this example, who are able to bring perfect union between the music and the playing of the notes on the score; the latter naturally flows out from the former, but the latter never limits itself and obstructs the manifestation of the former. One can argue that Beethoven’s music in the hands of Rudolf Serkin and Arthur Schnabel will be completely different, but the element of “music” conveyed in their performance is of “one taste,” just as the teachings of the innumerable Buddhas of the three times are said in the Mahāyāna scriptures to be teaching with different equally innumerable means but their teaching is said to be all of the same taste, with the same intention. Similarly, it is only the path towards the complete revelation of the immanent nonconceptual wisdom that can be regarded as a gradual “growth” of realization, but the wisdom realized at the state of perfect enlightenment is uncreated, ever-present, and not a product of development. The state of ordinary sentient beings, in this example, is then like the amateur, to whom the

musical notes become the concealment and defilement of the music intended by the composer.

Another example is drawn by Mi pham rgya mtsho (1846-1912), a scholar of the rNying ma tradition of Tibetan Buddhism, who says in his *Tshad ma rnam 'grel gyi rgya chen bshad pa rigs pa'i rgya mtsho* that mind “has naturally arisen as deluded (*ngo bo nyid kyis 'khrul pa can skyes nas*), but the stains of delusion are not naturally established, or existent (*dri ma rnams ni ngo bo nyid kyis grub pa min*). In other words, delusion arises from the mind as naturally as a face appears in a mirror; but we know from the example of the mirror (or dreams, or mirages) that what appears may not actually exist.”⁶⁰

Such a concept of the Buddha’s nirvanic nonconceptual wisdom spontaneously operating within the conditioned realm of *samsāra* not only reminds one of the three-*kāya* model of the Buddhahood, but also the general Mahāyāna notion of the *bodhicitta* itself which will be also better understood as a *bahuvrīhi* compound rather than a *tatpuruṣa* one,⁶¹ like the “*tathāgatagarbha*” discussed earlier. In the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*, generally considered to be the first text of the *Prajñāpāramitā* corpus, the “mind” (*citta*) is spoken of as a “no-mind” (*acitta*),⁶² as the *citta* is innately pure and luminous (*prakṛtiś cittasya prabhāsvarā*), which is nonconceptual (*avikalpa*)

⁶⁰ Roger R. Jackson, “Luminous Mind Among the Logicians,” p. 110.

⁶¹ Gareth Sparham, “Indian Altruism: A Study of the Terms *bodhicitta* and *cittotpāda*”: “The first part of the compound *bodhi-citta* ... should be understood not as referring to a for-others state of enlightenment (a *sambhoga-kāya*) but to [the] *Prajñā-pāramitā* herself, beyond all conceptualization and absorbed indivisibly with the ultimate. Rather than a dative *tatpuruṣa*, the compound is better construed as a curious Buddhist sort of *bahuvrīhi* meaning (one whose) fundamental state of being or mind is perfect wisdom, i.e., the ultimate.” (pp. 229-230)

⁶² Edward Conze, *The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines & its Verse Summary*, p. 89.

and unmodified (*avikāra*) by nature. At the same time, a mind is aroused (*cittotpāda*, later developed into the compound *bodhi-cittotpāda*)⁶³ that motivates one to liberate all beings who are considered to be parents or relatives in previous lives, and are equal to oneself. These two ideas are usually described as having the nature of wisdom and compassion, or as the ultimate and conventional *bodhicittas*.⁶⁴ The ultimate aspect can be seen to be related to the nonconceptual wisdom, and the conventional to the compassionate activities as arising naturally through such wisdom.⁶⁵ This bifurcated notion of the *bodhicitta* is illustrated in a famous passage in the *Diamond Sūtra*:

As many beings as there are in the universe of beings... all these I must lead to Nirvāṇa. ... And yet, although innumerable beings have thus been led to Nirvāṇa, no being at all has been led to Nirvāṇa. ... If in a Bodhisattva the notion of a 'being' should take place, he could not be called a 'Bodhi-being'.⁶⁶

Indeed, the idea of the *tathāgatagarbha* can be seen to be implicit in this passage, for how can a Bodhisattva see that *all* sentient beings can be led to *nirvāṇa*, from which he or she makes such a vow, if it is not that all beings possess the potential to attain enlightenment *without exception*? This way, the *bodhicitta* is clearly related to the idea of the *tathāgatagarbha*. Moreover, if the “mind of innate purity” or the *acitta* aspect of the *bodhicitta* is nondual with the real nature of all things, being nonconceptual and unmodified, it must also be unborn and unconditioned, just as the way the *dharmatā* is usually described; if it is unborn and unconditioned, it must be immanent, ever-present,

⁶³ Gareth Sparham, *op. cit.*, pp. 228-230.

⁶⁴ See, for example, Paul Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism*, p. 203.

⁶⁵ In terms of meditative practice of the six *pāramitās*, the ultimate *bodhicitta* is related to the perfection of “wisdom,” while the conventional *bodhicitta* is related to the remaining fivefold perfection. And hence, the *Perfection of Wisdom* scripture teaches not only the perfection of the last element of the six *pāramitās*, as the name might mislead us into thinking, but all six of them as a whole with no differentiation at all.

⁶⁶ Translation quoted from Edward Conze, *Buddhist Wisdom Books*, p. 25.

and “permanent,” rather than a product of gradual development or growth. Indeed, not only do we find a direct identification of the *bodhicitta* and the *tathāgatagarbha* in the *Dasheng fajie wuchabie lun* (大乘法界無差別論, *DSFJWCBL*) and the *Foxing lun* (佛性論, *FXL*), but in the opening verses of the *RGV-vyākhyā* one can also find a discussion of the two aspects of the *bodhicitta*:

Being immutable, free from efforts
 And not being dependent upon the others,
 [Also] Being endowed with Wisdom, Compassion and [supernatural]
 Power [imparted by both],
 The Buddhahood has two kinds of benefit.⁶⁷

It is perhaps for this reason that the *Dasheng fajie wuchabie lun*, widely considered to be a summary of the teachings of the *RGV*, deliberately draws the connection between *bodhicitta* and *tathāgatagarbha*. The *tathāgatagarbha*, related to the discussions above, can indeed be seen as the immanent state revealed through the perfection of the *bodhicitta* – the nondual perfection of both wisdom and compassion.

Indeed, nomenclature relating to *tathāgatagarbha* includes *tathāgatadharmatā*, *tathāgatajñāna*, *tathāgatatva*, *tathāgatagotra*, *tathāgatadhātu*, *buddhatva*, *padmagarbha*, and *svayambhūjñāna*. These compounds are sometimes used interchangeably in the *tathāgatagarbha* texts, which suggests that they were seen by the compilers of these texts as more or less synonymous with “*tathāgatagarbha*.” It should be noted that some of these terms appear quite early in the history of Indian Buddhism; for example,

⁶⁷ Takasaki Jikidō, *A Study on the Ratnagotravibhāga*, p. 156. Original Sanskrit: *asaṃskṛtam anābhogam aparapratyayōditam / buddhatvaṃ jñāna-kāruṇya-śakty-upetaṃ dvayārthavat //* (v. 1.5; E.H. Johnston edition, p. 7)

tathāgatajñāna and *tathāgatagoṭra* can be found in the *Tathāgatōtpattisambhavanirdeśa* and the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa*, respectively: both of these texts predating the *TGS* by centuries. The study of the *idea* of the *tathāgatagarbha* is not necessarily limited to the handful of *tathāgatagarbha* scriptures. Seyfort Ruegg traces the ideas or teachings that are related to the *tathāgatagarbha* in the chapter on “The Natural Luminosity of Thought” (“La Luminosité de la Pensée et l’Āśrayaparivṛtti dans le Ratnagoṭravibhāga et sa «Vyākhyā»”) of his *La théorie du tathāgatagarbha et du goṭra*. To recapitulate Seyfort Ruegg’s findings, the idea of the “luminous mind” (*prabhāsvaracitta*), whose defilements are only adventitious (*āgantuka*), is seen to be used most frequently in a soteriological context. The earliest occurrence of this idea seems to be in the now oft-quoted passage in the *Aṅguttara-nikāya*, which states:

This mind, O monks, is luminous; and yet it is defiled by adventitious defilements.⁶⁸

The *Laṅkāvatāra* equates this “luminous mind” with the *tathāgatagarbha*, whereas the *RGV* equates it with the *tathāgatagoṭra*, space (*ākāśa*), the transformation of basis (*āśrayaparivṛtti*), and non-conceptuality. In *Prajñāpāramitā* literature, the same idea is equated in the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* with the “non-mind” (*acitta*), unchangeable and nonconceptualizable as discussed above, and is neither existent nor non-existent; it is also equated with reality-itself (*dharmatā*) in the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā*. In the Yogācāra tradition, the same idea is equated in the *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra* with the cognition of

⁶⁸ *pabhassaram idaṃ bhikkhave cittaṃ / tame ca kho āgantukehi upakkilesehi uppakkiliṭṭhaṃ* / R. Morris & E. Hardy, eds., *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, 1. 10.

the *dharmatā*, while, in the Madhyamaka tradition, Candrakīrti equates it with the natural luminosity of phenomena (*dharma*), and, owing to natural pacification and the attainment of nonorigination, with emptiness (*sūnyatā*). In later Yogācāra-Madhyamaka writings, a luminous mind is equated with the *bodhicitta*, which is free from extreme views and impurities of the three times, as in Prañākaramati's commentary on the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* 2:1.⁶⁹

Though scholars are not unanimous in seeing “luminous mind” (*prabhāsvaracitta*) in the *Aṅguttara-nikāya* and “*tathāgatagarbha*” as synonymous, the doctrinal implications present in both compounds are no doubt very close to one another. Diana M. Paul also cites Katsumata Shunkyō's comments that it is indeed very difficult to determine when the *tathāgatagarbha* literature first appeared. He traced the first appearance of the compound “*tathāgatagarbha*” to the *Ekottarikāgama*,⁷⁰ an *Āgama* text whose exact relationship to the corresponding *Nikāya* canon remains unclear. On the other hand, in the *Aṅgulimālyasūtra*, there is a passage that explains that the hidden meaning of the famous verse in the *Dharmapada* implies the teaching of the *tathāgatagarbha*, which is identified with the “mind of innate purity” :

“Mind is primary and forerunner of all actions.
 With a superior mind, Dharma will be generated.
 With a pure and trustful mind, whatever we say or do,
 Happiness will naturally follow, just as a shadow follows the body.”

⁶⁹ See David Seyfard Rugg's *La théorie*, pp. 413-430, for a detailed discussion of these scriptures and their reference to the idea of the luminous mind.

⁷⁰ The verse, in Diana M. Paul's translation, reads: If someone devotes himself to the *Ekottarikāgama*, then he has the *Tathāgatagarbha*. Even if his body cannot exhaust defilement in this life, in his next life he will attain supreme wisdom.” (其有專心持增一 便為總持如來藏 正使今身不盡結 後生便得高才智 – T125, 550c). See Diana M. Paul, *The Buddhist Feminine Ideal*, p. 54.

This teaching is taught to the Śrāvakas. But what the verse [ultimately] intended is the idea that the meaning of the *tathāgatagarbha* is precisely the mind of innate purity.⁷¹

Furthermore, the *Samyuktāgama* contains a passage that compares the purification of the mind to the example of a goldsmith washing away layers of gravel, sand and dirt in order to reveal the gold as it is, in its perfect colour and lustre.⁷² Though the term “mind of innate purity” or “*tathāgatagarbha*” is not employed, the idea is clearly reminiscent of a similar passage in a *tathāgatagarbha* text, the *Dhāraṇīśvararājasūtra*, described by Seyfort Ruegg as follows:

Another parable that is especially relevant to the present investigation [of the term *gotra*] is found in the *Dhāraṇīśvararājasūtra*. There it is said: ‘O son of good family, for example an expert jeweller (*maṇikāra*) knows well how to clean gems (*maṇi*). After having extracted uncleaned gems from their mine (or matrix, *maṇigoṭra*), and having washed them in a sharp and salty liquid, he [first] polishes them with a coarse black cloth. But he does not stop at this point. Next, having washed them in a sharp detergent liquid, he polishes them with a fine (woollen) cloth. But he does not stop at this point. Next, having washed them in a great medicinal elixir, he polishes them with a fine cloth. And when [the gem] is polished and freed from impurity (*kāca*) one speaks of a noble precious material (*abhijātavaiḍūrya*).’ This parable of the jeweller and gem is then applied to the ‘Element’ of sentient beings (*sattvadhātu*) which is accidentally sullied but is progressively purified by means of the Buddha’s graded teaching.⁷³

The parables in both the *Samyuktāgama* and the *Dhāraṇīśvararājasūtra* shed light on the idea that there is an immanent purity underlying our worldly mind of impurities. This

⁷¹ “意法前行 意勝法生 意法淨信 若說若作 快樂自追 如影隨形” 我為聲聞乘說。此偈意者，謂如來藏義若自性清淨意。(T120, 540a) This corresponds to verse 2 of the *Dhammapada* in the Pali canon.

⁷² T99, no. 1246, 341b-342a.

⁷³ D. Seyfort Ruegg, “The Meanings of the Term *Gotra* and the Textual History of the *Ratnagoṭravibhāga*,” p. 343.

innate purity is also said to be unborn, unconditioned, and nonconceptual, concealed by our attachment to worldly conditioned phenomena. The relationship of the two is parallel to the following *Udāna* passage:

Monks, there is an unborn, unbecome, unmade, unconditioned. Monks, if there were not an unborn, unbecome, unmade, unconditioned, then we could not here know any escape from the born, become, made, conditioned.⁷⁴

Similarly, the idea that, whether or not the Buddhas appear in the world, all beings always possess the *tathāgatagarbha* is also frequently found in the *tathāgatagarbha* scriptures, such as the *TGS* and the *Laṅkāvatāra*. This, as Seyfort Ruegg also points out, is a play on the well-known formula found in the Pāli canon describing the law of dependent origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*).⁷⁵ This suggests that, to the compiler of these *tathāgatagarbha* texts, the idea of the *tathāgatagarbha* is compatible with, and as authentic as, the teaching of dependent origination.

The study of the *tathāgatagarbha* teaching, therefore, can be conducted in a “broader” sense that considers the teachings of the *acitta*, *tathāgatagotra*, *dharmatā*, or even *bodhicitta*, as portraying a similar idea to that of the *tathāgatagarbha*, although with different terminology and ways of presentation. As Wayman points out, “When this intrinsically pure consciousness came to be regarded as an element capable of growing into Buddhahood, there was the “embryo (*garbha*) of the Tathāgata (= Buddha)” doctrine,

⁷⁴ In the *Udāna* 80.

⁷⁵ See Seyfort Ruegg, *La Théorie*, p. 330f. The formula regarding the law of dependent origination runs as follows: *jātipaccayā bhikkhave jarāmarañam / uppādā vā tathāgatānam anuppādā vā tathāgatānam thitā va sā dhātu dhammaṭṭhitatā dhammaniyaṃatā idappaccayatā //*

whether or not this term is employed.”⁷⁶ In a “narrow” sense, it is strictly limited to the texts in which the compound “*tathāgatagarbha*” can be found. Although I am inclined more toward the former approach in my understanding of the notion of the *tathāgatagarbha*, the present thesis is focused more on the latter approach.

⁷⁶ Wayman & Wayman, *The Lion's Roar of Queen Śrīmālā*, p. 42.

Chapter Two: *Tathāgatagarbha* and the Two Mahāyāna Traditions

It would be erroneous to assume, as some modern scholars have suggested, that in addition to the Madhyamaka and the Yogācāra, the *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine should be accepted as the third Mahāyāna school that existed in India.⁷⁷ As mentioned briefly in the “Introduction,” seeing *tathāgatagarbha* as a third, distinct school in Indian Buddhism is perhaps a result of misinterpreting Madhyamaka, Yogācāra, and *tathāgatagarbha* as antithetical in their teachings. These are sometimes understood when viewed through the lens of Western Philosophy as upholding the philosophical teachings of nihilism, idealism, and ontological realism, respectively. But there are also dissenting voices, such as Edward Conze, the pioneer in translating and interpreting the *Prajñāpāramitā* literature, who comments that,

Mādhyamikas and Yogācārins supplement one another. They come into conflict only very rarely, and the powerful school of the Mādhyamika-Yogācārins demonstrated that their ideas could exist in harmony. They differ in that they approach salvation by two different roads. To the Mādhyamikas “wisdom” is everything and they have very little to say about *dhyāna*, whereas the Yogācārins give more weight to the experience of “trance.”⁷⁸

Questions arise as to whether Madhyamaka and Yogācāra are “antithetical.” If they are not, what kind of relationship is shared between them? In addition, if the two traditions are not in opposition there can be no need to assimilate or reconcile them, since they could, in Conze’s words, “exist in harmony” even without any deliberate act of assimilation. If that were the case, what is the nature of the Yogācāra-Madhyamaka

⁷⁷ See, for example, Mochizuki Shinkō, “Nyoraizōsetsu no kigen oyobi hattatsu,” pp. 1-2; Takasaki Jikidō, *A Study on the Ratnagotravibhāga*, pp. 57-61.

⁷⁸ Edward Conze, *Buddhist Thought in India*, p. 251.

tradition that arose in the seventh century and was long believed by modern scholars to be an attempt to combine harmoniously the two opposing traditions by regarding the teaching of the Yogācāra as the “conventional truth” and that of the Madhyamaka the “ultimate truth”? The proper understanding of the Yogācāra-Madhyamaka is important because the tradition clearly upholds the *tathāgatagarbha* as the goal of their practice, and has had, since the fourteenth century, a profound influence in Tibet, where it was named the Great Madhyamaka (*dbu ma chen po*).⁷⁹

These are all important questions when the proper relationship of the *tathāgatagarbha* with Madhyamaka and Yogācāra is to be determined. However, it is also apparent that to cover these topics thoroughly can easily give rise to another dissertation. Consequently these questions will be addressed only briefly in this chapter, for the purpose of clarifying the position of the *tathāgatagarbha* teaching in the Mahāyāna Buddhist tradition. In order to do so, the relationship between Yogācāra and *tathāgatagarbha* will be examined before that of Madhyamaka and *tathāgatagarbha*, and finally a general observation on the intricate and delicate relationship of all three will be commented on.

The Tathāgatagarbha Doctrine and the Yogācāra Tradition

It should first be noted that, generally speaking, two forms of Yogācāra exist; these we may designate as the “classical school” and the “new school.” Ueda Yoshifumi

⁷⁹ Cf. Dudjom Rinpoche, *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism*, pp. 169-177; Cyrus Stearns, *The Buddha from Dolpo: A Study of the Life and Thought of the Tibetan Master Dolpopa Sherab Gyaltsen*, pp. 41-105; S.K. Hookham, *The Buddha Within*.

is probably the first scholar to introduce this division in Japanese scholarship to the Western World. The research undertaken by Ui Hakuju as well as Ueda Yoshifumi himself was conducted more than half a century ago. According to Ueda, the two streams of Yogācāra are represented, first, by the works of Maitreya, Asaṅga, Vasubandhu, and Sthiramati, and, secondly, by the works of Dharmapāla whose “new school” of philosophy was transmitted to China by Xuanzang.⁸⁰ Janice Dean Willis shares the same view as she states:

[T]here existed at least two varying streams of Yogācāra thought, viz., (1) what may be called an “original” thread propounded by Maitreya, Asaṅga, Vasubandhu, and Sthiramati; and (2) a “later” thread which found expression notably through such doctors as Dharmapāla and Hsüan-tsang. Both “streams” were introduced into China—the earlier by Paramārtha and the later by Hsüan-tsang—and afterward transmitted also to Japan.⁸¹

For other publications in English, a more detailed study of the distinction between the two schools can be found in the introductory section of *The Realm of Awakening, Chapter Ten of Asaṅga's Mahāyānasāṅgraha* by Paul Griffiths, Hakamaya Noriaki, John Keenan, and Paul Swanson.⁸² In brief, the new school adopts a more “idealistic” interpretation of the theory of “cognitive-representation only” (*viññaptimātratā*). It is also this school, with its elaborate philosophy on “reflexive awareness” (*svasaṃvedana*) and the *viññaptimātra* position, that entered into fierce debates with Mādhyamikas such as Candrakīrti. The disciples of this “new school” are generally known as the

⁸⁰ Ueda Yoshifumi, “Two Main Streams of Thought in Yogācāra Philosophy,” pp. 155-156.

⁸¹ Janice Dean Willis, *On Knowing Reality: The Tattvārtha Chapter of Asaṅga's Bodhisattvabhūmi*, p. 21.

⁸² Paul Griffiths, *et al.*, *The Realm of Awakening*, pp. 3-45.

Vijñānavādins for their stance regarding consciousness (*vijñāna*). It would be a mistake, however, to treat “Vijñānavāda” as synonymous with “Yogācāra,” as it is only one school within the Yogācāra tradition. As Makransky has remarked:

Yogācāra Buddhism has sometimes been described in modern scholarly works as an ontological idealism that speculatively reduces all phenomena to the nature of consciousness alone. But we can see from the descriptions of the meditation practice stages...that the yogic process itself does not comprise a speculative philosophy of any kind, let alone a speculative ontology.⁸³

Yogācāra as interpreted by the “classical school” is indeed a yogic process that reveals the immanent and innate purity of the *buddhadhātu* or the *tathāgatagarbha*. This is clear from the description of the process of “transformation of basis” (*āśrayaparivṛtti*) in classical Yogācāra texts such as the *Dharmadharmatāvibhaṅga* and the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra*.

“Transformation of basis,” briefly speaking, refers to the abandonment of *dharmas* in order to attain the immanent *dharmatā*. However, it should be noted that two “levels” of “transformation of basis” are evident in the Yogācāra literature, with one level being “conventional” in meaning, and the other being “ultimate.” The “conventional” level refers to the achievement through the practice of a fourfold process. First, it is taught that all phenomena that seem to be external to consciousness are conceived by unreal pervasive conceptualization (*abhūtaparikalpa*) to be real in a dualistic way, which appears to exist but is indeed nonexistent. Once this is comprehended there is the non-apprehension of the phenomena as they are no longer grasped as external existents, for

⁸³ John Makransky, *Buddhahood Embodied*, p. 79.

these objects are realized to be “cognitive-representation only” (*viññaptimātratā*). When this is understood there is the corresponding non-apprehension of the subjective consciousness, which used to apprehend objective phenomena as external realities, because the consciousness itself exists only in relation to the objects external to it. It follows that if the apprehensible objects are realized to be non-existing, the apprehending consciousness is also established as non-existing. As a result, having comprehended that, one then completely transcends the stage of “cognitive-representation only” and awakens into the non-dualistic nature of Thusness (*tathatā*), and hence the apprehension of Thusness which is free from the apprehension based on the subject-object dichotomy.

The four stages in this transformation process are named differently according to different perspectives. In the *Dharmadharmatāvibhaṅga*, for example, they are named from the perspective of meditation practice as the fourfold “correct practice” (*samyakprayoga*): as apprehension (*upalambha*), non-apprehension (*anupalambha*), non-apprehension of apprehension (*upalambhānupalambha*), and apprehension of non-apprehension (*nopalambhopalambha*). In the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra*, they are named after the respective attainments as the four stages of heat (*uṣman*), summit (*mūrdhan*), forbearance (*kṣānti*), and worldly supremacy (*laukikāgradharma*), while in the *Mahāyānasamgraha*, they are named from the perspective of *samādhi* as “illumination attained” (*ālokalabdha*), “increase of illumination” (*ālokaṛddhi*), “partially entered into Reality” (*tattvaikadeśānupraviṣṭa*), and “uninterrupted” (*ānantarya*), or, from the perspectives of meditation and the wisdom realized, as the fourfold “reflections” (*paryeṣaṇā*) and the fourfold “ascertainment in conformity with reality”

(*yathābhūtaparijñā*), in terms of names (*nāma*), meaning (*vastu*), nature (*svabhāva*), and differences (*viśeṣa*). This is the process through which the practitioner abandons the attachment to *dharma*-manifestation and enters into the realm of *dharmatā*, and hence, the “transformation” of “basis.” This level of achievement corresponds to the attainment of the first level of Bodhisattvahood, sometimes described as the “contact” with the *tathatā*, the attainment of the Path of Direct Seeing (*darśanamārga*), or the entering into nonconceptuality (*nirvikalpapraveśa*).

The “ultimate” level, however, is also described in a fourfold manner, but encompassing the following stages: the Path of Preparation (*prayogamārga*), the Path of Direct Seeing (*darśanamārga*), the Path of Meditation (*bhāvanāmārga*), and the Path of No-more Learning (*aśaikṣamārga*). The attainment at the Path of No-more Learning is referred to as the “complete transformation of basis” (*niṣṭhāśrayaparāvṛtti*). At the end of this “complete transformation of basis” (which is to the achievement of Buddhahood or complete enlightenment), there is not even the discrimination of *dharma* and *dharmatā*, or *samsāra* and *nirvāṇa*. In other words, the “conventional” level of the “transformation of basis” involves both the abandoning of defilements and the attainment of “purity.” The complete realization of the “transformation of basis” on the “ultimate” level, however, transcends the notion of abandonment and achievement. It is an effortless, natural realization of the primordial wisdom and the *ekadhātu*. This amounts to saying that the “transformation of basis” can be discussed in terms of leading one to the level of

the First Stage Bodhisattva or leading one to perfect Buddhahood.⁸⁴ Similar pairs of “levels” of the fourfold-processed “transformation of basis” can be seen in a number of Mahāyāna scriptures, in *sūtras* like the *Laṅkāvatāra*, the *Avikalpapraveśa*, and the *Samḍhinirmocana*, and in Yogācāra literature such as the *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra*, the *Mahāyānasamgraha*, and the *Triṃśikā*. Moreover, they can also be seen in *tantras* like the *Guhyasamāja*, and in treatises such as Atīśa’s *dBu ma’i man ngag* and Mi pham rgya mtsho’s *dBu ma’i khrid zab mo*. One should be careful not to confuse the two fourfold processes in studying these scriptures.⁸⁵ It is clear, however, that in this literature the ultimate attainment of Buddhahood is usually discussed in terms of the complete realization of the *tathāgatagarbha*, as an intrinsic luminosity in the mind of all beings.

John Keenan also concludes in his investigation of the theme of “original purity of the mind” (*cittaprakṛtiprabhāsvartā*) in early Yogācāra:

The fact that the five works traditionally attributed to Maitreya, the putative founder of Yogācāra, include the *Ratnagotravibhāgaśāstra*, as well as the *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra*, shows that this tradition regarded Yogācāra and *tathāgatagarbha* as coming from the same source. Furthermore, the presence in the *Ratnagotravibhāga* of the famous quotation on the *anādikaliko dhātuḥ* from the *Mahāyānābhīdharmasūtra* suggests that the author of the *Ratnagotravibhāga*

⁸⁴ Takasaki Jikidō suggests in his article, “Tenne – *āśrayaparivṛtti* tō *āśrayaparāvṛtti*,” that the two forms of the Sanskrit original of “transformation of basis” used in the *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra* might have different connotations: while *āśrayaparivṛtti* more frequently is read to denote the appearance of the *tathatā* and Tathāgatas, the use of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is inclined toward denoting the cessation of the *ālayavijñāna*. It seems that such a difference in emphasis on the usage of the two terms can be applied to the two levels of “transformation of basis” as discussed here.

⁸⁵ Yael Bentor’s recent article, “Fourfold Meditation: Outer, Inner, Secret, and Suchness” contains some excellent research and discussion of the fourfold meditation in various *sūtras* and *tantras*, as well as other commentarial works. Bentor takes a different approach in comparing these fourfold systems, and she does not differentiate between the two levels of the fourfold process discussed above.

regarded the *Mahāyānābhīdharmasūtra* as being at least consistent with *tathāgatagarbha* themes.⁸⁶

Paul Griffiths, on the other hand, also discusses the sixteen verses from the ninth chapter of the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra* (22-37) that identify *tathāgatagarbha* as the pure Tathāgata inherent in all sentient beings.⁸⁷

In addition to these findings, we can also examine the claim that both the Yogācāra tradition and *tathāgatagarbha* teachings are said to be based on the third and last of the “three turnings of the wheel” mentioned in the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra*. It should be noted that the *sūtra* states explicitly that the third turning of the Dharma wheel expounds the “unsurpassable, definitive” teachings on the *Prajñāpāramitā*. Both the second and third turnings are in agreement in teaching that all phenomena have no own-being (*svabhāva*), and are non-arising, non-vanishing, originally quiescent, and naturally in the state of *nirvāṇa*. The third turning is distinguished from the second only in the sense that the latter’s teaching on the *Prajñāpāramitā* is surpassable and non-definitive (*neyārtha*) because it is still within the realm of language and dispute.⁸⁸ The emphasis on the “definitive” (*nītārtha*) teaching as expounding the “secret” or “hidden” meaning of

⁸⁶ John Keenan, “Original Purity and the Focus of Early Yogācāra,” pp. 14-15.

⁸⁷ An English translation of these sixteen verses, from Sanskrit, can be found in Paul Griffiths, “Painting Space with Colors: Tathāgatagarbha in the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra*-Corpus IX.22-37,” p. 52-53.

⁸⁸ According to Xuanzang’s translation: 世尊，在昔第二時中惟為發趣修大乘者，依一切法皆無自性無生無滅、本來寂靜自性涅槃，以隱密相轉正法輪，雖更甚奇甚為希有；而於彼時所轉法輪，亦是有所容受，猶未了義，是諸諍論安足處所。世尊，於今第三時中普為發趣一切乘者，依一切法皆無自性無生無滅、本來寂靜自性涅槃無自性性，以顯了相轉正法輪，第一甚奇最為希有；于今世尊所轉法輪，無上無容是真了義，非諸諍論安足處所。(T676, 697b)

the *Prajñāpāramitā* explains why the *sūtra* is titled “*saṃdhinirmocana*.”⁸⁹ With the constant emphasis on the state of Buddhahood as a realm that transcends our speculation, logic, dualistic concepts, and language, it is not surprising that, even though the name of the compound “*tathāgatagarbha*” is not used, the *Samdhinirmocana* is the scriptural source of later East Asian and Tibetan Buddhist traditions that claim the superiority of the teaching of the *tathāgatagarbha*. In the *Samdhinirmocana*, we find that the emphasis is on clarifying that the “ultimate” (*paramārtha*) is “realized by the sages themselves,” is the “domain of no-marks” (*animittagocara*), “cannot be expressed,” “cannot be known [intellectually],” “transcending all the characteristics of the domain of speculation (*tarkagocara*),” and is therefore “free from dispute.” In other words, ultimate reality should not be conceived as an object of philosophical inquiry, but a realization of how things truly are. It is therefore completely unlike the mind of speculation, which is described in the *Samdhinirmocana* as “limited within the domain of mark (*nimittagocara*),” “within the realm of teachings,” “within the domain of knowledge,” and so forth.⁹⁰ This domain of the ultimate (*paramārthagocara*) is declared to be fully and perfectly realized by the Buddha. It is said to be:

⁸⁹ According to Wonch’uk’s commentary, “*saṃdhi*” means profound and hidden, and such a deep meaning needs to be untied like a knot, and the term also refers to the mind-continuum of beings. In other words, there is something profound and hidden within the mind stream of ordinary sentient beings, but it takes an effort to reveal it like untying a knot. On the other hand, “*nirmocana*” means both interpretation and liberation – what is revealed in the mind stream of beings through correct interpretation of the hidden meaning of the *Prajñāpāramitā* is the state of liberation.

⁹⁰ The Chinese translation of the *sūtra* by Xuanzang states: 是故法涌，由此道理當知勝義，超過一切尋思境相。復次法涌，我說勝義，無相所行尋思但行有相境界，是故法涌，由此道理，當知勝義超過一切尋思境相。復次法涌，我說勝義，不可言說尋思但行言說境界，是故法涌，由此道理，當知勝義超過一切尋思境相。復次法涌，我說勝義絕諸表示、尋思，但行表示境界，是故法涌，由此道理，當知勝義超過一切尋思境相。復次法涌，我說勝義，絕諸諍論尋思但行諍論境界，是故法涌，由此道理，當知勝義超過一切尋思境相。(T676, 689c-690a)

...realized personally by the sages, while the domain of speculation is known by ordinary people through one another. Therefore, Dharmodgata, through this explanation you should know that the ultimate completely transcends all the characteristics of the domain of speculation.⁹¹

In the *SMD*, we find a similar passage:

The Tathāgatagarbha is the domain of the Tathāgata. It is not known by any Śrāvaka or Pratyekabuddha. The Tathāgatagarbha is the locus of the explanation of the meaning of the Noble Truths. Because this locus of the Tathāgatagarbha is profound, the meaning of the Noble Truths is also considered to be profound, subtle, and difficult to understand; this is not the realm of speculation, and is only known to the sages.⁹²

In the *AAN*, it is also stated:

At that time, the Lord told venerable Śāriputra, “This profound meaning [of the *tathāgatagarbha*] is the domain of wisdom (*jñānagocara*) of the Tathāgata, and is also the realm of the mentalities of the Tathāgata. Such profound meaning is not known, not seen, not observed by the Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas, let alone the speculation by all ignorant ordinary beings. Only the wisdom of all the Buddhas and Tathāgatas is able to contemplate and [truly] know this meaning.⁹³

As we can see, the *tathāgatagarbha* is not a conceptual realm; it therefore transcends the domain of dualistic consciousness of ordinary sentient beings. That there is a domain of wisdom (*jñānagocara*) which goes beyond our ordinary minds is indeed a point of emphasis in the *Samḍhinirmocana*. Takasaki Jikidō has remarked that “the core of the

⁹¹ Ibid.: 我說勝義是諸聖者內自所證尋思所行、是諸異生展轉所證。是故法涌，由此道理當知勝義超過一切尋思境相。(T676, 689c)

⁹² According to Guṇabhadra’s Chinese translation: 如來藏者，是如來境界，非一切聲聞緣覺所知。如來藏處，說聖諦義，如來藏處甚深故，說聖諦亦甚深，微細難知；非思量境界，是智者所知。(T353, 221b)

⁹³ 爾時世尊告慧命舍利弗：此甚深義乃是如來智慧境界，亦是如來心所行處。舍利弗，如是深義，一切聲聞緣覺智慧所不能知、所不能見、不能觀察，何況一切愚癡凡夫而能測量？唯有諸佛如來智慧，乃能觀察知見此義。(T668, 467a)

tathāgatagarbha theory is in ... the ‘pure’ faith in the Buddha.”⁹⁴ He therefore makes the connection between such an emphasis on “faith” in the *tathāgatagarbha* texts and stūpa worship. From a soteriological perspective, however, the significance of emphasizing “faith” (*śraddhā*) in the *tathāgatagarbha* texts is indeed much more than devotional faith in the Buddha who has long gone; rather it is because the *tathāgatagarbha* is said to be the “domain of the Tathāgata,” which utterly transcends the ordinary dualistic mode of our human consciousness.

That there is a series of Mahāyāna *sūtras* and *śāstras* dedicated to exploring the notion of *tathāgatagarbha* is not sufficient to make it a school itself. Takasaki points out that the conception of *tathāgatagarbha* as a separate school in addition to Madhyamaka and Yogācāra was not found in India or Tibet, but was simply a by-product of Chinese Buddhism.⁹⁵ Unlike Madhyamaka, founded by Nāgārjuna and the lineage of masters after him, including Āryadeva, Buddhapālita, Bhāvaviveka, and Candrakīrti, or Yogācāra, which was founded by Maitreya, Asaṅga, Vasubandhu, and propounded by Sthiramati, Dharmakīrti, *et al.*, there is no separate lineage of masters and disciples of a “Tathāgatagarbha school” in India. Also, unlike Madhyamaka and Yogācāra, both of which produced many treatises, such as the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* or the *Yogācārabhūmi*, which explain the *sūtra* teachings according to their respective

⁹⁴ Takasaki Jikidō, “Structure of the Annuttarāśrayasūtra (Wu-shang-I-ching),” in *Indogaku Bukkyōgaku Kenkyū* 8 (March, 1960), pp. 30-37.

⁹⁵ Takasaki Jikidō, *Nyoraizō shisō no keisei*, p. 3.

intentions, the same cannot be observed about the suggested “Tathāgatagarbha school.” It is chiefly represented by a dozen or so Mahāyāna *sūtras* that explicitly relate to the theme of *tathāgatagarbha*. The *RGV* is probably the only treatise on *tathāgatagarbha* theory whose authorship is not suspected to be non-Indian in origin, though this work is generally considered as a text of the Yogācāra tradition, ascribed to Maitreya, Asaṅga, Vasubandhu, Sāramati, or Sthiramati.⁹⁶ Indeed, there is no Indian treatise on this material outside the Yogācāra tradition. In the Chinese Buddhist canon, there are also other treatises, such as the *Foxing lun*, attributed to Vasubandhu, and the *Dasheng fajie wu fenbie lun*, attributed to Sāramati. These works, whether the ascriptions are correct or not, have a close affinity to the Yogācāra school.⁹⁷ As Sallie King states: “[the] *tathāgatagarbha* literature, like the *prajñāpāramitā* literature, is not the property of any identifiable school in Indian Buddhism.”⁹⁸ There is indeed no indication why we should expect a *tathāgatagarbha* tradition to form a third Mahāyāna school, in addition to Madhyamaka and Yogācāra, in India.

Though I disagree strongly with his interpretation and dismissal of the *tathāgatagarbha* theory as a “*dhātu-vāda*” concept, Matsumoto Shirō’s comment on the proposal of a third “*tathāgatagarbha* school” in Indian Buddhism is worthy of our attention:

⁹⁶ The authorship of the *RGV* will be discussed in Chapter 12 below.

⁹⁷ Cf. Sallie B. King, “Buddha nature and the concept of person,” p. 154-155. It should also be noted that in the *Foxing lun*, the *tathāgatagarbha* is also spoken of as the “true realm” (*zhengjing*, 正境) and the nonduality of the realm of Thusness (*ruru jing*, 如如境) and the wisdom that realizes it. The close affinity between Madhyamaka and the *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine will be discussed shortly.

⁹⁸ Sallie King, *Buddha Nature*, p. 11.

Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism is usually considered to have had two major scholastic traditions: the Mādhyamika and Yogācāra. This is adequate for classifying the *scholastic* traditions, and I see no need to support the proposal that the *tathāgata-garbha* tradition was a third school. In India there were certainly scholastic debates within the Yogācāra school and within the Mādhyamika school, and there were also debates between the Yogācāra and Mādhyamika schools, but can it be said that there were debates between the *tathāgata-garbha* and Yogācāra schools?⁹⁹

Neither Xuanzang (玄奘) nor Yijing (義淨) mentions the existence of any “Tathāgatagarbha school” in their memoirs recording their journeys to India. Indeed, Yijing, in comments in his *Nanhai jigui neifa zhuan* (南海寄歸內法傳), is adamant that there were only two Mahāyāna traditions in India, namely Madhyamaka and Yogācāra. This observation should be taken as correct in the light of the above discussion. The answer to Matsumoto’s question cited here seems very likely to be negative, as the *tathāgatagarbha* teaching is seamlessly woven into classical Yogācāra literature. However, the same cannot be said for Chinese Buddhism. Peter Gregory, in his insightful study of Zhiyi (智顓)’s works, observes that:

Hsüan-tsang ... rendered a large body of texts into Chinese, many of which belonged to the Yogācāra tradition of Indian Mahāyāna. Hsüan-tsang used these texts to introduce a new version of Yogācāra that was in many ways at odds with what previously had become accepted as the established Yogācāra tradition in China. ... That *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine was central to the earlier Chinese Yogācāra tradition to which Chih-yen appealed in his refutation of Hsüan-tsang’s new Yogācāra teaching.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ Jamie Hubbard & Paul L. Swanson, *Pruning the Bodhi Tree*, p. 11.

¹⁰⁰ Peter Gregory, *Tsung-mi and the Sinification of Buddhism*, pp. 12-13.

As a result of the conflict, the Huayan school rejected the form of Yogācāra transmitted by Xuanzang as being only a form of quasi-Mahāyāna teaching. It assigns it a rather low status in its classification of Buddhist teachings (*panjiao*, 判教), as the Teaching of the Phenomenal Appearance of the Dharmas (*faxiang jiao*, 法相教).¹⁰¹ As a result, what was originally a schism within the Yogācāra tradition in India, the “classical school” and the “new school,” developed into a debate between the Huayan school and the Faxiang school, which in essence became a debate between the teaching of *tathāgatagarbha* and that of the *viññānavāda*.¹⁰² It seems that Xuanzang tried to hold firmly to his view on the validity of the “new Yogācāra teaching” he brought back from India, to the extent that he even attempted to discredit all older versions of the Buddhist scriptures which he retranslated. In Daoxuan (道宣)’s *Xu gaoseng zhuan* (續高僧傳), it says:

Tripiṭaka-master Xuanzang did not allow any teachers to use the older translation of [Buddhist] scriptures. Fachong said, “You became a monk through the old translations of scriptures; if you do not allow the propagation of earlier translated texts, you can abandon your monkhood and return to the laity, then become a monk again using the newly translated scriptures. This is in agreement with your intention [of discarding the earlier translated scriptures.]” [Xuan]zang gave up his insistence upon hearing this.¹⁰³

This development of the debate in China has confirmed Takasaki’s view that the evaluation of the *tathāgatagarbha* tradition as a defined academic school is only a

¹⁰¹ Cf. Peter Gregory, *Inquiry into the Origin of Humanity*, pp.150-160.

¹⁰² The differences between Paramārtha’s and Xuanzang’s transmissions of Yogācāra teachings, of course, are also indicative of the differences of the two forms of Yogācāra in India.

¹⁰³ 三藏玄奘不許講舊所翻經，法沖曰：君依舊經出家，若不許弘舊經者，君可還俗，更依新翻經出家，方許君此意。樊闡遂止。(T2060, 666c)

peculiarity of Chinese Buddhism.¹⁰⁴ This does not mean, however, that the *tathāgatagarbha* tradition has always been treated as a distinct school in China. When the classical tradition of Yogācāra was transmitted to China, through the translations of Buddhasānta, Bodhiruci, Paramārtha, Dharmagupta, Prabhākaramitra, and others,¹⁰⁵ the *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine was treated as compatible with the Yogācāra. For example, Chan Wing-cheuk has pointed out that,

It should be noted that here the term “Three Natures” [of the Yogācāra teaching] must be understood in a broad sense. It not only covers the Three Natures in the usual sense, i.e., the *parikalpita*, the *paratantra* and the *pariniṣpanna*, but primarily refers to the Three Non-Natures, i.e., the *lakṣaṇaniḥsvabhāvatā*, the *utpattiniḥsvabhāvatā* and the *paramārthaniḥsvabhāvatā*. In this sense, for Paramārtha, “Three Non-Natures” is just another name for the *tathatā*. That is to say, in the eyes of Paramārtha, the term “Three Non-Natures” is synonymous with “Buddha-nature.” It is well-known that Paramārtha also declares: “The Three Non-Natures are non-grounding.” Accordingly, Buddha-nature in Paramārtha’s sense basically rather functions as the non-ground (*Abgrund*).¹⁰⁶

The *tathāgatagarbha*, as interpreted in Paramārtha’s works, is not taken to be an ontological ground but is an inconceivable state realizing the “Three Naturelessnesses” simultaneously. The Three Naturelessnesses, it should be noted, are referred to in the *Samdhinirmocana* and the *Ghanavyūha* as the “secret intention” of the Buddha concerning the reality of all phenomena.¹⁰⁷ The Three Naturelessnesses are therefore not

¹⁰⁴ Cf. John Keenan, “Original Purity and the Focus of Early Yogācāra,” p. 15.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Ueda Yoshifumi, “Two Main Streams of Thought in Yogācāra Philosophy,” p. 155.

¹⁰⁶ Chan, Wing-cheuk, “The Yogācāra Doctrine of Buddha-Nature: Paramārtha vs. the Fa-hsiang School,” pp. 14-15.

¹⁰⁷ For example, in Xuanzang’s translation of the *Samdhinirmocana*: 勝義生當知，我依三種無自性性密意，說言一切諸法皆無自性，所謂相無自性性、生無自性性、勝義無自性性。(T676, 694a)

synonymous with the Three Natures, as some modern scholars tend to see them; however a thorough discussion of the relationship between the two sets of tri-natures is beyond the scope of this thesis.

The Tathāgatagarbha Doctrine and the Madhyamaka Tradition

As for Madhyamaka, the relationship with the teaching of the *tathāgatagarbha* seems to be at first sight remote, and there are also scholars who suggest that the rise of the *tathāgatagarbha* literature is indeed targeted against Mādhyamikas who uphold “emptiness” (*sūnyatā*) as the ultimate truth. Furthermore, Madhyamaka is also seen as a rival school to Yogācāra. This, again, is based on a misinterpretation of all three systems of thought. Alex Wayman has lamented the rise of such misinterpretations in modern scholarship:

The tide of misinformation on this, or on any other topic of Indian lore comes about because authors frequently read just a few verses or paragraphs of text, then go to secondary sources, or to treatises by rivals, and presume to speak authoritatively. Only after doing genuine research on such a topic can one begin to answer the question: why were those texts [written] and why do the moderns write the way they do?¹⁰⁸

Regarding the rivalry between Madhyamaka and Yogācāra, D.T. Suzuki also made a similar remark:

Most Buddhist scholars are often too ready to make a sharp distinction between the Mādhyamika and the Yogācāra, taking the one as exclusively advocating the theory of emptiness (*sūnyatā*) while the other is bent single-mindedly on an idealistic interpretation of the universe. They thus further assume that the idea of

¹⁰⁸ Alex Wayman, “A Defense of Yogācāra Buddhism,” p. 470.

emptiness is not at all traceable in the Yogācāra and that idealism is absent in the Mādhyamika. This is not exact as a historical fact.¹⁰⁹

So, if Madhyamaka and Yogācāra are not antithetical, in what ways do the two traditions agree with each other?

It should first be noted that Madhyamaka is a dialectical system that is concerned with the refutation of *all* views (*dr̥ṣṭi*), including the view of “emptiness” (*śūnyatā*), and even the view of the “emptiness of emptiness.” The ultimate (*paramārtha*) in Madhyamaka is the cessation of *prapañca* (conceptual elaborations), as indicated in the dedicatory verse of Nāgārjuna’s *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*. This state of the “blissful quiescence of conceptual elaborations” (*prapañcopaśamaṃ śivam*) is also explained as the state of *advayavāda* which is freedom from the duality of the extremes (*antas*) of “is,” “is not,” “both is and is not,” “neither is nor is not”. It is also known as the state of *tattva*, *tathatā*, or *bhūtakoti*, where *prajñā* emerges as a result of correctly seeing that all phenomena are lacking in (*śūnya*) “own-being” (*svabhāva*), which is a result of “conceptual elaboration.” The reality in Madhyamaka is spoken of epistemologically, not ontologically. “Emptiness” as a view is not taken as the reality; rather, it is only a skilful means that leads the practitioner towards the attainment of the state free from “conceptual elaborations.”¹¹⁰ As Candrakīrti also states:

¹⁰⁹ D.T. Suzuki, *Eastern Buddhist* 4: 255.

¹¹⁰ Leaving aside the question whether one should take *śūnyatā* as a means or the ultimate, it should be noted that the term refers not to a void but something like a “space” (*ākāśa*) in the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā*, where it is said to be luminous and filled with light. Cf. Nancy McCagney, *Nāgārjuna and the Philosophy of Openness*, pp. xix-xx.

Emptiness is taught in order to lay to rest all differentiation without exception. Thus the intent of emptiness is the laying to rest of differentiation in its entirety.¹¹¹

The “ultimate truth” is, therefore, the wisdom of realizing all things as they are (*yathābhūtarśana*) without distortion (*akṛtrimam vasturūpam*) caused by the delusional attachment to *prapañcas*. As T.R.V. Murti summarizes the matter in his study of the relationship between the Two Truths:

I have interpreted *śūnyatā* and the doctrine of the Two Truths as a kind of Absolutism, not Nihilism. Nāgārjuna’s ‘no views about reality’ should not be taken as advocating ‘a no-reality view’. ... The Mādhyamika does not allow us to characterize and clothe the real in empirical terms and concepts (*prapañca*, *vikalpa*); even *nirvāṇa* or the *tathāgata* should not be theorized about. In the final resort *śūnyatā* by which all things are pronounced unreal, is itself not an end, an entity, but only a means, a remedy to cure a malady.¹¹²

Apparently, this state of “blissful quiescence of conceptual elaboration” connects well with both Yogācāra and the *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine. In addition, the state of “ignorance” (*avidyā*) is understood by the Mādhyamikas as illusory (*māyā*), as Nāgārjuna states:

Thus, with the cessation of perversions, ignorance ceases. When ignorance has ceased, the dispositions, etc. come to cease.

If, indeed, certain defilements of someone have come to be on the basis of self-nature, how could they be relinquished? Who ever could relinquish self-nature?

¹¹¹ Translation quoted from Jacques May, *Prasannapadā Madhyamakavṛtti*, p. 223.

¹¹² T.R.V. Murti, “Saṃvṛti and Paramārtha,” p. 22.

If, indeed, certain defilements of someone have not come to be on the basis of self-nature, how could they be relinquished? Who ever could relinquish non-existence?¹¹³

The emphasis on the unreality of the defilements (*kleśa*) reminds us of the claim that all defilements are “adventitious” in classical Yogācāra and *tathāgatagarbha* texts. On the other hand, the identification of *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa* in Madhyamaka writings also resonates well with the identification of the *sattvadhātu* and the *dharmakāya* in the *AAN*. This will be discussed below. It is therefore not surprising that the *tathāgatagarbha* has never been a subject of criticism by the Mādhyamikas. It is perhaps not because modern scholars who refute the teaching of the *tathāgatagarbha* as a non-empty entity are “better Mādhyamikas” than the lineage of masters in the past. It seems more likely, rather, that these Mādhyamikas know very well that the *tathāgatagarbha* is not an entity itself which is claimed to be permanent and eternal, and its description as a “Self” (*ātman*) also needs to be interpreted differently from the Vedāntic context. Interpreting Buddhist texts in a way that loses itself in language, and overlooks the doctrinal meaning that is being conveyed, always leads one into the danger of misinterpreting the texts. For example, in the study of Yogācāra literature, terms such as “existent,” “nonexistent,” and *svabhāva*, as used in the doctrine of the Three Natures (*trisvabhāva*), should be understood in a slightly different way from their usage in Madhyamaka literature. Whereas “existent”

¹¹³ Translation quoted from David J. Kalupahana, *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā of Nāgārjuna*, p. 324. The verses cited are from 23:23-25 – *evaṃ nirudhyate 'vidyā viparyayanīrodhayāt / avidyāyāṃ niruddhāyāṃ saṃskārādyaṃ nirudhyate // yadi bhūtāḥ svabhāvena kleśāḥ kecid dhi kasyacit / kathaṃ nāma prahīyeran kaḥ svabhāvaṃ prahāsyati // yady abhūtāḥ svabhāvena kleśāḥ kecid dhi kasyacit / kathaṃ nāma prahīyeran ko 'sadbhāvaṃ prahāsyati //*

and “non-existent” are understood as two of the extremes in the *prapañca* of the tetralemma in Madhyamaka, they are understood as something that exists as the way things truly are (such as *sūnyatā*, *tathatā*, *dharmakāya*, *tathāgatagarbha*, and so on), and something that has no reality whatsoever in Yogācāra. In the Madhyamaka tradition, when something is said to be “truly existent,” it usually refers to something which has its own-being (*svabhāva*). However, we should be aware when we are reading the Yogācāra literature that the same description of being “truly existent” in the Yogācāra tradition does not refer to some non-empty being, but rather refers to the characteristic (*lakṣaṇa*) of existing just as the way things truly are. Hence, the “accomplished nature” (*pariniṣpanna-svabhāva*) is said to be “truly existent” in Yogācāra works such as the *Madhyāntavibhāga*, but not because the “accomplished nature” is an entity itself or because this “nature” (*svabhāva*) is real in the sense that it is non-empty. Similarly, it can be inferred that when the *tathāgatagarbha* is described as being “truly existent” in the scriptures, we need not take that as a doctrine that is contradictory of the Madhyamaka tradition.

To see Madhyamaka and Yogācāra as contradictory and as rivals is clearly demonstrated to be an incorrect understanding. Guiseppe Tucci makes a similar point:

It is generally said that Mahāyāna may be divided into two fundamental schools, viz., Mādhyamika and Yogācāra. This statement must not be taken literally. First of all it is not exact to affirm that these two tendencies were always opposed to each other. ... The fact is that both Nāgārjuna as well as Maitreya, along with their immediate disciples, acknowledged the same fundamental tenets, and their

work was determined by the same ideals, though holding quite different views in many a detail.¹¹⁴

The same applies to the study of *tathāgatagarbha*. It has been a common practice to study the *RGV* to gain a better and more insightful understanding of the *tathāgatagarbha* teaching. However, it is also generally ignored that the study of classical Yogācāra literature, in addition to the *RGV*, can also aid us in our understanding of the profound teaching. For example, the careful delineation of the differences as well as the relationship between *dharma* and *dharmatā*, as well as the approach to transform the perception of the former into the latter, in the *Dharmadharmatāvibhaṅga*, can indeed be inspiring. It can aid us in our understanding of the relationship between the *ālayavijñāna* and the *tathāgatagarbha* in the *SMD* and the *Laṅkāvatāra*. Taking into consideration that the *tathāgatagarbha* might very well be an important component of the classical Yogācāra, how would one explain the concept of *tathāgatagarbha-ālayavijñāna*? It seems that the *dharma-dharmatā* relationship in the *Dharmadharmatāvibhaṅga* provides a clue to how to approach the teaching in true Yogācāra fashion. A detailed explanation of this, however, lies beyond the focus and intention of the current thesis.

To sum up, in reviewing the relationship between all three systems of thought in Mahāyāna Buddhism, it should be noted that there has been a misunderstanding in some modern scholarly criticism of seeing the main thrust of Madhyamaka as the establishment

¹¹⁴ Guiseppe Tucci, *On Some Aspects of the Doctrines of Maitreya(nātha) and Asaṅga*, pp. 2-4.

of the view of nihilism as the ultimate truth.¹¹⁵ It is similarly erroneous to suggest that that of Yogācāra is upholding “consciousness-only” as the ultimate reality, and that of the *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine as being to show that there is a pure, ontological substratum that acts as the true generative origin of all phenomena. The teaching of *sūnyatā* is a means of refuting the common belief, as a *prapañca*, that things truly exist and have their own-nature (*svabhāva*). Yet *sūnyatā* is not a view (*dr̥ṣṭi*); it should not be reified as a view with this view taken as the ultimate truth. Yogācāra, on the other hand, meaning “practice of yoga” (*yoga-acāra*), at the conventional level, is a system of practice that gradually removes the “unreal imagination” (*abhūtaparikalpa*) of truly existing dualistic relationships and of “conceptualizations” (*vikalpa*), through the teachings of the fourfold meditative practice on the “Path of Preparation.” Once practitioners enter the “Path of Vision,” it is the entering into the realm of Thusness (*tathatā*) or “nonconceptuality” (*nirvikalpa* or *avikalpa*), where the first stage of Bodhisattvahood is attained. This “purity” of Thusness, being nondual with the nonconceptual wisdom that realizes it, is said to be immanent, unconditioned, and uncreated, and is, therefore, always present. As such, the process of the “transformation of basis” is one that reveals the nonconceptual wisdom or Thusness that is always immanent, rather than a process of creating such a state of reality anew. In this respect one can see the common element in all three systems of thought: the immanent reality which is nondual, nonconceptual, unconditioned, and is

¹¹⁵ For example, Fernando Tola and Carmen Dragonetti state in the preface to their work, *On Voidness: A Study on Buddhist Nihilism*: “In relation to the title of *Buddhist Nihilism* we must explain that, even if the Mādhyamika philosophy does not affirm nothingness, anyhow its conception of reality as ‘void’, the emphasis it lays on universal contingency, the affirmation of the unreality of all and the analytical-abolishing method in order to reach truth, have led us to the conclusion that the Mādhyamika philosophy represents the most radical degree of philosophical nihilism.”

therefore said to be “permanent” and “eternal.” The methodology of presenting this nonconceptual reality is different in the three systems. In the case of Madhyamaka, it is through dialectical arguments. In Yogācāra, it is through a system of meditative practice coupled with philosophical guidance such as the Three Natures and the Three Naturelessnesses. The *tathāgatagarbha* thought is a direct description of such a state using more positive adjectives, while maintaining that it is a domain of the Tathāgata. Such differences should not become obstacles that blind us. Their intention is to guide practitioners towards a goal, an ultimate reality that is spoken of in very similar ways in all three systems.

Chapter Three: The *Anūnatvāpūrnatvanirdeśa-parivarta*

An Examination of the Title of the AAN

The *AAN* is the shortest of the *tathāgatagarbha* texts. Its Chinese translation, the *Buzeng bujian jing* (不增不減經; hereafter, *BBJ*), occupies only two pages of the Taishō edition. Although no Sanskrit or Tibetan version of this text is extant, leaving us only the Chinese translation by Bodhiruci of the Northern Wei (北魏) dynasty, almost one-third of the text is quoted in the *Ratnagoṭravibhāga* (*RGV*), and is instrumental in forming the central tenets of this Indian composition. What is also noteworthy is that even though the Tibetan tradition has never had its own translation of the *AAN*, it nevertheless has, since the fourteenth century, considered it as one of the “Ten *Sūtras* on the *Tathāgatagarbha*” (*snying po'i mdo*).¹¹⁶ Therefore, in spite of its conciseness, the text's importance in the Indian and Tibetan Buddhist traditions cannot be underestimated.

In China, however, the *BBJ* did not receive attention from Chinese scholars to the extent that the *Śrīmālādevī* (*SMD*) or the *Laṅkāvatāra* did. For example, while the *SMD*

¹¹⁶ The lists of the “Ten *Sūtras* on the *tathāgatagarbha*” first developed following the establishment of the Jo nang tradition. According to the *Zhu don gngang ba* (*The Conferment of the Essence of What is Being Said*) of Dol po pa Shes rab rgyal mtshan (1292-1362), the founder of the Jo nang tradition, the ten *snying po'i mdo* are: 1) the *Tathāgatagarbha-sūtra* (*De bshin gshegs pa'i snying po'i mdo*); 2) the *Avikalpapraveśa-dhāraṇī* (*rNam par mi rtog pa la 'jug pa'i gzungs*); 3) the *Śrīmālādevī-siṃhanāda-sūtra* (*Lha mo dpal phreng seng ge sgra'i mdo*); 4) the *Mahābherihāraka-sūtra* (*rNga bo che chen po'i mdo*); 5) *Ārya-aṅgulimāliya-sūtra* (*Sor mo'i phreng ba la phan pa'i mdo*); 6) the *Mahāśūnyatā-sūtra* (*sTong nyid chen po'i mdo*); 7) the *Dhāraṇīśvararājapariprcchā* (also known as the *Tathāgatamahākaraṇāsūtra*; *De bzhin gshegs pa'i thugs rje chen po bstan pa'i mdo*); 8) the *Jñānalokālamkāra-sūtra* (*De bzhin gshegs pa'i yon tan dang ye shes bsam gyis mi khyab pa'i bstan pa'i mdo*); 9) the *Mahāmegha-sūtra* (*Sprin chen po'i mdo rgyas pa*); and 10) the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* (*Myang 'das chen po'i mdo*). (Cf. *Zhu don gngang ba*, ff. 34-5) However, this list is not conclusive; there are other versions of what should be regarded as the *snying po'i mdo*. In mKhas grub rje's *rGyud sde spyi'i rnam par gzhag pa rgyas par brjod*, for example, the ten *sūtras* includes the *Anūnatvāpūrnatvanirdeśa-parivarta* and the *Samdhinirmocana-sūtra*, replacing the *Mahāmegha* and the *Mahāśūnyatā* from the *Zhu don gngang ba* list. (Cf. F.D. Lessing & A. Wayman, trans. *Introduction to the Buddhist Tantric Systems*. New York: Samuel Weiser, Inc., 1968, pp. 48-9.)

has numerous commentaries, both extant and lost, composed in the Chinese and Japanese tradition,¹¹⁷ there is no commentarial work written on the *BBJ*.¹¹⁸ Its brevity should not be seen as the reason for the lack of commentaries composed on it. There exist a large number of commentaries, from a diversity of Buddhist schools in China including Huayan (華嚴), Tiantai (天台), Chan (禪), and Pure Land, since the Tang (唐) dynasty, commenting on the *Heart Sūtra*, which is even shorter than the *BBJ*. However, it does not mean that the *BBJ* was completely ignored by Chinese Buddhists. On the contrary, it seems to have been a favourite Mahāyāna text among Chinese Buddhist scholars, as it has been quoted in a range of works from different Chinese Buddhist traditions, especially in the Huayan circle, as will be shown below. The use of the *BBJ* in China was mainly for illustrating its distinctive teaching on the notions of “one *dharmadhātu*” and the supreme equality of the *nirvāṇadhātu* and the *sattvadhātu*, and it therefore enjoys a prominent place particularly among the Huayan thinkers.

The Sanskrit title of the *BBJ* cited in the *RGV* is given as the *Anūnatvāpūrṇatvanirdeśa-parivarta*. Takasaki Jikidō was the first scholar to pay attention to this title as a “*parivarta*” instead of a “*sūtra*.” He suggests that this text may originally be a chapter of a larger *sūtra*, or a section from a voluminous scripture.¹¹⁹ The

¹¹⁷ The most well known commentaries on the *SMD* include Huiyuan (慧遠)’s *Shengmanjing yiji* (勝鬘經義記), Jizang (吉藏)’s *Shengmanjing baoku* (勝鬘經寶窟), Kuiji (窺基)’s *Shengmanjing shuji* (勝鬘經述記), Gyōnen (凝然)’s *Shōmangyō shoshō genki* (勝鬘經義詳玄記), and a *Shōmangyō shō* (勝鬘經疏) attributed to Prince Shōtoku (聖德太子). For detailed discussions of the available commentaries on the *SMD* and its influences in China and Japan, see Diana Mary Paul, *The Buddhist Feminine Ideal*, pp. 2-3, and Wayman & Wayman, *The Lion’s Roar of Queen Śrīmālā*, pp. 9-16.

¹¹⁸ The *BBJ* is occasionally quoted by Chinese monk-scholars, as in Fazang (法藏)’s *Huayan yisheng jiaoyi fenqi zhang* (華嚴一乘教義分齊章), as will be discussed below, but there is no commentarial work written on it.

¹¹⁹ See Takasaki Jikidō, *Nyoraizō shisō no keisei*, p. 69.

Chinese title, however, names this as a “*jing*” (經, *sūtra*). Nonetheless the titles of Chinese translations of Buddhist scriptures cannot be used to reconstruct the original Sanskrit titles, as is attested by the various different names given to a single *sūtra* by different translators in the history of the translation of Buddhist texts in China. Scriptures that do not bear the word “*sūtra*” in the original title were nevertheless called “*jing*” in their Chinese versions. The most obvious case is that of the famous *Heart Sūtra*, which has never been regarded as a “*sūtra*” in India or as a “*mdo*” in Tibet. The original Sanskrit title of the “*Heart Sūtra*” is *Prajñāpāramitā-hṛdaya*, literally meaning the “Essence of the Perfection of Wisdom;” this is translated into Tibetan as the *Shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa'i snying po*.¹²⁰ On the other hand, the famous *Platform Sūtra* (*Tanjing*, 壇經) of the Chan tradition is not even a “*sūtra*” in the traditional Indian way of referring to a text containing discourses attributed to the Buddha; rather, it simply purports to be a record of the life and teachings of Huineng (慧能), the sixth patriarch of

¹²⁰ Although the longer recension of the *Heart Sūtra* begins with the words “Thus have I heard” (*evaṃ mayā śrutam*), the text is not in the usual format of a *sūtra* that we might expect: the teaching in the text is purportedly taught by Avalokiteśvara and its contents are indeed a summary of the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā* (with exact sentences quoted from the latter). It is clear that the core material from the *Heart Sūtra* was a condensed form of the *Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*; in other words, it is a *dhāraṇī* in the sense that it is a memory device to remind the practitioners of the teachings from the entire corpus of the *Prajñāpāramitā*. The standardized critical edition of the short recension of the *Heart Sūtra* ends with the phrase “ity ārya-prajñāpāramitā-hṛdayaṃ samāptam.” But in the Nepalese manuscripts, as Edward Conze noted, there are variant versions to it. Instead of calling the scripture “prajñāpāramitā-hṛdaya,” other versions name it as “prajñāpāramitā-hṛdaya-dhāraṇī” and “pañca-viṃśatikā-prajñāpāramitā-hṛdaya-nāma-dhāraṇī” among others (see Conze, *Thirty Years of Buddhist Studies*, pp. 153-154). It seems that this view of the *Heart Sūtra* as a *dhāraṇī* is at least supported by the Nepalese manuscripts. It should also be noted that a “*dhāraṇī*” need not be “tantric” in nature or contain various *mantras*, as it is clear that the *Avikalpapraveśadhāraṇī*, considered to be one of the ten most important scriptures on the theory of *tathāgatagarbha* by the Jo nang tradition in Tibet, is a summary of the discourses that teach the practitioners the process of meditation toward entering into the realm of nonconceptuality, and itself contains no *mantras*.

the southern “sudden school” of Chan Buddhism. The famous *Hevajratāntra* also gained a new title in its Chinese translation, as *Dabei kongzhi jingangwang jing* (大悲空智金剛王經), which if we render in Sanskrit would read as *Mahākaruṇika-sūnya-jñāna-vajrarāja-sūtra*.¹²¹ In this case, the text is referred to as a “*jing*” (*sūtra*, 經) even though it is a *tantra* (*xu*, 續) according to its title and contents.

It is therefore possible that the *AAN* was not conceived of as an independent *sūtra* until Bodhiruci’s translating team gave it the title of a “*jing*.” As a result, there are grounds for taking Takasaki’s assertion that the *AAN* is a “chapter” of a large *sūtra* more seriously. However, even if Takasaki’s suggestion is correct, we still have no evidence as to which larger *sūtra* this *AAN* was originally conceived to be a part of. Given the close thematic relationship with the *SMD*, the *AAN* could well be a part of the *Mahāratnakūṭa* collection. Among the forty-nine *sūtras* in the *Mahāratnakūṭa*, five of the titles end with “-*parivarta*.”¹²² There are also passages in the *Mahāratnakūṭa* that evoke the theme of the *AAN*. For example, in the forty-sixth chapter of the *Mahāratnakūṭa*, the *Wenshu shuo bore hui* (文殊說般若會), it is said, in a fashion similar to the famous passage in the *Vajracchedikāsūtra*, that countless numbers of Buddhas liberated countless numbers of sentient beings, yet nonetheless, the realm of sentient beings (*sattvadhātu*) still has no increase or decrease; and it is further explained that the appearance and the quantity of the realm of sentient beings are like those of the

¹²¹ The *tantra* was translated into Chinese by Dharmarakṣa of the Northern Song (北宋) dynasty.

¹²² For the complete listing of the Sanskrit titles of the forty-nine *sūtras* in the *Mahāratnakūṭa*, see Mochizuki Shinkō, *Bukkyō Daijiten* (Kyoto, 1931-1936), pp. 3410-9. The rendition of Sanskrit titles in the Tibetan Tripiṭaka, however, gives 10 of the 49 texts a title ending with “-*parivarta*.”

realm of the Buddhas. Through this discussion, the realm of sentient beings is identified with the realm of the Buddhas, a core theme in the *AAN*, and the realization of the freedom from conceptual elaboration (*prapañca*), such as the views of “increase” and “decrease,” is said to be the characteristic (*lakṣaṇa*) of *prajñāpāramitā*.¹²³

However, there are, to date, no known scriptural proofs that the *Mahāratnakūṭa* as a collection of *sūtras* existed in India. Even if the *Mahāratnakūṭa* did exist as a group of 49 texts in India before its Chinese translation (completed by Bodhiruci of the Tang dynasty, between the years 706 to 713 C.E.), the *AAN* had already been available in its Chinese version for more than a hundred years, and Bodhiruci would have included it in the collection. The fact that the *AAN* was not included in the collection suggests that it was not considered to be a part of the *Mahāratnakūṭa*, at least not by Bodhiruci, who would no doubt have had access to the *AAN*. On the other hand, it does not seem, in terms of its contents, to fit comfortably within another *sūtra* collection, the *Mahāsamnipātasūtra*. In addition, it should be noted that the forty-sixth chapter of the *Mahāratnakūṭa*, mentioned above, is in fact the *Perfection of Wisdom in Seven Hundred Verses* (*Saptaśatikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*). However, given that the term “*tathāgatagarbha*” is not used anywhere in the *Prajñāpāramitā* (although one might argue that the idea of the *tathāgatagarbha* can be noticed in the *Prajñāpāramitā* in its

¹²³ 爾時文殊師利童真菩薩摩訶薩語舍利弗言：如是如是，如汝所說，雖為一切眾生發大莊嚴，心恒不見有眾生相；為一切眾生發大莊嚴，而眾生界亦不增不減。假使一佛住世，若一劫、若過一劫，如此一佛世界，復有無量無邊恒河沙諸佛，如是一一佛，若一劫、若過一劫，晝夜說法心不暫息，各各度於無量恒河沙眾生皆入涅槃，而眾生界亦不增不減；乃至十方諸佛世界亦復如是，一一諸佛說法教化，各度無量恒河沙眾生皆入涅槃，於眾生界亦不增不減。何以故？眾生定相不可得故，是故眾生界不增不減。...爾時佛告文殊師利：若無眾生，云何說有眾生及眾生界？文殊師利言：眾生界相如諸佛界。又問：眾生界者是有量耶？答曰：眾生界量如佛界量。...若能如是住般若波羅蜜，於諸善根無增無減、於一切法亦無增無減，是般若波羅蜜性相亦無增無減。(T232, 650c)

discussion of the *citta* and the *acitta*), it is quite improbable that the *AAN* originally formed part of the *Prajñāpāramitā* corpus. The theory proposed by Takasaki, then, cannot lead to any conclusive finding, and the identity of the *AAN* remains obscure.

So far in our discussion we have focused on the idea that the *AAN* was originally a “*parivarta*” but was later regarded in the Chinese tradition as a “*sūtra*.” However, we have not investigated the possibility that, contrary to our previous discussion, the *AAN* was initially a *sūtra* on its own that was later incorporated into a larger collection of *sūtras* thereby earning the title “*-parivarta*.” This is another issue that Takasaki, after alerting us to the idea of the *AAN* being a “*parivarta*,” has left unexplored. But the latter case is also possible, as indeed many chapters of large collections of *sūtras*, such as the *Daśabhūmika* chapter of the *Avataṃsakasūtra*, are believed to have been independent *sūtras* before they were incorporated in their present form into various large corpora of *sūtras*. If the *AAN* was not circulating, orally or in writing, as a *sūtra* on its own, but as a section of another unknown *sūtra* larger in size, then Takasaki’s assumption that the *TGS*, the *AAN*, and the *SMD* are the three oldest *tathāgatagarbha sūtras* which exist independently cannot hold. According to Takasaki’s theory, the *AAN* is the second oldest *tathāgatagarbha* text, composed after the *TGS* but before the *SMD*. Such an assumption, however, is based entirely on a comparative study of the relative complexity of the content of the scriptures and the presumption that Buddhist texts always *developed* from simplicity to complexity.

There are also different ways to interpret how these scriptures emerged through time. For example, to modern scholars, the acceptance of the *TGS* as the oldest

tathāgatagarbha scripture does not rest on any concrete evidence for its early existence. Such an assumption was based on the simplistic presentation of the meaning of the *tathāgatagarbha* through the nine similes, rather than through sophisticated philosophical discourse or soteriological models. It has been conjectured that a more detailed articulation of the *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine and its relation to the *sattvadhātu* developed only later out of these similes. However, the opposite is also possible: that it was owing to the difficulty of understanding the teaching of the *tathāgatagarbha* that there was the subsequent need to explain the concept through the use of similes or illustrations.¹²⁴ If the latter is true, then the speculation as to the antiquity of the *TGS* may be mistaken, and other texts such as the *AAN* could predate the *TGS*. Indeed, different scholars have worked out their own chronology of the *tathāgatagarbha* texts, and these theories do not always agree.¹²⁵

The Sanskrit title, *Anūnatvāpūrṇatvanirdeśa-parivarta*, given by the *RGV*, actually means *The Chapter on the Teachings of No Decrease and No Increase*. Unlike the writing habit of the Indian language, the pairs “increase and decrease” (*zengjian*, 增減), “birth and death” (*shengmie*, 生滅) are mentioned in Chinese writing in the order presented but rarely the other way, and, consequently, “no decrease” is also rarely placed before “no increase” when the two are mentioned together. In Chinese translations, the

¹²⁴ It also seems reasonable to me that it is easier to use similes to explain a theory difficult to grasp than to develop a sophisticated theory on the basis of a few rather simple similes.

¹²⁵ We will study some of these different versions of chronology of the *tathāgatagarbha* texts below, when we examine the relation of the *AAN* to these other texts.

Indian writing pattern is accordingly reversed.¹²⁶ This can be observed in the four pairs of negation in the celebrated opening stanza of Nāgārjuna's *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*:

To him who taught dependent arising as non-vanishing, non-arising, non-annihilation, non-eternity, non-identity, non-diversity, non-arrival, non-departure, the blissful quiescence of differentiation, to that Enlightened One I give my homage, to the best of teachers.¹²⁷

*(anirodham anutpādam anucchedam aśāśvatam /
anekārtham anānārtham anāgamam anirgamam //
yaḥ pratīyasamutpādaṃ prapañcopaśamaṃ śivam /
deśayām āsa saṃbuddhas taṃ vande vadatāṃ varam //)*

Kumārajīva's Chinese translation, however, translates the eightfold negation of the verse as follows:

Not arising and not vanishing, not permanent and not annihilated,
Not identical and not different, not coming and not going.
(不生亦不滅 不常亦不斷
不一亦不異 不來亦不出)

The order of the first two pairs of the negation has been reversed when compared to the Sanskrit original. Kumārajīva's translation of Piṅgala's commentary on the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* has also made similar adjustments, so that the commentary actually discusses "not arising" before "not vanishing," and "not permanent" before "not annihilated." It is generally assumed that Piṅgala's commentary was originally composed in Sanskrit, even though we do not have much information about who Piṅgala

¹²⁶ As Professor Leonard Priestley kindly suggests, "the difference is not simply in writing pattern (or literary convention) but in idiom, a difference that would be evident (as far as we know) in the spoken languages as well as the written." (from the written comments on an earlier version of the present thesis).

¹²⁷ Translation by Professor Leonard C.D.C. Priestley, unpublished manuscript (copyright 1996).

was.¹²⁸ But if that was in fact the case, it would mean that Kumārajīva and his team of editors must have made adjustments to the translation so that the commentaries follow the Chinese sequence with “not arising” before “not vanishing.” One might wonder whether the content of the *AAN* has also been “sinicized” by Bodhiruci, given that the order of “no decrease” and “no increase” in the title of the text has been reversed. From a close examination of the text, the answer seems to be both yes and no. One would expect that when the text says, “it is [therefore] said that the *sattvadhātu* increases, [or] the *sattvadhātu* decreases,”¹²⁹ the order of “increase” and “decrease” has been reversed from the original Sanskrit text. Indeed, throughout the text, “increase” is placed before “decrease” when the two words are mentioned together, except in the last sentence before the colophon, where it actually states, “...what is called the view of decrease [and] the view of increase.”¹³⁰ This may be a phrase that was left unedited. Moreover, we can also easily notice that the text’s major elaboration on the theme of “no increase” and “no decrease” actually discusses the latter before it does the former. That means, unlike Kumārajīva’s version of the *Zhonglun* (中論), the basic structure of Bodhiruci’s translation of the *AAN* has not been doctored to suit the conventions of Chinese, though the individual ordering of certain sentences may well have been switched.

¹²⁸ On whether Piṅgala was the author of the *MMK* commentary that Kumārajīva translated into Chinese, see Richard H. Robinson, *Early Mādhyamika in India and China*, p. 29.

¹²⁹ “... 謂眾生界增、謂眾生界減。” (T668, 466a-b) This phrase appears twice. In an earlier passage, it also states that “...this is what is called the unreal, firm attachment to the *sattvadhātu* as increasing, and the unreal, firm attachment to the *sattvadhātu* as decreasing” (“... 所謂取眾生界增堅著妄執、取眾生界減堅著妄執。” T668, 466b).

¹³⁰ “... 所謂減見增見...” (T668, 467c)

Historical Setting of the AAN

We know almost nothing about when or where the *AAN* was compiled. We can be sure, however, that the *AAN* in its original Sanskrit version appeared in India a long while before the early sixth century, as the Chinese translation of the *RGV* was made available in 511 C.E., and the Chinese translation of the *AAN*, the *BBJ*, was completed in 525 C.E. As mentioned above, modern Japanese scholars are almost unanimous in regarding the *AAN* as the second oldest *sūtra* dedicated explicitly to the *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine; they regard it as being composed directly after the *TGS*.¹³¹ Scholars such as Kimura Taiken, Katsumata Shunkyō, and Takasaki Jikidō are of the same opinion; Takasaki goes a step further and regards the *TGS*, the *AAN*, and the *SMD* as the “three [fundamental] *sūtras* of the scriptures in the Tathāgatagarbha-tradition.” There are always dissenting voices, of course, and Kagawa Takao, basing his research on the development of the four attributes of the *dharmakāya* as eternal, blissful, self, and pure, suggests that the *AAN* should be seen as the fourth *sūtra* ever composed on the theme of *tathāgatagarbha*, placing the composition of the *Aṅgulimālyasūtra* and the *Bodhisattvagocara-upāyaviṣaya-vikurvāṇa-nirdeśa* directly after that of the *TGS*.¹³² It is difficult to reach firm conclusions in the dating of Buddhist scriptures. The difficulty arises as our estimate of the composition dates of these Indian scriptures is frequently no more than speculation. In addition, it would also be misleading to think that there was only one Sanskrit original of a Buddhist text with no prior oral teachings about it before

¹³¹ Shunkyō Katsumata, *Bukkyō ni okeru shinshikisetsu no kenkyū*, pp. 597-601.

¹³² Kagawa Takao, “Nyoraizō Kyōten no Seiritsu ni Tsuite,” p. 198.

its written composition – in the same way as one may determine a specific date for Jane Austen’s composition of *Pride and Prejudice*.

Indeed, different recensions of a text were available throughout the history of Indian Buddhism. As Paul Williams reminds us:

One should never assume, incidentally, that because we are dealing with a *sūtra* originally composed in India an extant Sanskrit text must, where they differ, represent an earlier or more authentic version of the text than any Chinese translation. The codification of the Canon, the printing and preservation of texts in China, has meant that Chinese translations will often be much earlier than any Sanskrit manuscript. To think of an extant Sanskrit text as *the*, or even *an*, original is fraught with textual and historical problems.¹³³

Fazang (法藏) has also mentioned in his *Ru lengjiajing xin xuanyi* (入楞伽經心玄義) that he was confronted with five different versions of the *Laṅkāvatāra* when he assisted Śikṣānanda in the new translation of the text.¹³⁴ In addition, according to the findings of Christian Lindtner, Nāgārjuna cited the *Laṅkāvatāra*, most probably an oral recension, a number of times: five times in the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, three times in the *Acintyastava* and the *Lokātīstava*, and twice in the *Yuktiṣaṣṭikā*.¹³⁵ Lindtner’s comparative studies of the *Laṅkāvatāra* and Nāgārjuna’s works are convincing, and Lambert Schmithausen also makes a similar claim, that Vasubandhu cited the *Laṅkāvatāra* verses in his *Triṃśikā*.¹³⁶ It is a commonly held view among modern

¹³³ Paul Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism*, p. 142.

¹³⁴ 今則詳五梵本、勘二漢文，取其所得正其所失，累載優業當盡其旨，庶令學者幸無訛謬。(T1790, 430b)

¹³⁵ Cf. Christian Lindtner, *Nāgārjuniana*; Nancy McCagney, *Nāgārjuna and the Philosophy of Openness*, pp. 35-44.

¹³⁶ See Lambert Schmithausen, “A Note on Vasubandhu and the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*,” pp. 392-397.

scholars that the *Laṅkāvatāra* was not composed until the fourth-century.¹³⁷ But if Nāgārjuna lived in the second century, as general scholarly opinion would agree,¹³⁸ it would be impossible for him to be familiar with the *Laṅkāvatāra* if an earlier oral recension was not in circulation before its composition.¹³⁹

We have to admit the fact that we simply do not know when these teachings began to circulate among Buddhist practitioners. Dating back by a hundred years from the composition of the Chinese translation of a certain text is not a good or reliable way of determining when a Buddhist scripture was available in India. The Chinese translation provides us with nothing more than a *terminus ante quem* for the time when the version of a certain scripture, as we know it today, was written down. Because of my own disbelief in the possibility of determining when a certain Buddhist teaching in a Buddhist *sūtra* first appeared without taking into consideration its long history of oral transmission, I prefer to leave the issue aside completely, and, instead of attempting to reconcile these

¹³⁷ Florin Giripesu Sutton summarizes his dating of the *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra* as follows: “Consequently, two possible scenarios may be considered regarding the date of the text: (a) to suppose that the *Laṅkāvatāra* was compiled in the early half of the fourth century, or even earlier; or (b) to admit that Vasubandhu lived approximately between 400-480 (as it is generally assumed today), and, therefore, to accept that the *Sūtra* was gradually put together over a period of time stretching from the last part of the fourth century into the first half of the fifth century.” (*Existence and Enlightenment in the Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra*, p. 14) Peter Harvey also shares a similar view, and states: “The influential *Laṅkāvatāra* (‘Decent into Lankā’) *Sūtra*, which gradually developed from around AD 300, also contains many Yogācāra ideas in its unsystematic summary of Mahāyāna teachings.” (*An Introduction to Buddhism: Teachings, history and practices*, p. 104).

¹³⁸ Cf. Ian Mabbett, “The Problem of the Historical Nāgārjuna Revisited,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 118.3 (1998), pp. 332-346.

¹³⁹ D.T. Suzuki points out: “Even with the text that was in existence before 443 A.D we do not know how it developed, for it was not surely written from the beginning as one complete piece of work as we write a book in these modern days. Some parts of it must be older than others, since there is no doubt that it has many layers of added passages. ... As long as we have practically no knowledge of historical circumstances in which the Buddhist texts were produced one after another in India or somewhere else, all the statements are more or less of the character of an ingenious surmise.” (*The Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra: A Mahāyāna Text*, p. xlii). We should not be over-confident about the general assumption that the *Laṅkāvatāra* was not composed until the fourth century. It is possible that an earlier form of the scripture, be that oral or written, might exist in the days of Nāgārjuna.

chronological theories, to concentrate on the doctrinal exposition of the *AAN* and its thematic relationship with other *tathāgatagarbha* texts, as if we are looking at a “common pool” from which these teachings are drawn. Such a “common pool” is something similar to the lively and dynamic oral tradition of transmitting these Mahāyāna doctrines, even if the teachings are not in the exact form that we are reading now. As a result, the methodology employed in this thesis to study the *AAN* is twofold: an internal examination and an external examination. The internal study involves the examination of the main doctrine, theme, and structure of the *AAN*. With respect to the external study, research on the *AAN* in relation to other *tathāgatagarbha* texts, as well as Buddhist texts which are not generally acknowledged as teaching the *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine but nevertheless expound a theme similar to that of the *AAN*, will also be conducted.

Not only is it difficult to determine *when* the teachings of the *AAN* first appeared, it is also as difficult to determine *where* these teachings originated.

Both the *SMD* and the *TGS* are dated back to the third century C.E.¹⁴⁰ That the *AAN* resonates closely in its thematic contents with the *SMD* might suggest that this text was transmitted along with the *SMD* in and around the same region. Taking into consideration critical modern scholarly findings, we might say that the original form of the *AAN* was transmitted as oral teachings among the Mahāsāṅghika sect.¹⁴¹ Furthermore we might say that it was finally written down in its present form in the third century C.E.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. Wayman & Wayman, *The Lion's Roar of Queen Śrīmālā*, p. 3; William Grosnick, “The Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra”, p. 92.

¹⁴¹ Alex Wayman makes a strong claim that the *SMD* is a text belonging to the Mahāsāṅghika sect. See *The Lion's Roar of Queen Śrīmālā*, pp. 1-4. He later furthered his arguments, even more convincingly, in “The Mahāsāṅghika and the Tathāgatagarbha (Buddhist Doctrinal History, Study 1),” pp. 35-50.

at the latest, contemporaneous with the *TGS* and the *SMD*, but before the composition of the *RGV*. Takasaki believes that the original Sanskrit version of the *RGV* that the Chinese translation is based on dates back to the early fifth century C.E.¹⁴²

Given the text's close thematic relationship with the *SMD*, which we will examine more closely in the following chapter, it is possible to construe a South Indian origin for the *AAN*. Alex Wayman has presented a thoughtful and well-researched study, from an historical and archeological perspective, which argues for placing the *SMD* as a Mahāsāṅghika text originating in third-century Andhra.¹⁴³ Aside from Wayman's findings, we can also notice internal evidence in Buddhist scriptures that suggests South India as the fountainhead for the *tathāgatagarbha* teaching. For example, in the *Laṅkāvatāra* and the *Mahābherihāraka*, both of which are considered to be *tathāgatagarbha* texts, we find the prophecies that monks protecting the "authentic teachings" (*zhengfa* 正法) will be born in the South Indian region named Vedālī.¹⁴⁴ In Tāranātha's *History of Buddhism in India* (*rGya gar chos 'byung*), it is also mentioned that,

¹⁴² Takasaki, *A Study on the Ratnagotravibhāga*, p. 61.

¹⁴³ Wayman & Wayman, *The Lion's Roar of Queen Śrīmālā*, pp. 5-9.

¹⁴⁴ In the *Sagāthaka* chapter of the *Laṅkāvatāra*, we find verse 165 proclaiming the prophecy that: "In the Southern region, Vedālī, there will be born an illustrious monk with great renown with the appellation 'Nāga' (Nāgāhvaya), who will destroy the views of existence and non-existence." (*dakṣiṇāpatha-vedalyāṃ bhikṣuḥ śrīmān mahāyaśaḥ nāgāhvayaḥ sa nāmnā tu sadasatpakṣadāraḥ*) In the *Mahābherihāraka*, it is also said that "Bhikṣu Sarvalokanandadarśana...having heard this [*Mahābherihāraka*] teaching, will be well able to recite, protect, and expound this teaching for others, and will always manifest as an ordinary human being who dwells in the seventh stage [of Bodhisattvahood]. Eighty years after the authentic Dharma is about to vanish, [Sarvalokanandadarśana] will be born in Vedālī in the Southern region." (一切世間樂見離車童子...聞此經已,能善誦讀現前護持為人演說,常能示現為凡夫身,住於七地。正法欲滅餘八十年,在於南方文荼羅國...中生。T270, 298c-299a)

The southern *ācārya* whose appellation is Nāga (*Nāgāhvāya* [sic]; *Klu bos*), whose real name was Tathāgatābhadrā, was invited by the Nāgas to visit the Nāga-realm for seven times. A large number of Mahāyāna scriptures was expounded by him, and he [also] clarified some teachings of the Yogācāra-Madhyamaka (*rnam rig gi dbu ma*).¹⁴⁵

The Yogācāra-Madhyamaka tradition, as we will discuss in a following chapter, is closely related to the exposition of the *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine. Regardless of whether the “Nāgāhvaya” mentioned in the *Laṅkāvatāra* and in Tāranātha’s work refers to the same Nāgārjuna as the master of the Madhyamaka tradition or not,¹⁴⁶ the passages listed here do seem to point to South India as a stronghold for the *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine as the “authentic teaching” of the Buddha.

However, contrary to the studies of Alex Wayman and the textual evidence discussed above, there are also clues that suggest the *AAN* originated in the Central Asian region. As will be seen in the discussion on the translator of the *AAN*, Bodhiruci, most Buddhist monks who were involved in the translation of *tathāgatagarbha* texts in China, including Guṇābhadrā, Dharmakṣema, Buddhābhadrā, and Bodhiruci of the Tang dynasty, all traveled to China through Central Asia. They were either born in North India or in Central Asia, but none was from South India, nor did they travel to China through the

¹⁴⁵ Lama Chimpa & Alaka Chattopadhyaya, trans., *Tāranātha’s History of Buddhism in India*, p. 126.

¹⁴⁶ There have been many studies that argue whether “Nāgāhvaya” means [someone] “named (*āhvaya*) Nāga” or is a person’s name – another name for Nāgārjuna. According to Tāranātha, however, Nāgāhvaya is also named Tathāgatābhadrā, and is a disciple of Nāgārjuna. However, the cited verse from the *Laṅkāvatāra* seems to refer to Nāgārjuna the Madhyamaka master, as he was indeed most famous for refuting the extreme positions of “existing” and “non-existing” in his *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*. For related studies on this issue, see also N. Dutt, “Notes on the Nāgārjunikonda Inscriptions, I: Nāgārjunikonda and Nāgārjuna,” pp. 636-9; P.S. Sastri, “Nāgārjuna and Āryadeva,” pp. 193-292; Ian Mabbett, “The Problem of the Historical Nāgārjuna Revisited,” pp. 332-346.

southern route. If this can be taken as coincidence, then with the discovery of the Sanskrit fragments of the *RGV* by H.W. Bailey and E.H. Johnston in 1935 in Central Asia, as well as the fact that Central Asia is the source for the Sanskrit recensions of the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*, we cannot ignore the possibility that the *AAN* might also have strong ties with Central Asian countries. Julian Pas has convincingly argued for the *Guan wuliangshou jing* (**Amitāyurbuddhānusmṛtisūtra*) being composed in the Central Asian region, basing himself mainly on the fact that all the translators of the visualization *sūtras* related to the practice of Amitābha Buddha had connections with the area around Kashmir.¹⁴⁷ If Pas's argument is accepted, the Central Asian origin of the *AAN* should also be accepted.

It should be admitted that these clues, compared to the findings of Alex Wayman, are not as convincing, because it might only be a coincidence that many of those translators of the *tathāgatagarbha* texts were from North or Central Asia; Kumārajīva, for one, was also from Central Asia, but he did not translate any *tathāgatagarbha* texts, with the exception, perhaps, of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* and the *Vimalakīrti*, whose respective teachings of the “one vehicle” (*ekayāna*) and the *tathāgatagotra* might be seen as compatible with the doctrine of *tathāgatagarbha*. Furthermore, the discovery of these manuscripts in Central Asia also proves nothing about their origin.

There are, however, more clues that might suggest the North Indian origin of the *AAN*. According to the *Biography of Ācārya Vasubandhu* (*Posoupandou fashi zhuan*, 婆藪槃豆法師傳) composed by Paramārtha, Vasubandhu was born in north India in

¹⁴⁷ Julian F. Pas, “The *Kuan-wu-liang-shou-Fo-ching*: Its Origin and Literary Criticism,” pp. 194-218.

Puruṣapura, a city of Gandhāra.¹⁴⁸ Although the credibility of Paramārtha has been doubted by modern scholars, his account of the life of Vasubandhu shares much in common with other accounts such as Xuanzang's *Datang xiyu ji* (大唐西域記), Bu ston's *Chos 'byung*, and Tāranātha's *rGya gar chos 'byung bshugs*. Vasubandhu and his brother Asaṅga taught mainly in the northern part of India. According to Tāranātha, Asaṅga built a monastery in Magadha, and it is also said that:

[A] *brāhmaṇa* called *Basunāga in *Kṛṣṇarāja in the south...heard that an *ārya* called Asaṅga, having received instructions from Jina Ajita, was spreading the Mahāyāna over again. Along with his five hundred attendants, the *brāhmaṇa* himself came to *madhya-deśa*. He worshipped the *caitya*-s of the eight holy places and requested the *ācārya* to come to the south and lead the *brāhmaṇa*-s and householders to the virtuous path.¹⁴⁹

If we are to believe this account, it indicates that by the time of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, Mahāyāna teachings were not prevalent in South India anymore but, owing to the effort of the two brothers, remained strong in Central and Northern India. As shown above, the teaching of the *tathāgatagarbha* forms an integral part of the classical tradition of Yogācāra of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu; at least the *RGV*, which according to the Tibetan tradition is said to have had its root verses composed by Maitreya and its commentarial writings by Asaṅga, is itself a treatise that discusses the *tathāgatagarbha* scriptures, including the *AAN*, as a whole. This, of course, can be seen as a further indication that the *AAN* and other *tathāgatagarbha* texts flourished in the northern part of India.

¹⁴⁸ 婆藪槃豆法師者，北天竺富婁沙富羅國人也。(T2049, 188a)

¹⁴⁹ Lama Chimpa & Alaka Chattopadhyaya, trans. *Tāranātha's History of Buddhism in India*, pp. 164-165.

With such an ambiguous picture of the origin of the *AAN*, as well as other *tathāgatagarbha* texts which are likely to have originated around the same region, I propose that the *AAN*, with its close thematic relationship with the *SMD*, was originally transmitted within the Mahāsāṅghika sect. By the time of the composition of the *RGV*, this teaching had already been codified into its written format and had reached North India and Central Asia where the classical Yogācāra tradition was particularly strong. As a result, it was through such an area that China received the *AAN* and other *tathāgatagarbha* texts.

Chapter Four: The Main Themes and A Structural Analysis of the *AAN*

Unlike the *TGS*, which enumerated a total of fifty Bodhisattvas in its opening, the *AAN* does not begin with a long list of the names of the Bodhisattvas who attended the meeting. One of the purposes of the emphasis on the list of Bodhisattvas who attended the occasion when the Buddha expounded Mahāyāna teachings is to convey the polemical message that the teachings, including the doctrine of the *tathāgatagarbha*, are too profound to be comprehensible to the Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas. This is most evident in the case of the *Lotus Sūtra*, which opens with the departure of five hundred arrogant Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas before the Buddha embarks on the discourse of the “wonderful doctrine” (*saddharma*) of the “One Vehicle” (*ekayāna*), also known as the “unique Buddha Vehicle” (*evaikaṃ buddhayānam*), which is no doubt closely related to the doctrine of the *tathāgatagarbha*.¹⁵⁰ “Faith” (*śraddhā*) is therefore an important element in the *tathāgatagarbha* texts and in Mahāyāna scriptures in general, as the domain of wisdom depicted is said to transcend logical analysis, reasoning, and the discernment of the consciousness, a domain that not even the Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas are able to realize. The ultimate reality is declared to be inconceivable and unthinkable; it is therefore natural that the only approach to this transcendent reality is through “faith.” The necessity of “faith” in approaching the ultimate reality can be seen in many *tathāgatagarbha* texts, such as the *AAN*, the *SMD*, the *RGV*, and, in the Chinese tradition, the *Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna* (*Dasheng qixin lun*).

¹⁵⁰ On the similarity, in terms of both the structure and the teachings, of the *TGS* and the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra*, see Michael Zimmermann, “The *Tathāgatagarbhasūtra*: Its Basic Structure and Relation to the Lotus Sūtra,” pp. 143-66.

However, it has also been maintained that “faith” is possible only because of the presence of the *tathāgatagarbha*. Strictly speaking, therefore, “faith” is not portrayed as the cause for the realizing of the *tathāgatagarbha*, but only as a skilful means leading to such a realization.

It is not always the case that the Mahāyāna scriptures claim that Bodhisattvas were the only audience of the Buddha’s teaching, as enlisting the names of *arhats* such as Subhūti and Śāriputra also bears testimony to the authenticity of these scriptures. The beginning of the *AAN* is one of those Mahāyāna scriptures that opens with a simple statement that both a great assembly of monks, numbering one thousand two hundred and fifty, and a countless number of Bodhisattvas were present as the audience of this Buddha’s teaching. The main interlocutor of the *AAN*, however, is not Mañjuśrī or any other Bodhisattva, but Śāriputra, one of the two chief disciples of the Buddha.¹⁵¹ Śāriputra is also featured in other early Mahāyāna *sūtras* which expound teachings similar to the *tathāgatagarbha* texts (although the term “*tathāgatagarbha*” is not mentioned) such as the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa*, where Śāriputra is depicted as representing the monks’ biased and conceptual view of women, to which is attached the notion of sexual discrimination. In this episode, Śāriputra is magically transformed into a female body by the goddess, who takes the occasion to reinforce the teaching, one of the main themes of the *Vimalakīrti*, that the ultimate reality is nondual, beyond the dualistic

¹⁵¹ In the *Mahāpadāna Sutta*, it is mentioned that Śāriputta and Moggallāna are “the chief pair of disciples”. Elsewhere in the *Samyutta Nikāya*, similar claims are found. On the study of Śāriputta in the Pāli canon, see Nyanaponika Thera & Hellmuth Hecker, *Great Disciples of the Buddha: Their Lives, Their Works, Their Legacy*, pp. 1-66.

appearances, language, and concepts. It follows therefore that a mind attached to a dualistic view cannot realize the inconceivable, pure Thusness.¹⁵² This theme of the *Vimalakīrti* is indeed in line with the teachings of the *AAN*.

The main body of the text can be broadly divided into three sections. The first section begins with Śāriputra's enquiry as to whether the number of sentient beings, who have been trapped in the sixfold destinations of *saṃsāra* among the three realms of desire, form, and formless, since the beginningless past, actually increases or decreases. The Buddha, however, did not answer Śāriputra directly, but took the opportunity to expound on the theme of "no increase and no decrease," as well as explaining how the views of "increase" and "decrease" arise. The views on the "increase" and "decrease" of sentient beings, as explained by the *AAN*, are indeed perverted views. It is also due to the ignorance of adopting such perverted views that sentient beings fall and are trapped in the *saṃsāra*. It is such views that lead to the wrong belief in *nirvāṇa* as annihilation or permanence, the two extremes that should be eliminated before one can realize the "middle way" of the Buddha.

The text explains that the minds of ordinary, ignorant beings generate these perverted views because they do not understand the notion of the "oneness" of the nondual *dharmadhātu*. This realization of the "*eka-dharmadhātu*" is taken to be the infinite range (*gocara*) and the infinite realm (*viśaya*) of the Tathāgata, and is said to be the Tathāgata's inconceivable compassion (*karuṇā*), as well as the state of the great

¹⁵² Cf. Robert Thurman, trans., *The Holy Teaching of Vimalakīrti: A Mahāyāna Scripture*, pp. 58-63; Diana Y. Paul, *Women in Buddhism: Images of the Feminine in the Mahāyāna Tradition*, pp. 220-32.

nirvāṇa. Ordinary sentient beings, however, hold conceptualized notions about the *nirvāṇa* of the Tathāgata, and therefore perverted views of the increase and decrease of sentient beings arise. Here, the text presents a detailed analysis of how one perverted view leads to another, which further leads to more conceptualized views.

First of all, those attached to the view of “decrease” in the number of sentient beings will generate three interrelated views: 1) annihilation; 2) complete extinction; and 3) that no *nirvāṇa* whatsoever can be attained.¹⁵³ These three views further generate another two perverted views, inseparable from the three views already generated: 1) no desire¹⁵⁴; and 2) *nirvāṇa* as ultimate nonexistence. From the former view two further views evolve: 1) attachment to monastic discipline (*śīlavrataparāmarśa*); and 2) that incorrectness can be purified through impurities.¹⁵⁵ The latter view in turn generates six further perverted views: 1) there is a beginning of the world; 2) there is an ending of the world; 3) sentient beings are created from illusions; 4) there is neither suffering nor bliss;

¹⁵³ The difference between “annihilation” (斷見) and “complete extinction” (滅見) is not clear in the *BBJ*. The *Brahmajāla*, found in the *Dirgha-Nikāya*, discusses eight positions of the annihilationist, and we have no idea whether the view of annihilation mentioned in the *AAN* is similar to any of these eight positions. “Complete extinction” might refer to an extreme view of the teaching of the third Noble Truth, *nirodha* (“extinction”), by taking *nirvāṇa* as a permanent *nirodha*, a view that is refuted by Nāgārjuna (Cf. Nancy McCagney, *Nāgārjuna and the Philosophy of Openness*, pp. 90-94).

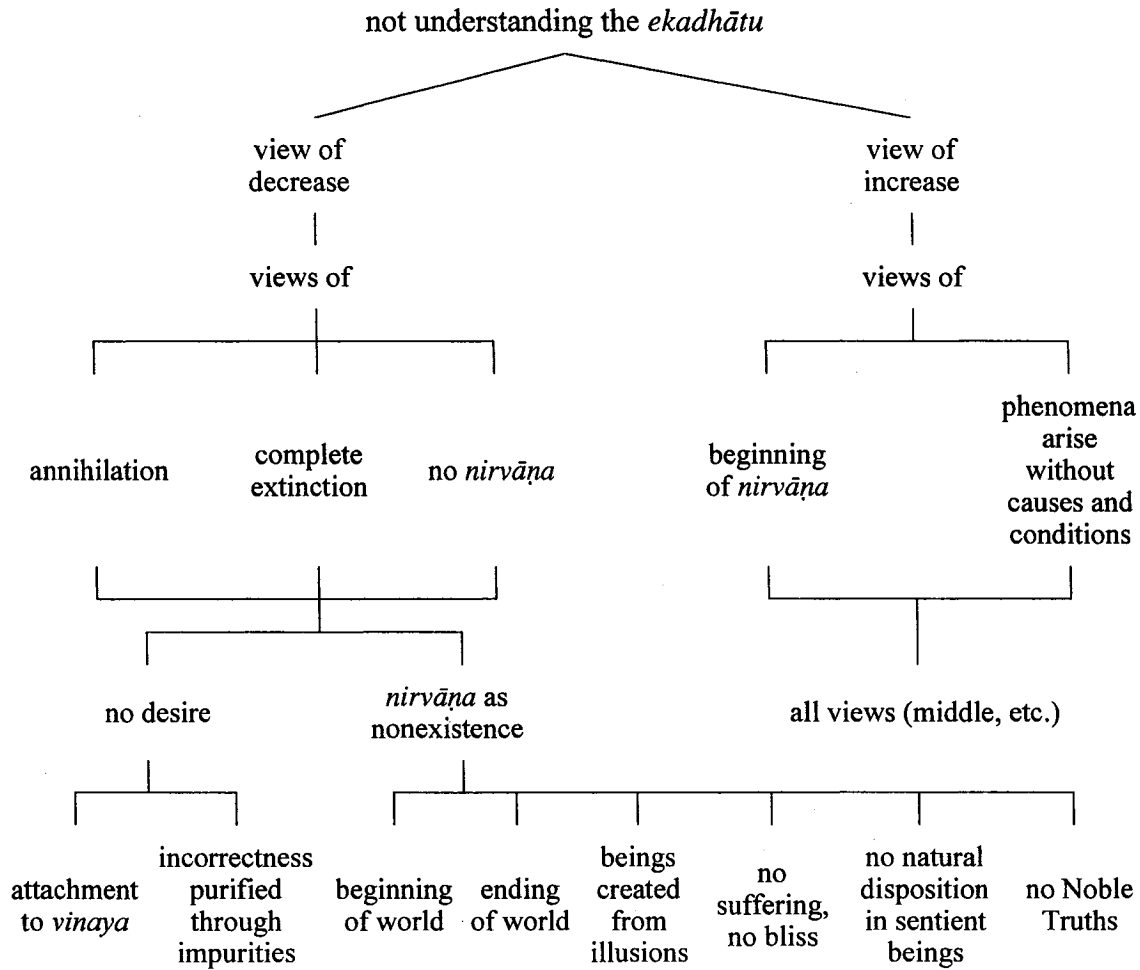
¹⁵⁴ It is again not clear in the *BBJ* what “the view of no desire” (*wuyu jian* 無欲見) means. Generally speaking, it is the attachment to desire (*chanda*) that leads one to suffering (*duḥkha*), and the deliverance from such an attachment to liberation. Having no desire, therefore, should be a proper intention towards the goal of attaining *nirvāṇa*. However, conventionally speaking, “no desire” is only a means, like a raft, that leads one to arrive at the “other shore” of *nirvāṇa*; it should not be reified as a “view” (*dr̥ṣṭi*). Ultimately speaking, from the perspective of Madhyamaka, there is not the slightest distinction between *nirvāṇa* and *samsāra*. What is refuted in the *AAN* passage seems to be the grasping of “no desire” as a view, and it is possible that this perverted view arises out of the assumption that *nirvāṇa* exists apart from *samsāra*.

¹⁵⁵ Leonard Priestley, in his comments on an early draft of the present thesis, suggests that this might refer to the Brahmanical belief in purification through blood sacrifices.

5) there is no natural disposition in sentient being to attain *nirvāṇa*; and 6) there are no Noble Truths of the Buddha.

On the other hand, those attached to the view of “increase” in the number of sentient beings will generate two views: 1) there is a beginning of *nirvāṇa*; and 2) phenomena arise suddenly without relying on causes or conditions. Such a twofold perversion generates incorrect views, such as the view of the mind as on the outer or the inner, being coarse or subtle, or that it is in the middle.¹⁵⁶ The structure of this section of the *AAN* can be summarized in the following chart:

¹⁵⁶ The *BBJ* is not clear in its translation concerning what is considered by ordinary beings to be on the outer, the inner, and so on. I take this to refer to the mind, as we have similar discourses in the *Wenshushili puchao sanmei jing* (文殊支利普超三昧經): 子當知之，心亦不立於身之內，亦不由外，亦無境界，不處兩間，不得中止；察其心者，亦無五色青赤黃白黑。子當了之，心者無色，亦不可見，亦無所住，亦不退轉，無有言教，不可執持，猶若如幻。(T627, 424b). Also in the *Dasheng baoyun jing* (大乘寶雲經): 是心非內非外亦非中間，是心無色無識無形無見無知無住處。(T659, 280a)



The views that are refuted here are not simply *any* ordinary perverted views; if we examine them closely, they are largely misinterpretations of Buddhist doctrines. These range from the misconception of *nirvāṇa* as a nihilistic state, to the view of the utter nonexistence of *nirvāṇa*. The former might refer to the pre-Mahāyāna notion of *nirvāṇa*, whereas the latter can refer either to a non-Buddhist challenge or the misconception of the Mahāyāna teaching of the nonduality of *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*: namely that if *nirvāṇa* is said to be empty this might lead one to conceptualize it as utterly non-existing. Such a misunderstanding can also be applied to other perverted views such as that there are no

Noble Truths of the Buddha, and that sentient beings are created from illusions. The former view reminds us of Nāgārjuna's *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*:

[Opponents:]

If all this is empty, then there exists no uprising and ceasing. These imply the non-existence of the four noble truths. (24. 1)

In the absence of the four noble truths, understanding, relinquishing, cultivation, and realization will not be appropriate. (24. 2) ...

[Nāgārjuna's answer:]

We say that you do not comprehend the purpose of emptiness.

As such, you are tormented by emptiness and the meaning of emptiness.

(24. 7)

The teaching of the doctrine by the Buddhas is based upon two truths:

truth relating to worldly convention and truth in terms of ultimate fruit. (24. 8)¹⁵⁷

This passage resonates quite well with the perverted view, mentioned in the *AAN*, that asserts that no Noble Truths exist. In other words, it is due to the misunderstanding of the teaching of emptiness, which in turn comes from the noncomprehension of the teaching of the Two Truths, that one would assert the non-existence of the Four Noble Truths, as well as *nirvāṇa*. An inability to understand the “purpose of emptiness” renders the realization of reality (*tattva*) or Thusness (*tathatā*) impossible. It follows that the realization of the “single *dharmadhātu*” (**ekasya dharmadhātu*), which is characteristic of the inconceivable reality, also becomes impossible. As a result, as described in the *AAN*, perverted views arise, such as the assertion of the non-existence of the Noble Truths and *nirvāṇa*.

¹⁵⁷ Translation quoted from David J. Kalupahana, *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā of Nāgārjuna*, pp. 326-330. The square brackets are mine.

My understanding of the *AAN* passage here is not an unsubstantiated attempt to read the text from the perspective of the Madhyamaka tradition. It is well known that the *tathāgatagarbha* texts are concerned with rectifying the nihilistic understanding of “emptiness,” as evidenced in the passage of the *Kāśyapa-parivarta* cited in the *RGV-vyākhyā*:

O Kāśyapa, really even such a conception which maintains substantial Ego as much as Mt. Sumeru is better than the conceptin of Non-substantiality on the part of those who are proud of it.¹⁵⁸

In the *AAN*, it is also asserted that the perverted views of increase and decrease in the *sattvadhātu* are rooted in “straying away from seeing emptiness just as it is.”¹⁵⁹ There are also other Mahāyāna scriptures that warn us against accepting the ultimate reality in a negative or nihilistic way. Such an interpretation is only a result of our conceptual elaboration (*prapañca*) or conceptuality (*vikalpa*), which arises as a result of not realizing the nonduality of the nonconceptual wisdom (*avikalpajñāna*) and the *ekadhātu*. In other words, if the mind is free from conceptualization or elaborations, it will see things as they truly are (*yathābhūtarśana*), and this is known as the realm of enlightenment or the “domain of wisdom” (*jñānagocara*). On the other hand, if the mind is caught by the subject-object dichotomy, Thusness (*tathatā*) will not be manifested and one will be trapped in a conceptualized world in which all perceptions are “cognitive-representation only” (*vijñaptimātratā*), having no ultimate reality but nevertheless accepted as true.

¹⁵⁸ Takasaki Jikidō, *A Study on the Ratnagotravibhāga*, p. 204. Original Sanskrit: *varam khalu kāśyapa sumerumātrā pudgaladṛṣṭir na tv evābhimānikasya sūnyatādṛṣṭir iti* // (E.H. Johnston edition, p. 28).

Johnston remarks that “[t]he quotation is to be found with slight differences of wording in *Kāś. P.*”.

¹⁵⁹ 如是等人起增減見，何以故？此諸眾生以依如來不了義經，無慧眼故，遠離如實空見故。(T668, 466b)

Such a condition of going astray is the state characterized by all kinds of views (*dr̥ṣṭi*), conceptualizations (*vikalpa*), and elaborations (*prapañca*). This is the “domain of consciousness” (*vijñānagocara*).¹⁶⁰ *Nirvāṇa* is the *gocara* experienced by *jñāna*, whereas *samsāra* is the *gocara* experienced by *vijñāna*. The characteristics (*lakṣaṇa*) of the two states can also be understood, according to the teachings in the *Dharmadharmatāvibhaṅga*, as *dharmatā* and *dharmas* respectively. It should be noted that, as discussed in the previous chapter, the two states are neither the same nor different. From the perspective of “conventional truth,” they are not really the same; from the perspective of the “ultimate truth,” they are not different either. Accordingly, entering into Thusness, or the realm of nonconceptuality, requires a correct understanding and discernment of the Two Truths. As Nāgārjuna observes in *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*:

Those who do not understand the distinction between these two truths do not understand the profound truth embodied in the Buddha’s message. (24. 9)

Without relying upon convention, the ultimate fruit is not taught.

Without understanding the ultimate fruit, freedom is not attained. (24. 10)

A wrongly perceived emptiness ruins a person of meager intelligence. It is like a snake that is wrongly grasped or knowledge that is wrongly cultivated. (24. 11)¹⁶¹

Again, the explanation given here is not an extrapolated interpretation using the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra tenets. The terminology employed here may be reflective of the two Mahāyāna traditions. However, such an insight into the relationship between

¹⁶⁰ Nany McCagney states: “Nāgārjuna argues that when it is realized that events (*dharmas*) are not independent (*svabhāva*) but interdependent (*pratītyasamutpāda*) and thus indeterminate (*animitta*) because they cannot be defined independent of all else, *cittagocara* (the range of thought, thinking that words describe reality) is renounced as invalid. .. This does not mean that events are indescribable or that the one who has knowledge (*jñāna*) of higher truth is reduced to silence, but that conventional discourse (*vyavahāra*) is true (*saṃvṛtisatya*) and thus useful (*kāryavaśa*) provided it is not reified (*sūnyatā*) and thus made fictional (*prapañca*).” (*Nāgārjuna and the Philosophy of Openness*, pp. 105-106).

¹⁶¹ David J. Kalupahana, *op. cit.* pp. 333-335.

samsāra and *nirvāṇa* does not belong exclusively to either Madhyamaka or Yogācāra, but rather it is a unique Mahāyāna approach in its understanding of Buddhahood and the notions of *bodhicitta*, *prajñāpāramitā* or perfection of wisdom, and the three *kāyas* of the Buddha. Accordingly, we will see that the understanding of the two aspects of the mind is crucial for our understanding of the *tathāgatagarbha* in its three aspects discussed in the final section of the *AAN*.¹⁶² The similarity drawn here, however, might be indicative that Nāgārjuna was also troubled by such a nihilistic way of understanding the Mahāyāna doctrines at that time. What he attempted to do in the twenty-fourth chapter of the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* was to defend the teaching of “emptiness” by arguing against the incorrect understanding and criticism of this teaching. He does this by offering his insight into the Two Truths, as well as emphasizing that “emptiness” is not a “view” itself and should not be an object of attachment. He states:

Furthermore, if you were [to] generate any obsession with regard to emptiness, the accompanying error is not ours. That [obsession] is not appropriate in the context of the empty. (24. 13)

Everything is pertinent for those for whom emptiness is proper. Everything is not pertinent for those for whom the empty is not proper. (24. 14)¹⁶³

The first section thus ends with the Buddha’s assertion that the views of increase and decrease are a great vice, and result from not knowing the *ekadhātu* as it is. Such perverted views of increase and decrease, however, are grounded on the *ekadhātu* and are not separate from it, as is the relationship between *dharma* and *dharmatā* which has been explained.

¹⁶² 眾生界中亦三種法，皆真實如，不異不差。何謂三法？一者如來藏本際相應體及清淨法；二者如來藏本際不相應體及煩惱纏不清淨法；三者如來藏未來際平等恒及有法。(T668, 467b)

¹⁶³ David J. Kalupahana, *op. cit.* pp. 337.

The second section starts with Śāriputra requesting the Buddha to explain what this “*ekadhātu*” is. The “*ekadhātu*,” the Buddha explains, is of profound meaning. It is the “domain of wisdom” (*jñānagocara*) of the Tathāgata, and is also the realm (*viṣaya*) of the Tathāgata’s mind. Such a profound meaning of the *ekadhātu* is not seen or comprehended by the Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas.

The text treats the *ekadhātu* as identical to the *dharmadhātu*. It goes on to emphasize that the Tathāgata, the Bodhisattvas, and ordinary sentient beings, being three different states of the *dharmakāya* in terms of its being defiled or pure, are not separate, differentiated, or unequal. The designation “ordinary sentient beings” is simply the *dharmakāya* in its impure state concealed by adventitious defilements. In reality the two are nondual but are perceived to be different in the minds of those who fall into a false understanding and accept the wrong views. Within the holistic *ekadhātu* (the domain of the Tathāgata’s wisdom) such a profound meaning is the ultimate reality, which is nothing other than the *sattvadhātu*. The *sattvadhātu* is itself the *tathāgatagarbha*, which is also identified as the *dharmakāya*, replete with the non-discrete, inconceivable qualities and wisdom of the Tathāgata.¹⁶⁴ Here, the phrase “the *sattvadhātu* is the *dharmakāya*” apparently reminds us of the famous formula in the *TGS*, *sarvasattvās tathāgatagarbhāḥ* or “all sentient beings possess the *tathāgatagarbha*.” The repletion of

¹⁶⁴ Here, I have left the terms “*ekadhātu*” and “*sattvadhātu*” untranslated on purpose, as we will examine their meanings more closely in a later paragraph.

inconceivable qualities of the Tathāgata is further explained through the two aspects of the *dharmakāya*. On the one hand, the *dharmakāya* itself is unborn and unceasing, transcending the three times, and is therefore permanent, unchanging, pure, nondual, nonconceptual, and unconditioned (*asamskṛta*); on the other hand, the *dharmakāya* is also not separated from the inconceivable Buddha qualities more numerous than the sands of the Ganges, just as the lantern is not separable from its light. Here we are given the two meanings which are elaborated as the “empty” and “non-empty” aspects of the *tathāgatagarbhajñāna* in the *SMD*:

Lord, there are two kinds of emptiness-wisdom of the *tathāgatagarbha*. Lord, the *sūnya-tathāgatagarbha* is devoid of all the sheaths of defilements which are differentiated and separated [from the *dharmatā*]; Lord, the *asūnya-tathāgatagarbha* is not devoid of the Buddhas’ qualities which are indivisible, inseparable [from the *dharmatā*], inconceivable and far beyond the sands of the Ganges in number.¹⁶⁵

The detailed explanation of these two aspects of the wisdom of the *tathāgatagarbha* is one of the highlights of the *RGV*. The *RGV* even boldly claims that, after citing the above passage from the *SMD*, such is the real characteristic of emptiness.¹⁶⁶ The correct understanding of emptiness is of cardinal importance in all schools of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Correct understanding means that one needs to be decisively clear on what should be regarded as empty and what should not. Some modern scholars have suggested that the purpose of the *tathāgatagarbha* texts is to present a positive view of reality against the negative or even nihilistic view of the *Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*. This

¹⁶⁵ 世尊，有二種如來藏空智。世尊，空如來藏，若離若脫若異一切煩惱藏；世尊，不空如來藏，過於恒沙不離不脫不異不思議佛法。(T353, 221c)

¹⁶⁶ Cf. Takasaki Jikidō, *A Study on the Ratnagoṭravibhāga*, pp. 301-2.

cannot be true, as the *Prajñāpāramitā* never teaches a nihilistic view of reality, nor should the teachings of the *tathāgatagarbha* be taken one-sidedly as “positive” either. In other words, the ultimate reality shown in the *Prajñāpāramitā* is never a mere void. Indeed, the *Prajñāpāramitā* emphasizes in many places that the ultimate reality is neither empty nor non-empty; it also states, from the soteriological perspective, that the practitioner should not be attached to the view that phenomena, including Thusness (*tathatā*), are either empty or non-empty.¹⁶⁷ This imagined polarized contradistinction between the *tathāgatagarbha* and the *Prajñāpāramitā* texts also overlooks the rich historical and geographical connection, not to mention the soteriological perspective from traditional accounts, between the two collections of literature.¹⁶⁸ However, the careful articulation of the distinction between emptiness and non-emptiness in the *tathāgatagarbha* texts is indicative that the texts are intended to rectify the misunderstanding of the doctrine of emptiness (*śūnyatā*), possibly the misconceptions of those who have misunderstood the teachings of the *Prajñāpāramitā*.

It is therefore not surprising that there were Buddhist schools that regarded the ultimate reality as an “exclusive emptiness.” From the perspective of the Buddhist schools that accept the *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine as authentic teaching of the Buddha, those who adopt a negativistic interpretation of the reality have misunderstood the teaching of emptiness.

¹⁶⁷ 復次舍利子，諸菩薩摩訶薩修行般若波羅蜜多，不著真如有、不著真如非有；...不著真如空、不著真如不空；不著法界乃至不思議界空、不著法界乃至不思議界不空。(T220, 30b)

¹⁶⁸ On the historical and geographical connection, see, for example, Diana M. Paul, *The Buddhist Feminine Ideal*, chapter one.

The quest for a genuine understanding of emptiness continues in Tibet, where the dGe lugs tradition and the non-dGe lugs traditions (including the rNying ma, the Sa skya, the bKa' brgyud, and the Jo nang) are divided in their interpretation of the ultimate truth and its relation to the mind. For the dGe lugs pa, in brief, the ultimate reality is the result of logical refutation of the false mode of the appearance of conventional phenomena. This "ultimate reality," therefore, is a mere negation (*prasajyapratishedha, med dgag*); it is unconditioned, and is said to be the object of the nondual mind. However, the mind that experiences this unqualified emptiness is believed to be conditioned. The dGe lugs school coins the term "Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka" as the name of this school of interpretation, and attributes the founding of this school to the famous Indian Mādhyamikas Buddhapālita and Candrakīrti. On the other hand, the non-dGe lugs traditions, such as the rNying ma school, emphasize that such an understanding of the ultimate reality is at best only a "conceptual" one (*paryāyaparamārtha, rnam grangs pa'i don dam*). The rNying ma tradition asserts that the ultimate is not a mere "emptiness" taken literally from reading the Madhyamaka treatises. Rather, it is a unity (*zung 'jug*) of the three aspects of the ground (*gzhi*) or reality: its nature (*ngo bo*) is primordially pure (*ka dag*) and empty (*stong pa*); its inherent quality is spontaneous (*lhun grub*) and luminous (*gsal ba*); its innate compassionate responsiveness (*thugs rje*) is unhindered and ceaseless (*dgag med*). The ultimate, in this interpretation, is not merely empty, but a union of emptiness and spontaneous, luminous appearance. As in dGe lugs pa, the ultimate reality is also maintained to be unconditioned; unlike in dGe lugs pa, however, the ultimate is not a mere negation resulting in an unqualified emptiness but rather it is an

implicative negation (*paryudāsapratīṣedha, ma yin dgag*), and the mind that knows this ultimate is also unconditioned. This unconditioned mind, like the ultimate reality, is by nature empty, but it is also spontaneously present, endowed with the inseparable intrinsic Buddha qualities. Needless to say, this unconditioned mind is precisely the *tathāgatagarbha*. As a result, there are broadly speaking two traditions of interpreting the *tathāgatagarbha* in Tibet: firstly, the dGe lugs tradition which takes the *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine as a provisional teaching (*neyārtha*), nothing other than the mere negation of inherent existence, or the emptiness or innate purity of all *dharmas*; and secondly, the non-dGe lugs traditions which understand the *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine as the definitive teaching (*nītārtha*), as innately pure wisdom (*prakṛtiviśuddhajñāna*) or the mind of innate luminosity (*prakṛtiprabhāsvaracitta*).¹⁶⁹

Clearly, it is the non-dGe lugs' interpretation that conforms better to the teachings in the *tathāgatagarbha* texts such as the *AAN* and the *SMD*. In this interpretation, the nature (*svabhāva*) of reality, like all phenomena, is recognized to be empty; however, through accepting that reality lacks its own-nature, it does not at the same time over-negate its qualities and compassion which are spontaneously present. Furthermore, what knows and what is known are maintained to be nondual and are of one taste. Hence, the *tathāgatagarbha* also possesses these three aspects in unity: the first can be categorized as the “empty” aspect and the latter two as the “non-empty” aspect. The correct

¹⁶⁹ The rNying ma scholar 'Ju Mi pham rgya mtsho (1846-1912) in his *Nges shes rin po che'i sron me* demonstrates insightful criticisms and discussions of the dGe lugs pa's Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka from the perspective of the rNying ma pa's Great Madhyamaka. Cf. John Pettit, *Mipham's Beacon of Certainty: The View of Dzogchen, The Great Perfection*.

understanding of emptiness needs a perfect balance that does not fall into over-negating or under-negating.

It is worth noting that such a query on the empty and non-empty aspects of phenomena does not belong exclusively to the Tibetan Madhyamaka schools. Indeed, it is not even an exclusive Madhyamaka problem, but rather, the issue can also be read in the Indian Yogācāra tradition. Nagao Gadjin's celebrated article, "What Remains in Śūnyatā: A Yogācāra Interpretation of Emptiness,"¹⁷⁰ carries some interesting discussions of the Yogācāra view on what remains in the process of emptying the adventitious defilements. In addition, the following passage from the *Yogācārabhūmi* is also worthy of attention:

That in which something is non-existent is empty of that: so he correctly sees.
But that which remains in it is real here: so he correctly understands. [This] is regarded (or produced) [by me] as a non-erroneous definition of emptiness.¹⁷¹

A similar passage can also be found in the *Cūlasuññata-sutta*.¹⁷² The citation here does not seem to give us a direct link to the two aspects of the *tathāgatagarbha*; however, on

¹⁷⁰ This article is published in more than one monograph, for example, in G.M. Nagao & L.S. Kawamura, eds. and trans. *Mādhyamika and Yogācāra: A Study of Mahāyāna Philosophies, Collected Papers of G.M. Nagao*, pp. 51-60.

¹⁷¹ Translation by Leonard Priestley, unpublished. Original Sanskrit: *evaṃ yad yatra nāsti tat tena śūnyam iti samanupaśyati / yat punar atrāvaśiṣṭaṃ bhavati tat sad ihāstīti yathābhūtaṃ prajānātīty aviparītaṃ śūnyatālakṣaṇam udbhāvitam bhavati //* This passage is quoted in Vasubandhu's commentary on the *Madhyāntavibhāga* 2.1, and also in the *Ratnagotravibhāga-vyākhyā* (1.154-155), the *Abhidharma-samuccaya* (Pralhad Pradhan, ed., *Abhidharma Samuccaya of Asanga*. Santiniketan: Visva-Bharati, 1950, p. 40), and the *Bodhisattva-bhūmi* (T1579, 489a), all of which are ascribed to Asaṅga. The Chinese translation by Xuanzang reads: 云何復名善取空者，謂由於此彼無所有，即由彼故正觀為空。復由於此餘實是有，即由餘故如實知有。如是名為悟入空性如實無倒。(T1579, 489a)

¹⁷² In *Majjhima Nikāya, sutta no. 121*: *iti yaṃ hi kho tattha na hoti / tena taṃ suññaṃ samanupassati / yaṃ pana tattha avasiṭṭhaṃ hoti / taṃ santaṃ idam atthīti pajānāti //*

closer examination, the resemblance between the two teachings can be observed.¹⁷³ The author of the *RGV-vyākhyā* also made use of this cited passage to explain the following two verses:

Here there is nothing to be removed
And absolutely nothing to be added;
The Truth should be perceived as it is,
And he who sees the Truth becomes liberated. (1.154)
The Essence [of the Buddha] is [by nature] devoid
Of the accidental [pollutions] which differ from it;
But it is by no means devoid of the highest properties
Which are, essentially, indivisible from it. (1.155)¹⁷⁴

The *tathāgatagarbha*, as we discussed in the first chapter, is the nonconceptual wisdom of the Buddha. This nonconceptual wisdom effortlessly knows everything just as it truly is: it is void (*śūnya*) of all the adventitious obscurations, but not void of the Buddha-dharmas (*guṇa*). In other words, this wisdom of the Tathāgatas knows what is empty and what remains.¹⁷⁵

So far, the terms “*sattvadhātu*” and “*ekadhātu*” have been deliberately left untranslated. The difficulty in finding an exact English translation for these terms lies in the ambiguity of the meaning of “*dhātu*.” Buddhaghosa, for example, gives us a total of

¹⁷³ David Seyfort Rugg dissues the *Cūlasuññata-sutta* in conjunction with the *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine; see *La théorie du Tathāgatagarbha*, p. 319.

¹⁷⁴ Takasaki Jikidō, *A Study on the Ratnagotravibhaga*, pp. 300-301. The original Sanskrit reads:
nāpaneyam ataḥ kiṃ-cid upaneyam na kiṃ-cana / draṣṭavyaṃ bhūtato bhūtaṃ bhūta-darśi vimucyate //
śūnya āgantukair dhātuḥ sa-vinirbhāga-lakṣaṇaiḥ / aśūnyo 'nuttarair dharmair avinirbhāga-lakṣaṇaiḥ //
(E.H. Johnston edition, p. 76).

¹⁷⁵ G.M. Nagao discusses how the teaching from the *Cūlasuññata-sutta* is understood in the *RGV* in relation to the *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine. See his “What Remains in *Śūnyatā*”, published in G.M. Nagao, *Mādhyamika and Yogācāra: A Study of Mahāyāna Philosophies*, pp. 51-60.

five possible meanings for “*dhātu*” in his *Visuddhimagga*.¹⁷⁶ Takasaki reminds us that it is in the meanings of “element,” “essence,” and “essential nature” that the meaning of *dhātu* is predominantly understood in Abhidharma literature.¹⁷⁷ On the other hand, Takasaki has also pointed out that “[t]he term *dhātu*, being a derivative from the root $\sqrt{dhā}$, has the meaning ‘that which places or sustains something (*ādhāra*),’ and hence, embodies a similar concept to *dharma*. It can stand for *dharma* in the sense of rule, principle or truth.”¹⁷⁸ Likewise, Kawada Kumataro has also demonstrated that “*dhātu*” can also be used to signify the meaning of the “universal law or truth which is permanent.”¹⁷⁹ In Western scholarship, A.K. Warder gives a similar interpretation of *dhātu* by translating it as “base,” and explains that “[h]ere we translate the term *dhātu* as ‘base’ as above, this being the nearest equivalent, but the original term means a base in the sense of something having an original nature, an ultimate reality.”¹⁸⁰ In addition, *dhātu* also carries the meaning of “realm” or “sphere,” such as in the case of the three realms of desire (*kāmadhātu*), form (*rūpadhātu*), and formless (*arūpadhātu*). It also seems to be most natural that *sattvadhātu* be translated as “the realm or sphere of sentient beings.”

¹⁷⁶ In C.A.F. Rhys Davids, trans., *The Visuddhimagga of Buddhaghosa*, p. 485, the five definitions of “*dhātu*” are given as: “produces,” “is made to sustain,” “production,” “is sustained by means of that,” and “causes to be sustained.”

¹⁷⁷ Takasaki Jikidō, “Dharmatā, Dharmadhātu, Dharmakāya and Buddhadhātu,” p. 916. It is well known that the *Abhidharmakośa* teaches that each individual is constituted by a stream of *dharma*s, which are believed to exist substantially, as the “primary existence” (*dravya*) and which function as the real foundation of the “secondary existence” (*prajñāpti*) of the “person.” The classification of these *dharma*s is usually categorized into the aggregates (*skandha*), the spheres (*āyatana*), and the elements (*dhātu*). The “elements” are the six senses, their respective objects, and the six consciousnesses.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p.916.

¹⁷⁹ Kawada Kumataro, “Dharmadhātu,” p. 859.

¹⁸⁰ A.K. Warder, *Indian Buddhism*, p. 132.

Given the multiple meanings of *dhātu* listed above, the meaning of *sattvadhātu* should be examined more carefully. In the *AAN*, it is emphasized that the perverted view of “increase and decrease” arises as a result of not recognizing the *ekadhātu*; such ignorance results in not being able to realize that the *sattvadhātu* is the ultimate truth, and is also identified as the *tathāgatagarbha* and the *dharmakāya*. In this sense, the *ekadhātu* cannot be understood simply as an objective “one realm” or “one sphere,” because it is evident that the term also signifies the essence or the true nature of all *dharmas*, the universal truth concerning all things, and is a synonym for *dharmadhātu* and *dharmatā*.¹⁸¹ Takasaki therefore concludes in his article that the meaning of *dhātu*, as in “*buddhadhātu*” for example, signifies “nature” (as a synonym of *dharmatā*) of the Buddha. In addition, the term is also used to refer to the idea of the “cause” (as a synonym of *hetu*), meaning the foundation.¹⁸² In the *RGV*, for example, *dhātu* is explained as “being the seed of the supramundane thing, [and] should be understood as the cause (*hetu*) of origination of the 3 Jewels with reference to its (= of the Germ) purification...”¹⁸³ This idea of an additional bifurcated meaning of *dhātu* is in line with the findings of Shinoda Masashige who, based on a study of the meaning between “*dhātu*,” “*gotra*,” and “*garbha*” through a comparison of the Sanskrit version and the Chinese translation of the *RGV*, understands the basic meaning of *dhātu* as “cause” and “essential nature.”¹⁸⁴

¹⁸¹ Takasaki Jikidō, “Dharmatā, Dharmadhātu, Dharmakāya and Buddhadhātu,” p. 914.

¹⁸² Ibid., p. 912 and p. 906.

¹⁸³ Takasaki Jikidō, *A Study on the Ratnagotravibhāga*, p. 195.

¹⁸⁴ Shinoda Masashige, “Busshō to sono gengo,” pp. 223-226.

In addition, Takasaki has also explained that in “*sattvadhātu*,” not only can “*dhātu*” be explained in various ways, but also “*sattva*” can be interpreted either as “sentient beings” (*sattva*) or as “existence” (*sat-tva*).¹⁸⁵ Given these insightful findings by modern scholars, it seems that the *sattvadhātu* can be rendered not only as “the realm of sentient beings,” but also as both “the nature of sentient beings” and “the cause (=foundation) of sentient beings.” Bodhiruci chose to translate the term as “*zhongsheng jie*” (眾生界), but this does not really tell us how he understood “*dhātu*” in “*sattvadhātu*,” because the Chinese “*jie*” has been used to translate *dhātu* in the sense of “element” (as in the case of the eighteen *dhātus*) and that of “realm.” The following passage from the Chinese translation of the *Mahāsaṃnipātasūtra* (大集經) is particularly interesting:

If there are Bodhisattvas who contemplate two kinds of realm, the *realm* of sentient beings (*sattvadhātu*) and the *realm* of *dharma* (*dharmadhātu*), [they should] contemplate the *nature* of sentient beings from the perspective of the *nature* of *dharmadhātu*, and contemplate the *nature* of *dharmadhātu* from the perspective of the *nature* of sentient beings; [furthermore], apart from the *dharmadhātu* there is no *sattvadhātu*; the *dharmadhātu* and the *sattvadhātu* have no arising or vanishing. It is known as wisdom concerning the unarisen if one can completely understand this as such.¹⁸⁶

The original Sanskrit of this text is no longer extant, neither in its Sanskrit version itself nor in quotation from other Sanskrit texts. However, the doctrinal meaning of this passage is indeed very close to the *AAN* in its delineation of the relationship between the *sattvadhātu* and reality. Taking into consideration Takasaki’s comments on the twofold

¹⁸⁵ Takasaki Jikidō, *Nyoraizō shisō no keisei*, pp. 76-77.

¹⁸⁶ 若有菩薩觀二種界，一眾生界、二者法界，以法界性觀眾生性、以眾生性觀法界性。若離法界無眾生界，法界眾生界無生無滅。若能如是通達知者名無生智。(T397, 43c)

meaning of *dhātu*, it is possible that this passage was translated deliberately to include both meanings of *sattvadhātu*, as “the realm of sentient beings” and as “the nature of sentient beings.” In addition, in Jñānagupta’s Chinese translation of another text, the *Foshuo zhufa benwu jing* (佛說諸法本無經),

It is said that the nature of sentient beings is *bodhi*,
 And the nature of *bodhi* is all sentient beings;
 The two, sentient beings and *bodhi*, are not one either.
 One who knows that is a supreme being.¹⁸⁷

It seems possible that the passage can be understood to mean that “the *svabhāva* or *prakṛti*¹⁸⁸ of sentient beings is enlightenment (*bodhi*),” but it would probably be more natural to render the “*zhongsheng xing*” (眾生性) here as *sattvadhātu*, which would then conform with the teachings in the *AAN*.

Furthermore, in the *Dasheng fajie wuchabie lun* (大乘法界無差別論), *dharmadhātu* is identified as the innate purity of the mind (*prakṛtipariśuddhacitta*), which is further explained as a synonym for the *dharmakāya* of the Tathāgata. Taking the teaching of the *AAN* into consideration, it would amount to saying that the *sattvadhātu* is identified as the innate purity of the mind, since it is said that the

¹⁸⁷說眾生性是菩提 菩提性即諸眾生 眾生菩提二不一 若知是者得人上 (T651, 762c)

¹⁸⁸ It is true that the Mādhyamikas argue against the view of hypostatized phenomena as having own-nature (*svabhāva*), but we should also note that in his *Acintyastava* Nāgārjuna states that: “Śūnyatā is not different from things and there is no thing without it. Therefore You have declared that dependently arising things are empty (v. 43); The conventional arises from causes and conditions and is relative. Thus have [You] spoken of the relative. The ultimate meaning, however, is not fabricated. (v. 44); It is also termed own-being, nature, truth, substance, the real [and the] true. [Conventionally] an imagined thing does not exist but a relative is found [to exist] (v. 45)” (Chr. Lindtner, *Master of Wisdom*, p. 27). The Sanskrit of the last verse cited here reads: *svabhāvaḥ prakṛtis tattvaṃ dravyaṃ vastu sad ity api / nāsti vai kalpito bhāvaḥ paratantras tu vidyate* // (Ibid., p. 169). It is clear that Nāgārjuna identifies *śūnyatā* as *svabhāva*, *prakṛti*, and so on.

sattvadhātu is nothing other than the *dharmakāya*. Here again, it would seem more appropriate not to understand *sattvadhātu* simply as the “realm of sentient beings,” but also to include its multiple meanings as “the nature of sentient beings” and the “cause of sentient beings.” As a result, since the rich meaning of “*sattvadhātu*” cannot be satisfactory translated into English in any simple way, I prefer to leave it untranslated.

The understanding of the relationship between the *jñānagocara* and the *viññānagocara* is crucial for an understanding of the three kinds of beings, because it is clear that those who “cling to worldly phenomena” are beings whose minds function in the mode of the *viññānagocara*. Those who intuitively and naturally perceive phenomena as they truly are, without conceptualization or elaboration, are the Buddhas whose minds function within the domain of wisdom (*jñānagocara*). The Bodhisattvas, then, are those who are at the midpoint between the *jñānagocara* and the *viññānagocara*. They have set themselves on the path that gradually eliminates various stages of conceptualization until the ultimate wisdom state of non-conceptualization is attained. The three states correspond respectively to the Yogācāra understanding of the states of *dharmatā* and *dharmā*, along with the process of “transformation of basis” (*āśrayaparivṛtti*) which effects the transformation from one to another. This leads to the third section of the main body of the text, which discusses the three states of sentient beings, the Bodhisattvas, and the Buddhas respectively.

In this way the text establishes clearly the nonduality of the *sattvadhātu* and the *nirvāṇadhātu*. But the question arises: what kind of ‘nonduality’ does the text present?

David Loy asks “How many nondualities are there?” in an article which bears the question as its title. Loy presents seven models of nondualities understood in different religious traditions, ranging from Sāṃkhya and Advaita Vedānta to philosophical Daoism and the Madhyamaka. It seems that it is in his description of the sixth model that we can find the kind of “nonduality” which I believe to be revealed in the *AAN*. Loy says:

[Speaker] F reflects the *paramārtha-satya*, the highest truth that one should not draw any ontological or other philosophical conclusions from the experience. This expresses the “perspective” of the experience itself, which really is no perspective at all. All philosophical issues are attempts to grasp the nature of this ultimate experience from the dualistic standpoint, and hence all answers *must* be inadequate. In response to the question what is Real, the Mādhyamika, like the Buddha, ultimately remains silent.¹⁸⁹

This illustrates the nonconceptual characteristic (*lakṣaṇa*) of the *dharmakāya* and the *tathāgatagarbha*, in the way that such a profound meaning is said to be beyond the comprehension and intelligence of ordinary sentient beings. Whatever can be spoken of or discussed is within the realm of the *vijñāna*, and therefore Vimalakīrti keeps his noble silence when asked to explain how to enter the Dharma-door of nonduality.

Loy continues in a later paragraph:

In Mahāyāna generally we see more of a balance in perspective between empty Mind-space and phenomena; neither is negated in favor of the other, for both are empty. As the Heart Sūtra says, form is not only emptiness, emptiness is also form. To say that emptiness manifests as form is not quite right, however: As the Heart Sūtra continues, form is no other than emptiness, and emptiness is no other than form – that is, one must be careful not to reify emptiness into something that phenomena arise *from*, as Śāṅkara and the Mind-space analogy do; it is rather the case that empty phenomena appear and disappear. Here we have the familiar

¹⁸⁹ David Loy, “How many nondualities are there?”, p. 420.

Mahāyāna equation between *nirvāṇa* and *saṃsāra*. This implies a different attitude towards change: the Vedāntic Brahman is static, the early Buddhist *dharma*s are impermanent, but the Mahāyāna view is more paradoxical: changing yet unchanging, since phenomena change although their nature as empty does not. This is a more dynamic conception than that of Vedānta, which, prejudiced as it is against phenomena, must conceive of the Absolute as static; because for Mahāyāna emptiness is not other than form, the Absolute is understood as more dynamic, as active and creative.¹⁹⁰

I agree with the distinction that Loy makes here between Mahāyāna and Vedānta, in postulating that emptiness is, in the sense of Mahāyāna Buddhism, not a static Absolute from which all phenomena arise in the way that they are understood to arise from the Vedāntic Brahman. However, his conclusion that there are “different attitudes towards change” in “early Buddhism” and Mahāyāna Buddhism is incorrect: Loy is certainly right to see the Mahāyāna view of “changing yet unchanging” as phenomena changing but not with regard to their nature as empty; however, this is also the view of “early Buddhism.” The saying in the *Samyutta-Nikāya* that “whether there is an arising of Tathāgatas or no arising of Tathāgatas, that element (*sā dhātu*) still persists, the stableness of the Dhamma (*dhammatṭhitatā*), the fixed course of the Dhamma (*dhammaniyāmatā*), specific conditionality (*idappaccayatā*)”¹⁹¹ signifies that Reality is unchanging, constant at all times, no matter how phenomena change. This is indeed one of the points by which the *tathāgatagarbha* texts postulate their connection with early Buddhist teachings, as we can find, for example, in chapter five of the *Laṅkāvatāra*, the

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 421.

¹⁹¹ Quoted from the *Nidānavagga*. See Bhikkhu Bodhi, trans., *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha*, pp. 551 and 741.

“Tathāgatanyānitya,” which contains a passage very similar to the cited *Nikāya* passage above, thereby linking up the Dhamma of early Buddhism with the notions of *dharmatā* and *tathāgatagarbha* in Mahāyāna Buddhism.

The “nonduality” between *sattvadhātu* and *dharmakāya* in the *AAN* is understood in a similar way to that between phenomena and emptiness discussed here. The *AAN* states that “the *sattvadhātu* is precisely the *dharmakāya*, and the *dharmakāya* is precisely the *sattvadhātu*.” This certainly echoes the famous phrase of the *TGS*, “*sarvasattvās tathāgatagarbhāḥ*” meaning “sentient beings possess the *tathāgatagarbha*,” but it could mean “sentient beings are *tathāgatagarbhas*” if we take the “*tathāgatagarbha*” as a *tatpuruṣa* compound. Similarly, we also see the *Prajñāpāramitā-sūtras* teach that “form is emptiness, and emptiness is form.” It follows that “emptiness is not other than form, and form not other than emptiness.” This is indeed also stressed in the *AAN*, which says “the *dharmakāya* is not apart from the *sattvadhātu*, and the *sattvadhātu* is not apart from the *dharmakāya*.” The “nonduality” is clearly presented in the same manner as in *Prajñāpāramitā* literature. The tradition of the *tathāgatagarbha*, therefore, does not aim at postulating a static basis which modern Japanese scholars of Critical Buddhism criticize as the “*dhātu-vāda*” belief.

In the third section of the main body of the *AAN*, the three states of being are further elaborated, on the understanding that they are nondualistic in nature, and that the

three states are indeed neither the same nor different. Such an elaborate and complex treatment is conducted through a discourse on the three aspects of the *tathāgatagarbha*:

The first aspect is the *tathāgatagarbha* which, since the beginningless past, has been connected with the pure essence (*śubhadharmatā*), which is not separated from the wisdom and pure *tathatā* of the *dharmadhātu*. Such a pure essence is inconceivable, and within the *sattvadhātu* it is known as the innately pure mind (*prakṛtipariśuddhacitta*).

The second aspect is the *tathāgatagarbha* which is essentially unconnected with the “covering of defilements” (*kleśakośatā*). Though unconnected, such defilements can only be eliminated through the *bodhi* wisdom of the Tathāgatas. The *dharmadhātu* which is concealed by this essentially unconnected “covering of defilements” is known as the innately pure mind polluted by adventitious defilements.

The third aspect is the *tathāgatagarbha* whose existence as the *dharmatā* is the same and eternal till the ultimate limit (*aparāntakoṭi*). It is the ground of all phenomena; it contains and includes all phenomena. Within the realm of worldly phenomena, it is never separated from the real *dharmas*. It is therefore explained to be non-arising and non-ceasing, an eternal, permanent, quiescent, and steadfast object for refuge, and the inconceivable pure *dharmadhātu*. Such an ultimate aspect of the *tathāgatagarbha* can be understood as the *dharmakāya*, or the “embodiment of the Buddha *dharmas*,” and so, given the proper relationship between the *dharmakāya* and the *sattvadhātu* discussed above, it is natural for the *AAN* to claim that this third aspect of the *tathāgatagarbha* is also identified as the sentient beings; as the text explains, the sentient beings *are*, in

reality, non-arising and non-ceasing, as well as replete with all the qualities of the *dharmadhātu* described. As such, the three states all exist in accordance with the *tathatā* and are not differentiated; such an enlightened experience of nonduality is always free from the two perverted views of “increase and decrease,” and therefore it is said that the two views are condemned by all Buddhas-Tathāgatas.

The three aspects of the *tathāgatagarbha* are clearly reminiscent of the three states of beings previously discussed in section two. Here, the first aspect refers to the idea that there is an undefiled aspect of the mind, the innately pure mind, to be cultivated, and those who are on the path of such cultivation are the Bodhisattvas. The second aspect refers to the innately pure mind concealed by adventitious defilements; although it is emphasized that such defilements are essentially unconnected with the pure mind, it is nevertheless the impure state, and refers therefore to ordinary sentient beings. The third aspect, the ultimate limit of reality, is the *dharmakāya*, and is the domain of the Tathāgatas. Such a threefold understanding of the *tathāgatagarbha* is further elaborated in the *RGV*.

What is important also in this section is the idea that the same *dharmakāya*, when it is concealed by innumerable defilements from the beginningless past, is known as the ordinary sentient beings; when it, having felt disgusted at the *saṃsāra*, undergoes the practice of the ten *pāramitās* and has the desire to attain the Buddha *bodhi*, it is known as the Bodhisattvas; when it is free of all defilements, going completely beyond the pollutants and suffering, and attaining freedom in all realms, knowing them just as they

are, it is known as the Buddhas. The three kinds of beings are further elaborated in the *RGV* in a similar manner as follows:

In brief there are those three kinds of living beings among their multitudes: 1) those who cling to the worldly life (*bhavābhilāṣin*), 2) those who seek for deliverance from it (*vibhavābhilāṣin*), 3) those who wish neither of both (*tadubhayānābhilāṣin*).¹⁹²

It is therefore clear that the attainment of Buddhahood, the third kind of being, is natural, effortless, transcending the extremes of attachment either to *saṃsāra* or to *nirvāṇa*. Those who have the desire to extinguish the fires of defilement are at best on the path of Bodhisattvahood. The influence of this threefold categorization of beings on the *RGV* will be further discussed in the following chapter.

It should be mentioned here that it is my interpretation to speak of the three “states” of the *tathāgatagarbha*. The Chinese translation by Bodhiruci, however, states that those are three kinds of *dharma* (*fa* 法) of the *sattvadhātu*. The meaning of “*dharma*” is of course very wide-ranging, and it is possible, although absurd, to understand the three states of the *tathāgatagarbha* as three kinds of *dharma*. However, it does call our attention to the possibility that there may have been a mistranslation here, since three such “states” of the *tathāgatagarbha* are named in the Sanskrit version of the *RGV*, although not quoted in the entire passage but only mentioned in the terms, as *anādisāṃnidhya-saṃbaddhasvabhāva-śubhadharmatā*, *anādisāṃnidhyāsaṃbaddha-*

¹⁹² Taksaki Jikidō, *A Study on the Ratnagotravibhāga*, p. 202.

svabhāva-kleśakośatā, and *aparāntakoṭisama-dhruvadharmatā-saṃvidyamānatā* respectively,¹⁹³ where the word “*dharma*” is not mentioned in any of these three terms.

This puzzle led me to investigate other translations by Bodhiruci, to see if there is anything particular and special about his use of the term “*fa*” (*dharma*) in his translation. This investigation, however, leads to a conclusive finding that Bodhiruci’s use of “*fa*” is completely arbitrary, as is evident in the following three examples of his translation of the *Samḍhinirmocana* in juxtaposition with the Chinese translation by Xuanzang and the Tibetan translation. The first example comes from the chapter of “The Questions of Maitreya” in the Tibetan version, where John Powers translates the passage as follows:

Maitreya, Bodhisattvas also comprehend objects through five aspects. What are these five aspects of objects? They are: knowable things, knowable meanings, knowledge, obtaining the fruit of knowledge, and full awareness of that.¹⁹⁴

The Tibetan of the “five aspects” here is “*don rnam pa lnga*,” which should be literally and more accurately translated as the “five aspects of meaning” or “five kinds of object,” because the Tibetan “*don*” corresponds to “*artha*” in Sanskrit, which means meaning or object. The former meaning corresponds well with Xuanzang’s Chinese translation, in which the phrase in question is translated as the “five kinds of meaning” (五種義).¹⁹⁵

However, in Bodhiruci’s translation, we find the phrase translated as “five kinds of

¹⁹³ See E.H. Johnston’s edition, *The Ratnagoṭravibhāga Mahāyānottaratantraśāstra* 1.95 (Patna: The Bihar Research Society, 1950), p. 59: *ity etad aparānta-koṭi-sama-dhruva-dharmatā-saṃvidyamānatām adhikṛtya daśa-vidhenārthena tathāgatagarbha-vyavasthānam uktam | punar anādi-sāṃnidhyāsambaddha-svabhāva-kleśa-kośatām anādi-sāṃnidhya-sambaddha-svabhāva-śubha-dharmatām cādhikṛtya navabhir udāharanair aparyanta-kleśa-kośa-koṭi-gūḍhas tathāgatagarbha iti yathā sūtram anugantavyam ||*

¹⁹⁴ John Powers, *Wisdom of the Buddha*, p. 176.

¹⁹⁵ The corresponding passage in Xuanzang’s translation (解深密經) reads: 復次善男子，彼諸菩薩由能了知五種義故，名為知義。何等五義？一者遍知事；二者遍知義；三者遍知因；四者得遍知果；五者於此覺了。(T676, 700a)

dharma” (五種法), where “*dharma*” could be accepted as a loose translation of “*artha*.”¹⁹⁶

The second and third examples are as arbitrary as the first one. In a later passage of the same chapter in the *Samdhinirmocana*, the Tibetan version in Powers’s English translation reads:

Maitreya, Bodhisattvas who are skillful with respect to six topics manifestly achieve the Bodhisattva’s great powers. These [powers] include skill with respect to the arising of mind, the abiding of mind, the emergence of mind, the increasing of mind, the diminishing of mind, and skill in means.¹⁹⁷

The term “six topics” here is used to translate the Tibetan “*gnas drug*,” which can be translated with many meanings such as “six realms,” “six places,” or “six dwellings.” This, again, conforms with the translation of Xuanzang, who rendered the term as “six locales” (六處)¹⁹⁸, but in Bodhiruci’s translation this becomes rather ambiguous as “six kinds of *dharma*” (六種法).¹⁹⁹

A third example can be found in the chapter “The Questions of Avalokiteśvara,” which in Powers’s translation reads as follows:

Bhagavan, why is it that Bodhisattvas do not abide through faith in the desirable fruitional results of the perfections in the same way that they abide in the perfections?

Avalokiteśvara, this is due to five causes: The perfections are causes of surpassingly great happiness and pleasure; they are causes of benefit for oneself

¹⁹⁶ In Bodhiruci’s translation (深密解脫經): 復次彌勒, 若菩薩知五種法, 彼菩薩名善知義。何等為五? 一者可知境界; 二者可知義; 三者知法; 四者依知得證果; 五者如實受彼法。(T675, 677a)

¹⁹⁷ John Powers, *op. cit.*, p. 207.

¹⁹⁸ 善男子, 若諸菩薩善知六處, 便能引發菩薩所有廣大威德。一者善知心生; 二者善知心住; 三者善知心出; 四者善知心增; 五者善知心減; 六者善知方便。(T676, 702b)

¹⁹⁹ 佛言: 彌勒, 若菩薩如實能知六種法者, 是人能得菩薩妙果。何等六種? 所謂善知心生; 善知心住; 善知心起; 善知法來; 善知善法增長; 善知巧方便。(T675, 679a)

and others; they bring about desirable fruitional results in the future; they are the bases of non-affliction; and they are unchangeable reality.²⁰⁰

The “five causes” mentioned here is a literal translation of the Tibetan “*rgyu lnga*”; Xuanzang has “five kinds of causes and conditions” (五因緣).²⁰¹ Although a Sanskrit version of the text is not extant and therefore we cannot tell whether the Sanskrit read five kinds of “*hetu*” or “*hetupratyaya*,” the meanings of the two are nonetheless close enough for us to leave their distinctions aside here. We find in Bodhiruci’s translation that once again “five kinds of *dharma*” (五種法) is the translation he adopts instead.²⁰²

The few examples found in the *Samḍhinirmocana* might be taken as coincidence, or one might even argue further that, since the Sanskrit version is not extant, it could possibly mean that, contrary to our assumption, it was the Tibetan and Xuanzang versions that mistranslate the passage. In order to test that possibility we can use Bodhiruci’s translation of the *Laṅkāvatāra*, and check it against the Sanskrit text as well as against other Chinese translations. Again, we find that the use of the word “*fa*” in Bodhiruci’s translation is much more frequent than in the other two Chinese translations by Guṇabhadra and Śikṣānanda. In one passage, for example, Bodhiruci’s version explains that it is due to the attachment to “two kinds of *dharma*” (二種法) that the erroneous views of “permanence” and “impermanence” arise, whereas the Buddhas do not have

²⁰⁰ John Powers, *op. cit.*, p. 259.

²⁰¹ 觀自在菩薩復白佛言：世尊，何因緣故，是諸菩薩深信愛樂波羅蜜多，非於如是波羅蜜多所得可愛諸果異熟？佛告觀自在菩薩曰：善男子，五因緣故。一者波羅蜜多是最增上喜樂因故；二者波羅蜜多是其究竟饒益一切自他因故；三者波羅蜜多是當來世彼可愛果異熟因故；四者波羅蜜多非諸雜染所依事故；五者波羅蜜多非是畢竟變壞法故。(T676, 707a)

²⁰² 聖者觀世自在菩薩白佛言：世尊，世尊何故諸菩薩，心不多樂諸波羅蜜果報，而多樂諸波羅蜜行？佛言：觀世自在，有五種法。何等為五？所謂樂於增上歡喜樂故；攝取自利利他故；樂未來世樂報恩故；不染諸法故；不失彼法故。(T675, 683c)

these two kinds of *dharma*.²⁰³ Śikṣānanda simply states that such erroneous views of “permanence” and “impermanence” arise because of attachment to the “two” (二), or duality, and what the Buddhas attain is “nonduality” (無二).²⁰⁴ The latter translation is found to correspond well to the Sanskrit version, where only “dual” (*dvaya*) and “nondual” (*advaya*) are mentioned.²⁰⁵

It is therefore clear that the sentence “there are three kinds of *dharma* in the realm of the sentient beings” in the *BBJ* should not be taken literally as an accurate and faithful translation of the corresponding sentence in the *AAN*. Following the discussion in the *RGV*, it seems reasonable to understand the sentence as referring to the three “states” (*avasthā*) of the *tathāgatagarbha*.

In the concluding paragraph of the main body of the *AAN*, it is forcibly stated that those who are attached to the views of “one” or “two” (i.e., the monistic view or dualistic views), even if they are monks, nuns, or lay Buddhists, are not the disciples of the Buddhas, for they are attached to the dualistic view and so they are actually “migrating from darkness to darkness, from gloom to gloom.” These beings are named as the *icchantikas*. It is therefore emphasized that the right Middle Way is to be attained through freedom from the two views. This idea is elaborated in detail in the *Kāśyapa-parivarta*:

²⁰³ See *Ru lengjia jing* (入楞伽經), T671, 556b.

²⁰⁴ 一切三界皆從虛妄分別而生，如來不從妄分別生。大慧，若有於二有常無常，如來無二，證一切法無生相故，是故非常亦非無常。(T672, 619b)

²⁰⁵ See Bunyu Nanjio, ed., *The Laṅkāvatārasūtra*, p. 218.

Because permanence is one extreme, and impermanence is another extreme. [Not falling into the extremes of] permanence and impermanence is the Middle, which is formless, shapeless, not cognizable, and not knowable. This is known as the Middle way, the true contemplation on all *dharmas*. Self is one extreme, no-self is another extreme. [Not falling into the extremes of] self and no-self is the Middle, which is formless, shapeless, not cognizable, and not knowable. This is known as the Middle Way, the true contemplation on all *dharmas*. Furthermore, Kāśyapa, to regard the mind as real is one extreme, to regard the mind as unreal is another extreme. If [one realizes that] there is no mind and no mental activities [as either real or unreal], it is known as the Middle Way, the true contemplation on all *dharmas*.

As such, wholesome and unwholesome *dharmas*, secular and transcendent *dharmas*, sinful and non-sinful *dharmas*, afflictive and non-afflictive *dharmas*, composite and non-composite *dharmas*, and defiled and non-defiled *dharmas* are likewise free from the two extremes, and they cannot be felt or spoken of. This is known as the Middle Way, the true contemplation on all *dharmas*.²⁰⁶

The passage quoted here cites examples of the two extremes, freedom from which would be the Middle Way, and the true contemplation of reality. It is not inconceivable that the

²⁰⁶The translation here follows the Chinese version collected in the *Mahāratnakūṭasūtra*: 以常是一邊無常是一邊，常無常是中無色無形無明無知，是名中道諸法實觀；我是一邊無我是一邊，我無我是中，無色無形無明無知，是名中道諸法實觀。復次迦葉，若心有實是為一邊，若心非實是為一邊，若無心識亦無心數法，是名中道諸法實觀。如是善法不善法、世法出世法、有罪法無罪法、有漏法無漏法、有為法無為法，乃至有垢法無垢法，亦復如是，離於二邊，而不可受亦不可說，是名中道諸法實觀。(T310, 633c) Adding “not falling into the extremes of” does not seem to be what the Chinese seems to say, but it makes better sense and corresponds better with the original Sanskrit, which we can find in Stael-Holstein, *The Kācyaaparivarta: A Mahāyānasūtra of the Ratnakūṭa Class: nityam iti kāśyapa ayam eko 'ntaḥ anityam iti kāśyapa ayam dviṭīyo 'ntaḥ yad etayor dvayo nityānityayor maddhyam tad arūpy anidarśanam anābhāsam avijñāptikam apratiṣṭham aniketam iyam ucyate kāśyapa madhyamā pratipad dharmānām bhūtapratyavekṣā / ātmeti kāśyapa ayam eko 'ntaḥ nairātmyam ity ayam dviṭīyo 'ntaḥ yad ātmanerātmyayor madhyam tad arūpy anidarśanam anābhāsam avijñāptikam apratiṣṭham aniketam iyam ucyate kāśyapa madhyamā pratipad dharmānām bhūtapratyavekṣā / bhūtacittam iti kāśyapa ayam eko 'ntaḥ abhūtacittam iti kāśyapa ayam dviṭīyo 'ntaḥ yatra kāśyapa na cetanā na mano na vijñānam iyam ucyate kāśyapa madhyamā pratipad dharmānām bhūtapratyavekṣā / evaṃ sarvadharmānām kuśalākuśalānām lokikalokottarānām sāvadyānavadyānām sāsravānāsravānām saṃskṛtāsamskṛtānām saṃkleśa iti kāśyapa ayam eko 'ntaḥ vyavadānam ity ayam kāśyapa dviṭīyo 'ntaḥ yo 'syāntadvayasyānugamo 'nudāhāro pravayāhāra iyam ucyate / kāśyapa madhyamā pratipad dharmānām bhūtapratyavekṣā // (pp. 86-89)*

views of “increase and non-increase” and “decrease and non-decrease” are also examples of the two extremes. In other words, the dualistic conceptualizations that arise from elaborations (*prapañca*) are all extremes that prevent one from realizing the Middle Way or Thusness (*tathatā*). Those who are bound by the dualistic views, owing to their harboring the incorrect views and thus being unable to realize the Reality (*tattva*), are therefore known as the *icchāntikas*. These are the sentient beings who “migrate from darkness to darkness, from gloom to gloom.” The term “*icchāntika*,” in this context, might therefore be seen to mean “one who desires” which is the literal meaning of the Sanskrit word. It is the desire which arises as a result of falling into the extremes that leads one to migrate from darkness to darkness, as detailed in the first section of the text. The text does not mention explicitly, however, whether there is a possibility for these *icchāntikas* to attain Buddhahood. Judging from the context of the *AAN*, the answer seems to be positive, as it has been stated clearly that the *tathāgatagarbha* of ordinary beings is “essentially unconnected with the covering of defilements (*kleśakośa*).” The defilements of attachment to the extremes, therefore, should be understood to be adventitious.

Chapter Five: The Notion of “No Increase and No Decrease” in Mahāyāna Scriptures

The foregoing discussion of the main theme of the *AAN* might lead to the belief that the notion of “no increase and no decrease” is a unique teaching of the *tathāgatagarbha* texts. A survey of the Mahāyāna scriptures, however, reveals that the doctrine of “no increase and no decrease” does not belong exclusively to the *tathāgatagarbha* formulation; it is not even exclusively Mahāyāna, as we can find a discussion of this theme in the *Udāna*:

And just as whatever rivers in the world, monks, run into the great ocean and whatever showers fall upon it from the air, the great ocean is not known to be lessened or filled by that, so, monks, however many monks attain Parinirvana in the realm of Nirvana (*nibbānadhātu*) without residue, the realm of Nirvana is not known to be lessened or filled by that.²⁰⁷

This teaching, therefore, should not be criticized as a product of the “*dhātu-vāda*” school of Buddhism which modern Japanese Critical Buddhism denounces. In fact, references to “no increase and no decrease” are prolific in the *Prajñāpāramitā*. In Xuanzang’s Chinese translation of the *Large Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra*, we find a whole chapter dedicated to a discussion of “no increase and no decrease” as being the marks of reality.²⁰⁸ The *Heart Sūtra* (*Prajñāpāramitā-hṛdaya*), regarded as the “essence” of all *Perfection of Wisdom* teachings, also retains this idea in its condensed wording. According to Edward Conze’s critical edition of the *Heart Sūtra*:

²⁰⁷ Leonard C.D.C. Priestley, *Pudgalavāda Buddhism: The Reality of the Indeterminate Self*, p. 179. Cf. P. Steinthal, ed., *Udāna*, p. 55.

²⁰⁸ See Xuanzang’s translation of the *Prajñāpāramitā* (大般若波羅蜜多經) fascicle 360, beginning from T220, 853b.

iha Śāriputra sarva-dharmāḥ śūnyatā-lakṣaṇā anutpannā aniruddhā amalā avimalā anūnā aparipūrṇāḥ

(Here, Śāriputra, all *dharmas* have the mark of emptiness; [they are] non-originated, non-extinct, non-defiled, not non-defiled, non-decreasing [and] non-increasing.)

The words *anūna-āparipūrṇa* for “non-decreasing [and] non-increasing” correspond well to the original Sanskrit title of the *BBJ*, *Anūnatvāpūrṇatvanirdeśa-parivarta*, as found in the *RGV*. On the other hand, however, a similar passage in the extant Gilgit manuscript of the Sanskrit original of the *Large Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra* uses completely different wording to express the same message:

yā Śāradvatīputra śūnyatā na sā utpadyate na nirudhyate na saṃkliśyate na vyavadāyate na hīyate na vardhate

Here, the Sanskrit terms for “non-decreasing” and “non-increasing” are “*na hīyate*” and “*na vardhate*” respectively. This causes Jan Nattier to question if the *Prajñāpāramitā-hṛdaya* was originally composed in Sanskrit or if it is a redaction into Sanskrit from a Chinese summary of the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā*.²⁰⁹ In any case, the idea of “no increase and no decrease” is quite commonly found in the *Prajñāpāramitā*, and the teaching is central to the Bodhisattva practice of the “perfection of wisdom.”

Linking the teaching of “no increase and no decrease” with the practice of Bodhisattvas can also be seen in the *Ji yiqie fude sanmei jing* (集一切福德三昧經)²¹⁰, which states that:

²⁰⁹ For a critique of Nattier’s claim, see the section on the *Dasheng qixin lun* below.

²¹⁰ This text is translated by Kumārajīva, and is indeed the second translation of the *sūtra* in China. The earlier version is translated by Dharmarakṣa, entitled *Dengji zhongde sanmei jing* (等集眾德三昧經).

Furthermore, Nārāyaṇa, Bodhisattvas realize that the *sattvadhātu* is infinite, [and that] the *dharmadhātu* is [also] infinite, [following] practice that [realizes] that the *sattvadhātu* and the *dharmadhātu* are not utterly ceased. Why is this so? It is because *sattvadhātu* and *dharmadhātu* are nondual, without dualistic actions and without dualistic characteristics (*lakṣaṇa*). [Within the] *dharmadhātu*, which neither increases nor decreases, there is no increase in the *sattvadhātu*, and no decrease in the *sattvadhātu*. As is the characteristic of the *dharmadhātu*, so also is the characteristic of the *sattvadhātu*... Nārāyaṇa, such conduct of the Bodhisattvas is known as the practice of “the way of enlightenment (*bodhicaryā*).”²¹¹

The attainment of such a realization of the nonduality of the *dharmadhātu*, according to the Yogācāra tradition, is said to be the realization of the eighth-stage Bodhisattvas; as the *Madhyāntavibhāga* states:

The realization of the *dharmadhātu* at the eighth stage is known as [realizing] the meaning of “no increase” and “no decrease”. At this stage, the *anutpattikadharmakṣānti* is completely realized, not seeing the increase or decrease of a single *dharma* among all pure and impure *dharma*s. [At this stage,] four kinds of sovereignty (*vaśitā*) are attained: the sovereignty of nonconceptualization, the sovereignty of the pure land, the sovereignty of wisdom, and the sovereignty of *karma*. The *dharmadhātu* is the foundation of these four kinds [of sovereignty]. This is known as the meaning of the foundation of the four kinds of sovereignty.²¹²

²¹¹復次那羅延，菩薩摩訶薩解眾生界無量法界無量、眾生界法界無盡滅行。何以故？眾生界法界無有二故，無有二作、無有二相。不增不減法界，不增眾生界、不減眾生界。如法界相眾生界相亦復如是... 那羅延，菩薩如是行名修菩提行。(T382, 1000a)

²¹²第八地中所證法界名不增不減義，由通達此圓滿證得無生法忍，於諸清淨雜染法中不見一法有增有減。有四自在：一無分別自在；二淨土自在；三智自在；四業自在。法界為此四種所依，名四自在所依止義。(T1600, 468b)

Other Mahāyāna *sūtras* which share a close thematic relationship with the *AAN* include the *Dafangdeng dajijing* (大方等大集經), which contains a passage that reads:

The whole of the *dharmadhātu* cannot be seen by the ordinary eyes (*māṃṣa-caḥsus*) or the divine eyes (*divya-caḥsus*), but is connected with the noble Dharma-wisdom-eye (*ārya-dharma-prajñā-caḥsus*). Using the noble Dharma-wisdom-eye to contemplate the non-increasing and non-decreasing of the *dharmadhātu*, one does not see all phenomena possessing the [characteristics] of growth (*vrddhi*) and decline (*hāni*); one does not see near and far or arrival and departure; one does not see that there are arising and vanishing. Such a person, thus seeing all phenomena as pure and equal, does not see that there are truly existing sentient beings anymore. When one enters [into the realization that real] sentient beings are unattainable, one will enter [the realization that] all phenomena are [likewise] unattainable. Why is it so? It is because all phenomena do not exist apart from sentient beings, and sentient beings do not exist apart from all phenomena; the nature (*svabhāva*) of sentient beings is the nature of all phenomena, and the nature of all phenomena is the nature of sentient beings; such a nature of all phenomena is the nature of Self, and the nature of Self is the nature of all phenomena; such a nature of all phenomena is [also] the nature of Buddha-*dharma*s, and the nature of Buddha-*dharma*s is the nature of the realm of selflessness; such a nature of the realm of selflessness is the nature of reality-limit (*bhūtakoti*), and the nature of reality-limit is the nature of Thusness (*tathatā*).²¹³

Furthermore, in the *Foshuo wenshushili xingjing* (佛說文殊尸利行經), we find the following passage:

²¹³一切法界，非肉眼見非天眼見，是聖法慧眼相應，以聖慧眼觀諸法界不增不減，不見諸法有盛有衰，不見近遠方所無所至去，不見有生有滅。是人如是見諸法清淨平等時，更不見眾生有實可得；若入眾生不可得，是人則得入一切法不可得。何以故？不離眾生有一切法，不離一切法有眾生；其眾生體性是一切法體性，其一切法體性是眾生體性；其一切法體性是我體性，其我體性是一切法體性；其一切法體性是佛法體性，其佛法體性是無我界體性；其無我界體性是實際體性，其實際體性是如如體性。(T397, 339b)

Mañjuśrī says, ‘Śāriputra, the limit of reality neither increases nor decreases. The *dharmadhātu* does not increase or decrease, and the *sattvadhātu* also has no increase or decrease. Therefore, Śāriputra, *bodhi* is indeed liberation. Why is it so? It is because the wisdom of all *dharma*s does not lie elsewhere; it is neither constructed nor unconstructed. One whose knowledge is such is known as having entered into *nirvāṇa*.’ At that time, the Lord told Śāriputra, ‘Śāriputra, indeed, indeed. Just as Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī has said, the limit of reality has no increase or decrease; the *dharmadhātu* and the *sattvadhātu* also have no increase or decrease.’²¹⁴

It is clear from these passages that the identification of *sattvadhātu* with the *dharmadhātu* cannot be expressed in a limited way in English as the identification of “the realm of sentient beings” with “the realm of *dharma*,” as discussed in the previous section. The term “*dharmadhātu*” not only refers to one of the eighteen “elements,” but also denotes the totality of all *dharma*s, both conditioned (*saṃskṛta*) and unconditioned (*asaṃskṛta*), and hence both *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*. In other words, as Takasaki suggests:

The term *dharmadhātu* ... may be interpreted as the nature (*dhātu*) of thing[s] (*dharma*), or the truth concerning things. ... [A]ll things[,] all phenomena could be called *dharmadhātu* when they are cognized by the mind. Thus the *dharmadhātu* signifies the whole phenomenal world or the universe... Thus the *dharmadhātu* has two characteristics, the one being the *dharmatā*, i.e., the law of *prāṭīyasamutpāda*, and the other being *sarvadharmāḥ*, i.e., the whole sphere of *prāṭīyasamutpanna-dharmāḥ*.²¹⁵

²¹⁴ 文殊尸利菩薩言：舍利弗，真實者不增不減，法界不增不減，眾生界者亦無增減。... 是故舍利弗，菩提者即是解脫也。何以故？所有法智無異處故，非作非不作。若如是知名為已入涅槃者。爾時世尊即告尊者舍利弗言：舍利弗，如是如是，如文殊尸利菩薩所說，真實中無增無減，法界眾生界亦無增減。(T471, 514a)

²¹⁵ Takasaki, “Dharmatā, Dharmadhātu, Dharmakāya and Buddhadhātu,” p. 940.

Taking “*dharmadhātu*” as having a meaning close to *dharmatā* and *pratītyasamutpāda* as in Takasaki’s study would also mean that the *dharmadhātu* need not be understood as a substantial “realm” of any sort as proponents of Critical Buddhism suppose, but rather it is a principle or the ultimate truth underlying all phenomena. Indeed, in the *Prajñāpāramitā* we can see that the *dharmadhātu* is identified as the Thusness (*tathatā*) of all phenomena:

The *tathatā* of the *dharmadhātu*, *dharmatā*, non-delusiveness (*avisamvāditva*), non-modification (*avikāra*), equanimity (*samatā*), non-arising (*anutpāda*), *dharmaniyāmatā*, *dharmasthititā*, *bhūtakoti*; the realm of space, and the realm of the inconceivable is precisely the *tathatā* of the Tathāgata. The *tathatā* of the Tathāgata is precisely the *tathatā* of the *dharmadhātu* and so on to the *tathatā* of the inconceivable realm.²¹⁶

In a later passage from the *Large Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra*, it is stated even more clearly that the *dharmadhātu* is indeed the Thusness (*tathatā*):

At that time, Invincible asked the Buddha, “Lord, what is it that is named the *dharmadhātu*?” The Buddha told Invincible the king of gods (*devarāja*), “You should know the *dharmadhātu* is precisely non-delusiveness.” “Lord, what is non-delusiveness?” “King of gods, it is the unchanging nature.” “Lord, what is the unchanging nature?” “King of gods, it is the *tathatā* of all *dharmas*.” “Lord, what is the *tathatā* of all *dharmas*?” “King of gods, you should know that *tathatā* is profound and wonderful; it can only be known through wisdom but cannot be spoken through words. Why is it so? Because the *tathatā* of all *dharmas* is beyond the realm of all words and speech, no verbal activity can course in it; it is utterly beyond conceptualization (*vikalpa*) and elaboration (*prapañca*), without either this or that, it is beyond marks and no-marks of existence; it is far away

²¹⁶ Xuanzang’s translation, fascicle 447: 法界法性、不虛妄性、不變異性、平等性、離生性、法定、法住、實際、虛空界、不思議界、真如，即如來真如；如來真如即法界乃至不思議界真如。(T220, 254b)

from the realm of analysis and reflection (*vitarkavicāra*), it is beyond the realm of analysis and reflection; being no-thoughts and no-marks²¹⁷, it is beyond the realm of duality; it is far away from ignorant beings, it is beyond the realm of ignorant beings; it is beyond all evil doings; it is beyond all obscurations and ignorance; it is not what consciousness can comprehend; it abides in non-abiding; it is the quiet supreme wisdom and non-conceptuality, and its subsequent wisdom has nothing of self (*ātman*) and what is mine (*mamakāra*); it cannot be attained through seeking; it has no attachment or detachment; it has no defilement and attachment; it is pure and free from impurities; it is the supreme, the highest, and its nature and characteristics are eternal and unchangeable. Whether a Buddha is born or not born, its characteristic is eternally abiding. King of gods, you should know that such is the *dharmadhātu*.”²¹⁸

Furthermore in Edward Conze’s English translation of the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrika*, there is also a passage that says:

Because the Dharma-element [i.e. *dharmadhātu*] and the perfection of wisdom are not two nor divided. And what is true of the Dharma-element, that is true also of Suchness, the Reality-limit, and the unthinkable element.²¹⁹

In a later passage, it is further stated that:

²¹⁷ “Being no-thoughts and no-marks” translates the Chinese “無想無相”; the second “xiang” here, with the wood radical, represents the Sanskrit *nimitta*, which means the mark or image apprehended by thoughts (*samjñā*). Cf. Leonard C.D.C. Priestley, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

²¹⁸ Xuanzang’s translation, fascicle 567: 爾時最勝復白佛言：世尊，云何名為法界？佛告最勝天王：當知法界即是不虛妄性。世尊：云何不虛妄性？天王，即是不變異性。世尊，云何不變異性？天王，即是諸法真如。世尊，何謂諸法真如？天王當知，真如深妙但可智知非言能說。何以故？諸法真如過諸文字離語言境，一切語業不能行故，離諸戲論絕諸分別，無此無彼離相無相，遠離尋伺過尋伺境，無想無相超過二境，遠離愚夫過愚夫境，超諸魔事離諸障惑，非識所了住無所住，寂靜聖智及無分別，後得智境無我我所，求不可得無取無捨，無染無著清淨離垢，最勝第一性常不變，若佛出世若不出世性相常住。天王當知，是為法界。(T220, 929b-c) There are many more passages in the *Large Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra* that identify the *dharmadhātu* as *tathatā*, which are not quoted here. For example, 法界於真如無所有不可得，真如法界於法性無所有不可得。法性性空故，法性於法性無所有不可得，法性於真如法界無所有不可得，真如法界法性於不虛妄性無所有不可得。(T220, 369b)

²¹⁹ Edward Conze, trans. *The Large Sūtra on Perfect Wisdom with the Divisions of the Abhisamayālaṅkāra*, p. 249. Conze’s translation of the *Prajñāpāramitā* in this work is a combination of various versions, including the 100,000 verses, the 25,000 verses, and the 18,000 verses in Sanskrit, the Chinese translations, the Gilgit and Central Asian manuscripts. The passage cited here is from chapter 31, of which Conze states in his preface that “For chapters 22-54 ... I have generally followed the revised *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrika*.” (p. ix)

If there were no Dharma-element [i.e. *dharmadhātu*] which is the same in the beginning, end, and middle, the Bodhisattva could not, with his skill in means, indicate the Dharma-element to beings and mature them. But because there is such a Dharma-element, the Bodhisattva, coursing in perfect wisdom, indicates through his skill in means the Dharma-element to beings, courses in the course of a Bodhisattva for the sake of beings and matures beings.²²⁰

It should be noted, however, that such an idea does not belong exclusively to Mahāyāna Buddhism. In the early Buddhist canon, in the *Nikāyas* and *Āgamas*, we also find the *dharmadhātu* described in a very similar way. For example, in the *Samyuktāgama* no.296, it is said:

What is the principle of dependent-origination (*pratīyasamutpāda*)? It is [indicated by way of the teaching of] ignorance (*avidyā*) and action-intentions (*saṃskāras*), [etc.] Whether a Buddha is born or is not born, this principle is eternally abiding. The principle abides (*dharmasthitā*) in the *dharmadhātu*, which is realized by the Tathāgatas themselves, thus attaining perfect enlightenment, and expounding, revealing, declaring, and explaining it to others.²²¹

In Dharmadeva (法天)'s Chinese translation of the *Qifo jing* (七佛經), too, the *dharmadhātu* is also mentioned as the pure “object” (*viśaya*) realized by the Buddha's wisdom:

The Bhikkhu asks the Buddha, “The Buddha has the pure *dharmadhātu* and has realized the true awareness and wisdom; there is nothing that is not known to him. I pray [the Buddha] to expound on this.”²²²

²²⁰ Ibid., p. 597. This is the translation of the Gilgit manuscript of the 18,000 verses.

²²¹ 云何緣生法？謂無明、行。若佛出世、若未出世，此法常住，法住法界，彼如來自所覺知，成等正覺，為人演說，開示顯發。(T99, 84b)

²²² 苾芻白言：佛有清淨法界，證真覺智，無不了知，願為解說。(T2, 152b)

These passages show that the *dharmadhātu* is spoken of as the ultimate truth known to the perfectly enlightened one, and this ultimate truth is also referred to as Thusness (*tathatā*), reality-limit (*bhūtaḥkoṭi*), and the inconceivable realm (*acintyadhātu*).

The *dharmadhātu*, being “the truth concerning things” cognized by the Buddhas, is also equivalent to the *nirvāṇa-dhātu*, which, conventionally speaking, exists in contrast to the *saṃsāra-dhātu* where ordinary sentient beings (*sattvas*) abide. The relationship between the *sattvadhātu* and the *dharmadhātu* therefore echoes the relationship between *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*. Ultimately, however, *nirvāṇa* and *saṃsāra* are not two nor separate. This is in agreement with Nāgārjuna’s famous verse in the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* (25:19, 20):

There is no distinction whatever between *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*.

There is no distinction whatever between *nirvāṇa* and *saṃsāra*.

The limit of *nirvāṇa* is that of *saṃsāra*.

The subtlest difference is not found between the two.²²³

It is also discussed in the *Laṅkāvatāra*:

Again Mahāmati, what is the characteristic of nonduality? Namely just as light or shade, long or short, black and white appear as two, they are not separate one from another. Like all events, *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa* are not two. There is no *nirvāṇa* except where there is *saṃsāra*, and there is no *saṃsāra* except where there is *nirvāṇa*, for existence is without distinctive mark or cause. It is said that “all events are not two like *saṃsāra* and *parinirvāṇa*.” Then from that,

²²³ Nancy McCagney, *Nāgārjuna and the Philosophy of Openness*, p. 209. The original Sanskrit reads: *na saṃsārasya nirvāṇāt kiṃcid asti viśeṣaṇam / na nirvāṇasya saṃsārāt kiṃcid asti viśeṣaṇam // nirvāṇasya ca yā koṭiḥ koṭiḥ saṃsāraṇasya ca / na tayoḥ antaram kiṃcit susūksmam api vidyate //*

Mahāmati, duty and discipline are marked by *śūnyatā*, nonarising, nonduality, and lack of own-being.²²⁴

The *dharmadhātu*, more specifically, is the ultimate truth of nonduality which is nonconceptual. Linking it to the principle of dependent-origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*), as suggested in the *Samyuktāgama*, also means that the *dharmadhātu* can be understood as the true nature of emptiness (*śūnyatā*) of all phenomena as illustrated in the *Prajñāpāramitā* and in the writings of Nāgārjuna. The relationship between *sattvadhātu* and *dharmadhātu* is therefore one that closely resembles, in Mahāyāna Buddhism in general, that between phenomena and emptiness. It also resembles the notion of the Two Truths in the Madhyamaka tradition, the relationship between mind (*citta*) and no-mind (*acitta*) in the *Prajñāpāramitā*, and the distinction found in the Yogācāra tradition between imagined (*parikalpita*) and dependent natures (*paratantra*), on the one hand, and the perfected nature (*pariṇiṣpanna*), on the other.

Symbolically, the *dharmadhātu* is the ground or foundation of all sorts of phenomena that are also of the same nature as itself. The two aspects are never completely different or separate, as a celebrated passage in the *Heart Sūtra* notes:

Form is empty, emptiness is form;
form is not other than emptiness, emptiness is not other than form.

²²⁴ Quotation from Nancy McCagney (1997), p. 39. The original Sanskrit, following P.L. Vaidya's critical edition (pp. 32-33), reads:

advayalakṣaṇaṃ punar mahāmate katama? Yaduta cchāyātapavad dīrghahrasvakṛṣṇaśuklavan mahāmate dvayaprabhāvitā na pṛthakpṛthak / evaṃ saṃsāranirvāṇavan mahāmate sarvadharmā advayāḥ / na yatra mahāmate nirvāṇaṃ tatra saṃsāraḥ / na ca yatrā saṃsāras tatra nirvāṇaṃ, vilakṣaṇahetusadbhāvāt / tenocyate 'dvyavaḥ saṃsāraparinirvāṇavat sarvadharmā iti / tasmāt tarhi mahāmate śūnyatānutpādādāvayaniḥsvabhāvalakṣaṇe yogaḥ karaṇīyah // (Cf. D.T. Suzuki, pp. 67-8)

In this regard, the “water and wave” analogy employed in some of the *tathāgatagarbha* texts is also reflective of this teaching about form and emptiness. In the *Laṅkāvatāra*, for example, the ocean of water is symbolically representative:

Then Mahāmati said: Teach me, Blessed One, concerning ... the Dharmakāya which is praised by the Tathāgatas and which is the realm of the Ālayavijñāna which resembles the ocean with its waves.

Then the Blessed One again speaking to Mahāmati the Bodhisattva-Mahasattva said this: ... the waves of the evolving Vijñānas are stirred on the Ālayavijñāna which resembles the waters of a flood....As the Vijñānas thus go on functioning [without being conscious of their own doings], so the Yogins while entering upon a state of tranquillisation (*samāpatti*) are not aware of the workings of the subtle habit-energy [or memory] within themselves; for they think that they would enter upon a state of tranquillisation by extinguishing the Vijñānas. But [in fact] they are in this state without extinguishing the Vijñānas which still subsist because the seeds of habit-energy have not been extinguished; and [what they imagine to be] an extinction is really the non-functioning of the external world to which they are no more attached....

At that time the Blessed One recited the following verses:

99. Like waves that rise on the ocean stirred by the wind, dancing and without interruption,

100. The Ālaya-ocean in a similar manner is constantly stirred by the winds of objectivity, and is seen dancing about with the Vijñānas which are the waves of multiplicity. ...

105. As there are no distinction between the ocean and its waves, so in the Citta there is no evolution of the Vijñānas.

108. There are no such varieties of colour in the waves; it is for the sake of the simple-minded that the Citta is said to be evolving as regards form.

109. There is no such evolving in the Citta itself, which is beyond comprehension. Where there is comprehension there is that which comprehends as in the case of waves [and ocean]. ...

111. The ocean is manifestly seen dancing in the state of waveness; how is it that the evolving of the Ālaya is not recognized by the intellect even as the ocean is?

112. That the Ālaya is compared to the ocean is [only] for the sake of the discriminating intellect of the ignorant; the likeness of the waves in motion is [only] brought out by way of illustration.²²⁵

This text emphasizes that the analogy only illustrates the relationship between the *dharmakāya*, the *ālayavijñāna*, and its sevenfold *vijñānas* on the conventional level (for the sake of simplicity). What it illustrates is that when the mind is calm, it can perceive things as they really are. However, the defiled mind is always agitated by its attachments and cravings, and therefore the surface of the water is always disturbed, distorting the reflected images. The nature of water itself is likened to the *tathāgatagarbha*, and the state of the agitated water is compared to the storehouse-consciousness (*ālayavijñāna*) along with its sevenfold transforming consciousness (*vastuprativikalpa-vijñāna*). The state of the *ālayavijñāna*, however, is at one with the *dharmakāya*, and the two can never be separated; the connecting principle between the two is the *tathāgatagarbha*. As a result, the way to achieve the state of *dharmakāya* is not by eliminating or extinguishing the *ālayavijñāna*, as emphasized in the passage. Similarly, the *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra* also draws the distinction between the original purity of the mind and the adventitious defilements concealing it, using the analogy of water:

When water, after having been stirred up, settles, the regaining of its transparency is not due to something other than the removal of dirt. The manner in which the mind is purified is similar. It is to be understood that the mind is originally luminous (*prakṛtiprabhāsvaraṃ*) at all times, but blemished by

²²⁵ Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki, trans. *The Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*, pp. 39-43. Words in the square brackets are Suzuki's.

adventitious faults. It is not to be thought that apart from this mind of *dharmatā* there is any other mind that is originally luminous.²²⁶

The mind of *dharmatā*, as is emphasized in the *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra*, is originally luminous. This original purity is the domain of perfect enlightenment (*jñānagocara*), where all is realized to be in agreement and nondual. Duality is only a product arising from the imagination of the defiled mind, and it is only in the domain of consciousness (*viññānagocara*) that attachment becomes manifest. The key to the realization of the *dharmadhātu* plainly lies in transcending the conceptual mind, and abiding in the natural state of nonconceptuality.

However, this does not preclude the idea that when the mind is in a state of delusion, it still has the potential to exhibit such luminosity, just as a turbulent ocean surface can be calmed naturally into a peaceful state. Such a natural and peaceful state is not an “entity” (*bhāva*) itself; it is simply a state, as the Mādhyamikas would firmly uphold, which is empty like any other phenomenon. However, it is also not something that is completely nonexistent, like the son of a barren woman. It is a state that is inconceivable to the dualistic mind. It is therefore an error, using our conceptual mind, to accept this *dharmadhātu* as an ultimately and truly existing substratum out of which all phenomena arise.

²²⁶ Translating following the citation in John Keenan, “Original Purity and the Focus of Early Yogācāra,” p. 8. Cf. Sylvain Lévi, ed., *Mahāyāna-sūtrālamkāra, Exposé de la Doctrine du Grand véhicule* (Paris, 1907), p. 88: *yathāiva toyē lulite prasādite na jāyate sā punar acchatānyataḥ / malāpakarṣas tu sa tatra kevalaḥ svacittaśuddhau vidhir eṣa eva hi / mataṃ ca cittam prakṛtiprabhāsvaraṃ sadā tadāgantukadoṣadūṣitam / na dharmatācittam rte 'nyacetasaḥ prabhāsvaratvaṃ prakṛtau vidhīyate //*

K.N. Jayatilleke states that “[d]espite the qualitative similarity between the means of knowledge in the Middle and Late Upaniṣads and Buddhism, it is necessary to note that the latter gives a different orientation to and evaluation of this means of knowledge.

... In the Upaniṣads one’s knowledge and vision is not, in the final analysis, due to one’s efforts but to the grace or intervention of Ātman or God.... The emergence of this knowledge is conceived as something inexplicable and mysterious.”²²⁷ He then cites a passage from the *Aṅguttara-nikāya* in his own translation:

It is *in the nature of things* (dhammatā) that a person in the state of (meditative) concentration knows and sees what really is. A person who knows and sees what really is, does not need to make an effort of will to feel disinterested and renounce. ... One who has felt disinterested and has renounced does not need an effort of will to realize the knowledge and insight of emancipation (vimutti-nāṇadassanaṃ).²²⁸

What Jayatilleke emphasizes is that *dhammatā* (or the Sanskrit equivalent *dharmatā*) is not to be perceived as a supernatural source that creates the myriad things in the cosmos. In other words, it is neither the “first cause” nor the sole origin of all things. As Kalupahana also stresses in his study of the Buddhist notion of causality, “... *dharmatā* (P. *dhammatā*) refers to the causal connection between two *dharmas* rather than an underlying substratum of *dharmas*.”²²⁹ This principle of reality can be realized in the state of meditative concentration when the mind does not “make an effort of will,” that is, when it is in its natural state of being nonconceptual. Although the term

²²⁷ K.N. Jayatilleke, *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*, p. 420

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 420-1.

²²⁹ David J. Kalupahana, *Causality: The Central Philosophy of Buddhism*, p. 75.

“nonconceptualization” is not mentioned in the *AAN*, it is nevertheless a message that is implicit in the text.

It is tempting to interpret the idea of *ekadhātu* or the *dharmadhātu* as a permanently existing entity. Such an interpretation is indeed what Critical Buddhism in Japan aims to do, naming this the position of “*dhātu-vāda*.” However, throughout this thesis it is maintained that, in ultimate truth, the *dharmadhātu* is not a truly existing substratum, just as “emptiness” should not be interpreted as the substratum out of which all phenomena arise. Before we go on to examine the relationship between the *AAN* and other *tathāgatagarbha* texts, it is worthwhile to examine the notion of “no increase and no decrease” from the perspective of Buddhist meditative practice.

The realization of “no increase and no decrease”

The *Heart Sūtra* (*Prajñāpāramitā-hṛdaya*) contains a well-known passage that says:

Therefore, Śāriputra, all phenomena are empty, without characteristic, unborn, unceased, not defiled, not pure, without decrease, without increase.²³⁰

Eight Indian commentaries, composed between the eighth and eleventh centuries, are preserved in Tibetan translations.²³¹ What distinguishes these Indian commentaries from the hundreds of others composed in China, Japan, and Vietnam, etc., is that the

²³⁰ According to Conze’s critical edition: *evam Śāriputra sarvadharmāḥ śūnyatālakṣaṇā anutpannā aniruddhā amalā avimalā anūnā aparipūrṇāḥ* /

The term *śūnyatālakṣaṇā* can be read in two ways: 1) as “the marks (*lakṣaṇa*) of emptiness (*śūnyatā*),” which is the way adopted by Xuanzang and Edward Conze; and 2) as “emptiness (*śūnyatā*) and without characteristic (*alakṣaṇa*),” which is how the Indian commentaries read the term and is followed by the Tibetan tradition.

Prajñāpāramitā-hṛdaya is always interpreted in the context of the Bodhisattva path. Three of these eight commentaries, those by Kamalaśīla, Atīśa, and Śrīmahājana, undertake the task of aligning the *Prajñāpāramitā-hṛdaya* with the Fivefold Path (*pañcamārga*) structure of the Yogācāra tradition: that is to say, the Path of Accumulation (*sambhāramārga*), the Path of Preparation (*prayogamārga*), the Path of Direct Seeing (*darśanamārga*), the Path of Meditation (*bhāvanāmārga*), and the Path of No-more Learning (*asaikṣamārga*). Here we find consensus among these three commentators that the realization of “no increase and no decrease” is the characteristic of the Path of Direct Seeing. For example, Atīśa observes in his commentary that:

...The three doors of liberation are in turn included in the eight profound meanings. The emptiness of intrinsic entity of phenomena is the door of liberation emptiness. *Emptiness and without defining characteristic* explain [that phenomena] lack a specific entity and a general entity [respectively]. Because all meanings of emptiness are included in those two perspectives, [the classification of emptiness and without characteristic under the door emptiness] is explained. Signlessness is the lack of causes, and causes are posited as causes in terms of effects. *Unproduced, unceased, stainless, not stainless* [are classified under the door of liberation signlessness] because they include the cause and effect of the thoroughly afflicted and the cause and effect of the completely pure, respectively. Regarding wishlessness, there are two effects that are wished for: the wish to be separated from faults and the wish to be endowed with good qualities. Freedom from these two [wishes] [indicated in the sutra by *undiminished, unfilled*] is wishlessness. Therefore, the nature of the three doors of liberation is determined to be only the eight negations of the eight objects of negation.²³²

²³¹ English translations of all eight commentaries can be found in Donald S. Lopez, Jr., *Elaborations on Emptiness: Uses of the Heart Sūtra* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

²³² *Ibid.*, pp. 75-6.

Here, the eight negations cited in the passage of the *Prajñāpāramitā-hṛdaya* quoted above are discussed in relation to the Three Doors of Liberation (*trivimokṣamukha*). Further readings in Atīśa’s commentary reveal that “no increase and no decrease” is not only equated with the door of wishlessness liberation (*apraṇihitavimokṣamukha*), but also with the Path of Direct Seeing, as the commentary explains the teaching in the *Heart Sūtra* that “in emptiness there is no form, no feeling, ... no attainment” should indicate that “the fruition of the path of vision is the generation of such a consciousness that perceives the emptiness to which it has become accustomed through these eight aspects”²³³ of emptiness and without defining characteristics (*śūnyatālakṣaṇa*), unproduced and unceased (*anutpannā-aniruddhā*), stainless and not stainless (*amalā-avimalā*), and non-decreasing and non-increasing (*anūnā-aparipūrṇā*). Donald S. Lopez, Jr., in *The Heart Sūtra Explained: Indian and Tibetan Commentaries*, also explains the structure of the *Heart Sūtra* in connection with the structure of the fivefold path, where it can be conveniently seen that the “eight aspects” of negation are listed in all three commentaries of Kamalaśīla, Atīśa, and Śrīmahājāna under “The Path of Seeing.”²³⁴

In Yogācāra literature, the first stage of the Bodhisattva path is defined as entering into the Path of Direct Seeing, and the Path of Meditation consists of the second to the tenth stages of Bodhisattvahood.²³⁵ In other words, the initial realization of “no increase

²³³ Ibid., p.76.

²³⁴ Donald S. Lopez, Jr., *The Heart Sūtra Explained: Indian and Tibetan Commentaries*, pp. 129-136.

²³⁵ In Vasubandhu’s *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkārahāṣya*, for example, it is stated that: “From here onwards is the stage of the path of direct seeing (*darśanamārgāvasthā*). It is free from perception of duality because it is liberated from the perceptions of subject and object. It is nonconceptual (*nirvikalpaṃ*) because it is free from the conceptualization of subject and object. ... This is the [bodhisattva’s] fundamental transformation

and no decrease” is aligned with the first stage of Bodhisattvahood. This link is not simply a pedagogical tool that those Indian commentators arbitrarily conceived in order to interpret the *Prajñāpāramitā-hṛdaya* within the context of the Fivefold Path; we can actually find a similar discussion in at least two other texts. One of them is the *Foxing lun (FXL)* we have discussed above. In the closing section of the *FXL*, it is stated:

Therefore those who have attained freedom from the two extremes of
“increase” and “decrease” are the first-stage Bodhisattvas.²³⁶

The text then goes on to discuss the various attainments in the subsequent stages of Bodhisattvahood. On the basis of the discussions above, it is reasonable to understand the *AAN* passage that the “Tathāgata’s initial attainment of the arousal of the aspiration [to enlightenment]”²³⁷ (at least from the perspective of classical Yogācāra) refers to the attainment of a first stage of the Bodhisattva path. To describe such a state of attainment using other terminology of the Yogācāra tradition, it is also the entering into the perfectly-accomplished nature (*pariniṣpanna-svabhāva*). From a different perspective, it is the initial attainment of the “transformation of basis” (*āśrayaparivṛtti*), which according to the *Dharmadharmatāvibhaṅga* is abandonment of *dharmas* and entering into *dharmatā*. This state is also the realization of Thusness (*tathatā*), the entering into nonconceptuality (*avikalpa*), the “direct seeing” into the *dharmadhātu* which is free of subject-object duality.

(*āśrayaparāvṛtti*), accepted as the first bodhisattva stage (*bhūmi*). It takes measureless aeons for it to become perfectly pure. (Makransky, p. 78; Cf. Lévi, *op. cit.*, pp. 93-94.)

²³⁶ 故得遠離增減二邊為始行菩薩。(T1610, 812c)

²³⁷ 如來所證初發心。(T668, 466b)

From this perspective, we can understand the *AAN* in a new light. Philosophically speaking, we can say that it is because the *dharmadhātu* or reality is non-dual in nature; therefore the attainment of *parinirvāṇa* should not be seen as a decrease in the *sattvadhātu* and an increase in the *nirvāṇadhātu*, and therefore we have a full identification of the *sattvadhātu* and the *nirvāṇadhātu*, and hence of *samsāra* and *nirvāṇa*. However, from the perspective of the stages of meditative attainment, the understanding is quite the opposite. The practitioners begin the training on the Path of Accumulation, where they accumulate both wisdom and karmic merits, and, most importantly, develop the correct understanding of the Mahāyāna teachings. Then, on the Path of Preparation, they follow a fourfold process, known as the “transformation of basis,” through which the distinctions of “subject” and “object” resulting from conceptual construction are eliminated. Successful completion of this process leads one into the Path of Direct Seeing, where practitioners abide in nonconceptual wisdom thus attained, and dwell in the nondual realm of the *dharmadhātu* which they begin to experience. The subsequent practices on the Path of Meditation would involve the strengthening of the nonconceptual wisdom through the elimination of various types of obscurations that conceal the perfect realization of the *dharmadhātu*. Such a process of elimination of obscurations culminates on the Path of No-more Learning when the state of perfect enlightenment is attained. In other words, it is through the realization of the non-conceptual wisdom that one naturally does not conceive anymore of dualistic notions such as “increase and decrease.” From this wisdom of nonconceptuality the nondual nature of the *dharmadhātu* is realized. It is quite different from the philosophical standpoint of understanding the notion of “no

increase and no decrease” as a concept about reality that results from the theory that reality is nondual.

Chapter Six: The *AAN* and the *Tathāgatagarbhasūtra*

Having examined the structure and the main themes of the *AAN*, and especially the significance of its teaching of “no increase and no decrease” in Mahāyāna Buddhism, we will examine the relationship of the *AAN* to other *tathāgatagarbha* texts.

Modern scholars are unanimous in dating the *Tathāgatagarbhasūtra* (*TGS*) as the earliest text on the *tathāgatagarbha* theory. Michael Zimmermann, for example, entitled his study of the *TGS* “The Earliest Exposition of the Buddha-Nature Teaching in India.” The two extant Chinese translations, produced under the direction of Buddhahadra in 420 C.E. and Amoghavajra in mid-eighth century C.E., are entitled *Da fangdeng rulaizang jing* (大方等如來藏經) and *Da fanguang rulaizang jing* (大方廣如來藏經), respectively, the latter being about one-third longer than the former. There is also a Tibetan translation, entitled *'Phags pa de bshin gshegs pa'i snying po shes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo*, made by Śākyaprabha and Ye shes sde in the late eighth century. The two Chinese translations were obviously based on different Sanskrit recensions. Both translated titles can be rendered into Sanskrit as *Mahāvaiṣṭya-tathāgatagarbha-sūtra* in the case of the Chinese translations,²³⁸ and as *Ārya-tathāgatagarbha-nāma-mahāyāna-sūtra* in the case of the Tibetan translation. If we accept the explanation given in the *Bukkyō jiten* (*Dictionary of Buddhism*), edited by Ui Hakuju, “mahāvaiṣṭya” is

²³⁸ Both *da fangdeng* and *da fanguang* can be accepted as the Chinese translations of *mahāvaiṣṭya*.

synonymous with “*mahāyāna*,”²³⁹ so these titles are all very similar in meaning. According to Zimmerman, the Tibetan version is based on the same recension that Amoghavajra’s version is based on.²⁴⁰

The differences between the two recensions are summarized in Zimmermann’s study.²⁴¹ Although Zimmerman does not comment on it in his work, it is worth noting that “*dharmakāya*” appears only in the Amoghavajra’s version but not in Buddhahadra’s translation. The recension that Amoghavajra based his translation on is therefore presumed to be later than the one Buddhahadra used for his translation. Is it then possible that this “later recension” of the *TGS* was composed after the *AAN* and the *SMD*, both of which delineate the close relationship between the *dharmakāya* and the *tathāgatagarbha*? According to Takasaki this is not so. He reasons that both recensions of the *TGS* appeared before the *AAN* and the *SMD*, as he found the *Prajñāpāramitā* (translated into Chinese in 291 C.E.) contains a discussion of the *dharmakāya*. Consequently the idea itself must predate the compilation of even the earliest recension of the *TGS*.²⁴² This would mean that the two recensions of the *TGS* were compiled within the same period. Zimmermann drew a similar conclusion in stating that:

... I suppose that we can assume a period of at least fifty to one hundred years between the first appearance of *TGS*² [i.e., the later recension] and the final Chinese translation of the *Ratnagotravibhāga(vyākhyā)*. This, however, would place the *terminus ante quem* of *TGS*² more or less within the same period as *TGS*¹.²⁴³

²³⁹ Ui Hakuju, *Bukkyō jiten* (Tokyo: Daitō Shuppansha, 1974), pp. 948-9.

²⁴⁰ Michael Zimmermann, *A Buddha Within*, p. 16.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 16-24.

²⁴² Takasaki Jikidō, *Nyoraizō shisō no keisei*, p. 390.

²⁴³ Michael Zimmermann, *A Buddha Within*, p. 24.

The “same period” that the two recensions were compiled, according to Takasaki Jikidō and Mochizuki Shinkō, is, at the latest, mid-third century C.E.

It should be noted that although this dating tells us when the texts were originally compiled in a written format, it does not tell us much about the history of the oral transmission of this teaching. It also gives no clue as to how the oral transmission is related to that of the *AAN*, the *SMD*, and other *tathāgatagarbha* texts. While the *TGS* is likely to be the first *sūtra* that introduced the term “*tathāgatagarbha*,” the idea that all beings have within them the enlightened qualities of the Buddhas only concealed by the adventitious defilements might well have existed long before the third century.

As studies on the structure and the content of the *TGS* have been made by a number of scholars,²⁴⁴ I do not intend to produce a detailed study in this regard. What I propose to examine is an approach to the understanding of the similes in the *TGS*. The main body of the text makes use of nine similes to demonstrate the idea of the innate purity of the mind which is essentially unconnected (*asambaddha*) to the adventitious defilements. These similes are: 1) the Buddha inside a weathered lotus flower; 2) honey surrounded by bees; 3) kernels of grains covered by husks; 4) gold buried by impurities; 5) treasures under the ground; 6) the pit of a mango; 7) an image of the Buddha wrapped in a tattered garment; 8) the *cakravartin* inside the womb of a poor woman; and 9) a precious statue in an earthen mould. Modern scholars have explained the symbolic

²⁴⁴ See, for example, Michael Zimmermann’s *A Buddha Within*; Takasaki Jikidō’s *Nyoraizō shisō no keisei*; William Grosnick’s “The *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra*”; Brian Brown’s *The Buddha Nature*.

meaning of these similes in relation to their understanding of the *tathāgatagarbha* theory. These similes are all explained as portraying a *philosophy* of the meaning of the *tathāgatagarbha* through different perspectives and examples. However the explanation offered in the *RGV* emphasizes a soteriological reading of these nine similes, in a way that connects the defilements represented by each of the similes with the obstructions of various stages of practitioners from the state of ordinary beings to those in the Pure Stage (*śuddhabhūmi*) of Bodhisattvas. Quoting from Takasaki's translation of the *RGV*:

What are the 9 Defilements? They are, namely: 1) the Defilement characterized as the dormant state of Desire (*rāgānuśayalakṣaṇa-kleśa*); 2) the Defilement characterized as the dormant state of Hatred (*dveṣānuśayalakṣaṇa-k.*); 3) the Defilement characterized as the dormant state of Ignorance (*mohānuśayalakṣaṇa-k.*); 4) the Defilement characterized as the intense outburst of Desire, Hatred and Ignorance (*tīvrrarāgadveṣamohaparyava-sthānalakṣaṇa-k.*); 5) the Defilement contained in the Dwelling Place of Ignorance (*avidyāvāsabhūmisamgrhīta-k.*); 6) the Defilement to be extirpated by means of Perception (*darśanaprahātavya-k.*); 7) the Defilement to be extirpated by means of Practice (*bhāvanāprahātavya-k.*); 8) the Defilement remaining in the impure Stage [of a Bodhisattva] (*aśuddhabhūmigata-k.*); & 9) the Defilement remaining in the pure Stage [of a Bodhisattva] (*śuddhabhūmigata-k.*).²⁴⁵

The first four defilements, as the *RGV* explains, refer to the defilement of ordinary sentient beings. The fifth one refers to the defilement of the Arhats; the sixth and seventh defilements are those of the practitioners on the Path of Direct Seeing (*darśana mārga*) and those who enter the Path of Meditation (*bhāvanā mārga*) respectively. The final two are the defilements of the Bodhisattvas on the Impure Stage (i.e., those on the second to

²⁴⁵ Takasaki Jikidō, *A Study on the Ratnagoṭravibhāga*, p. 278. The cited passage is a comment on verses 1.130 and 1.131 of the *Ratnagoṭravibhāga*.

the seventh stage) and the Pure Stage (i.e., those on the eighth to tenth stage) respectively. In other words, the nine similes are explained in the *RGV* as covering the entire range of defilements of the Fivefold Path in the Yogācāra framework. The *RGV* concludes this explanation with verse 1.133:

The impurity [retained] in the ordinary beings,
The Arhats, the individuals in training [on the Path],
And the Bodhisattvas are [explained], respectively,
By these four, one, two and two kinds of pollution.²⁴⁶

We should take into consideration the famous verse 1.47 in the *RGV* on the different states (*avasthāprabheda*) of beings:

Impure, [partly] pure and [partly] impure,
And perfectly pure – these are said of
The Ordinary beings, the Bodhisattvas,
And the Tathāgata, respectively.²⁴⁷

The various stages of practitioners mentioned in the explanation of the nine similes are clearly those beings who are “impure” and “partly pure, partly impure,” but not those who are perfectly pure since the Buddhas would be free from all defilements. It therefore makes sense that the nine similes are discussed under the section on the “Defiled Thusness” (*samalā tathatā*). The *RGV* makes it clear that the first two states of beings, viz. the states of the Bodhisattvas and ordinary sentient beings, are explained through the nine similes of the defilements covering the *tathāgatagarbha*, while the third characteristic is explained through the ten topics concerning the *tathāgatagarbha*. The nine similes, of course, are a unique feature of the *TGS*. By using the nine examples of

²⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 281. Original Sanskrit: *bālānām arhatām ebhiḥ śaikṣāṇām dhīmatām kramāt / malaiś caturbhir ekena dvābhyām dvābhyām aśuddhatā* // (E.H. Johnston edition, p. 68)

²⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 230-231. Original Sanskrit: *aśuddho 'suddha-śuddho 'tha suviśuddho yathā-kramam / sattva-dhātur iti prokto bodhisattvas tathāgataḥ* // (E.H. Johnston edition, p. 40)

the *TGS* to explain the defiled and partly-pure-partly-defiled states of the *tathāgatagarbha* of ordinary sentient beings and Bodhisattvas, the *RGV* makes a connection between the two texts. According to the *AAN*:

Furthermore, Śāriputra, as I explained earlier, there are three aspects of the *sattvadhātu*, which are all *tathatā* and are not differentiated or distinct [from one another]. What are the three *dharmas*? First, the *tathāgatagarbha* which, since the beginningless past, is essentially connected with the pure *dharmas* (*śubhadharma*); second, the *tathāgatagarbha* which, since the beginningless past, is essentially unconnected from “the impure *dharmas* of the covering of defilements” (*kleśakośatā*); third, the *tathāgatagarbha* whose existence as the *dharmatā* is the same and eternal till the ultimate limit (*aparāntakoṭisama-dhruvadharmatā-saṃvidyamānatā*).²⁴⁸

The *RGV* connects this passage with the nine similes of the *TGS*:

Thus, with reference to the existence (*saṃvidyamānatā*) of the Essential Nature (*dharmatā*), as eternal as the ultimate limit (*aparāntakoṭi-sama*) [of the world], we have hitherto explained the characteristics of the Matrix of the Tathāgata from 10 points of view. And hereafter, with reference to the fact that the covering of defilements is essentially unconnected (*asambaddha*) [with the Innate Mind] although associated with (*sāṃnidhya*) it since the beginningless time, and the pure Essential Nature, likewise associating since the beginningless time, is essentially connecting with it [as being its own nature], it should be understood, by 9 illustrations based upon the Scripture, that the Matrix of the Tathāgata is concealed by the limitless coverings of defilements.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁸ 復次舍利弗，如我上說，眾生界中亦三種法，皆真實如不異不差。何謂三法？一者如來藏本際相應體及清淨法；二者如來藏本際不相應體及煩惱纏不清淨法；三者如來藏未來際平等恒及有法 (T 668, 467b). The original Sanskrit term is rendered from the *Ratnagotravibhāga* by Takasaki Jikidō (ibid., p. 39.)

²⁴⁹ Takasaki Jikidō, *A Study on the Ratnagotravibhāga*, p. 268. The Sanskrit terms in parentheses are included here from Takasaki’s footnotes on the same page. This passage comments on verse 1.95 of the *Ratnagotravibhāga*.

What the two texts have in common is clear here: the first two aspects of the *tathāgatagarbha* discussed in the *AAN* (i.e., the aspect that is connected with the pure essence (*śubhadharmatā*) and the aspect which is essentially unconnected with the covering of defilements) are explained in the *RGV* by way of the nine similes of the *TGS*. It is also said that the third aspect of the *tathāgatagarbha*, i.e., whose existence as the *dharmatā* is the same and eternal till the ultimate limit (*aparāntakoṭi*), should be understood through the “ten topics concerning the *tathāgatagarbha*” explained in the *RGV*.²⁵⁰

There are other passages in the *TGS* that echo the *AAN*. For example, in Amoghavajra’s version of the *TGS*, it is stated:

If ignorance and defilements can be purified, such a *sattvadhātu* is named the essence of the accumulation of great wisdom, and those sentient beings are named “the accumulation of great wisdom.”²⁵¹

This passage is in essence the same as the *AAN* teaching that “the *sattvadhātu* is precisely the *dharmakāya*, and the *dharmakāya* is precisely the *sattvadhātu*,” that the two are not separable, but are “of the same meaning with different designations.” The similarity of the two passages is striking, especially if we consider the “*dharmakāya*” as meaning the “embodiment of all the teachings of the Buddha,” which essentially carries the same meaning as “the essence of the accumulation of great wisdom.”

²⁵⁰ See *Ratnagoṭravibhāga*, v. 1.95; the *RGV-vyākhyā* further says: “Thus with reference to the existence [*saṃvidyamānatā*] of the Essential Nature [*dharmatā*], as eternal as the ultimate limit (of the world), we have hitherto explained the characteristics of the Matrix of the Tathāgata [*tathāgatagarbha*] from 10 points of view.” (Takasaki, *A Study on the Ratnagoṭravibhāga*, p. 268)

²⁵¹若能淨除無明煩惱是有情界，是則名為大智聚體，彼之有情名大智聚。(T667, 463a) The corresponding passage in Buddhahadra’s version reads: 彼如來藏清涼無熱，大智慧聚妙寂泥洹，名為如來應供等正覺。(T666, 458b).

Modern scholars, with the exception of Takasaki Jikidō and Diana M. Paul, have overlooked the connection between the *AAN* and the *TGS*.²⁵² It is indeed Takasaki's study and the English translation of the *RGV* that led me to investigate the connection between the two texts in greater detail. On the other hand, Diana M. Paul also lists the similarities between the *AAN* and the *TGS*:

- 1) The common man is not aware of the Tathāgatagarbha.
- 2) The association of Bodhisattva practice with the teaching of the Tathāgatagarbha.
- 3) The association of Tathāgatagarbha with living beings.
- 4) Tathāgatagarbha embodies the nature and wisdom of the Buddha.
- 5) Only one reference to ignorance (*avidyā*).
- 6) No mention of Dharma-Nature (*dharmadhātu*) per se.
- 7) No discussion of the One vehicle (*Ekayāna*).²⁵³

Some of the points, such as number 1, are to be expected; however, number 6 appears to be incorrect, as the notion of *dharmadhātu* and indeed the term itself occur in both the *AAN* and the *TGS*. In addition, Paul fails to notice that the *RGV* not only quotes the *AAN*, but actually employs the *TGS* to explain one of the main passages in the *AAN*.

The text itself is unique in the way that it relies chiefly on symbolic similes to present the meaning of the *tathāgatagarbha*. In some ways the *Lotus Sūtra* (*Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*) takes a further step by presenting its One Vehicle and

²⁵² Michael Zimmermann's detailed study of the *TGS*, for example, only mentions the *AAN* briefly in a footnote (see his *A Buddha Within*, p. 128).

²⁵³ See Diana Mary Paul, *The Buddhist Feminine Ideal*, p. 79. Paul goes on to create a second list of characteristics that are found in the *TGS* but not in the *AAN*.

tathāgatagarbha teachings not through similes but through lively stories. Zimmermann in a recent article draws our attention to the point that the *Lotus Sūtra* and the *Tathāgatopattisambhavanirdeśa* of the *Avataṃsakasūtra* can indeed be seen as the predecessors of the *TGS*. The *Lotus Sūtra*, in particular, can be seen to play a direct and influential role in the composition of the *TGS*.²⁵⁴ This view, of course, is based on the theory of the continual linear development of Buddhist texts; we cannot simply deny the possibility that there were oral versions of the text, even though we have no knowledge of what they were like. Nevertheless, Zimmermann's study is inspiring in commenting on the striking similarities in terms of structure and composition between the *Lotus Sūtra* and the *TGS*. If the *Lotus Sūtra* was indeed *compiled* earlier than the *TGS* and the *AAN*, what it reveals is that these texts were based on a source of teachings, probably in an oral form, which spread them more widely than the individual *sūtras* in their written form. While the *Lotus Sūtra* is famous for its One Vehicle teaching, this idea does not appear in the *TGS* (whose composition is believed to be based on the *Lotus Sūtra*) but appears in the *AAN* where it receives its own form of delineation that is quite different from the *Lotus*. Since the compilation of the *AAN* is believed to have occurred in the same period when the two recensions of the *TGS* were compiled, it seems the most likely explanation for this is to be found in the richness of the oral tradition, which deserves to be studied further, although it is very difficult to undertake research in a past oral tradition.

²⁵⁴ Cf. Michael Zimmermann, "The *Tathāgatagarbhasūtra*: Its Basic Structure and Relation to the *Lotus Sūtra*." In this article, Zimmermann comments that "It is obvious that the authors of the *sūtras* somehow felt the necessity to weave a more interlocked tied between the two main units: a core story, probably taken from a common pool of more or less mahāyānized narrations circulating among preachers and story-tellers, and a second part serving as the authorization of the *sūtra* by locating it into the historic context created by the first unit." (p. 161)

In addition to the nine similes, the names of the main Bodhisattvas in the text are also rich in their symbolic meanings. For example, the text mentions that in the distant past there was a Bodhisattva Anantaraśmi (“Infinite Light”) who requested the Buddha Sadāpramuktaraśmi (“the King constantly emitting lights”) to expound this *TGS* teaching to his retinue. It is also said that the Buddha Sadāpramuktaraśmi in his last rebirth as a Bodhisattva was constantly emitting light even while he was still in his mother’s womb. This story may be seen as connecting the *tathāgatagarbha* teaching with the idea of “light,” especially the innate purity of the mind which is said to be always luminous. The natural luminosity of the mind (*cittaprakṛtiprabhāsvara*), at least in the Yogācāra tradition and later Tibetan traditions, is always seen from a soteriological perspective. The realization of such luminosity is precisely the realization of the *tathāgatagarbha*, and is itself also the correct realization of *śūnyatā*.

To conclude, the importance of the *RGV* incorporating quotations from the *AAN* gives us not only solid proof that this text was compiled (or composed) in India, but, more importantly, it also shows us how the Yogācāra commentators in India understood the relationship between various *tathāgatagarbha* texts (as in our demonstration of the possible relationship between the *AAN* and the *TGS*), which is easily overlooked. Such an examination of the relationships between these *tathāgatagarbha* texts works differently from the premise in modern scholarship that these texts have evolved and developed gradually one by one. To the contrary, the analyses are grounded in the assumption that these texts were circulating in a common pool of teachings related to the

doctrine of the *tathāgatagarbha*. There is also the possibility that the compiled texts mutually influenced one another in the process of revision and expansion when these texts were memorized; the result is a common pool of texts which influenced each other as they developed, rather than a linear development. These teachings are not separable but are related, resonating and illuminating each other, and assisting in the understanding of the teachings contained in each of them.

Chapter Seven: The *AAN* and the *Śrīmālādevīsīṃhanādasūtra*

If the relationship between the *AAN* and the *TGS* is not immediately noticeable, that with the *Śrīmālādevīsīṃhanādasūtra* (*SMD*) is comparatively obvious because of their presentation of the doctrine of the *tathāgatagarbha*. Owing to the closeness of the thematic content of the two texts, Takasaki considers the two to be contemporaneous, composed around the mid-fourth century C.E. However, both Katsumata Shunkyō and Kagawa Takao place the *SMD* at a later date, sometime after the composition of the *AAN* and the *Mahābherihāraka-sūtra*.²⁵⁵ In addition, Katsumata also refers to the opinion of Kimura Taiken, who considers the *SMD* to be composed directly after the *AAN*.²⁵⁶ In the West, Alex Wayman, in the introduction to his English translation of the *SMD*, has also written convincingly stating that the text should be dated to the third century during the Īkshvāku rule in Southern India.²⁵⁷ Although these scholastic findings are not unanimous, it seems certain for all these scholars that the *SMD* does not predate the *AAN*. It seems possible that the compilation of the *SMD*, at least in its earliest form, took place in the third century as Wayman suggests, given his strong geographical and historical arguments. If that is the case, it is arguable that the *AAN* was compiled in the early third, or perhaps even the late second century.

The Sanskrit manuscript of the *SMD* was discovered only recently in Afghanistan, inside a cave where Taliban forces had sought refuge.²⁵⁸ In addition to this recent

²⁵⁵ See Katsumata Shunkyō, *Bukkyō ni okeru shinshikisetsu no kenkyū*, p. 601, and Kagawa Takao, "Nyoraizō kyōten no seiritsu ni tsuite," p. 198.

²⁵⁶ Katsumata, *op. cit.*, p. 597.

²⁵⁷ Wayman & Wayman, *The Lion's Roar of Queen Śrīmālā*, pp. 1-4.

²⁵⁸ This collection of Indian manuscripts, which contains many Buddhist texts, including the *SMD*, was acquired by a Norwegian collector, and is now published, in several volumes, as the *Manuscripts in the*

discovery, the *SMD* is extant in two Chinese translations and one Tibetan translation. The earlier Chinese version was translated by Guṇabhadra in 436 C.E., while the later one was translated in the early eighth century by Bodhiruci of the Tang dynasty. Bodhiruci's version, entitled *Shengman furen hui* (勝鬘夫人會), comprises the forty-eighth chapter of the voluminous corpus, known as the *Mahāratnakūṭasūtra*, which he edited and in which he collected forty-nine Mahāyāna texts as a single work. Of these forty-nine works, only ten had not been translated earlier into Chinese, while for the remaining thirty-nine texts Bodhiruci incorporated either older translations into the *Mahāratnakūṭa* or, if Bodhiruci and his translation team found the old translations unsatisfactory, they re-translated them. The texts that fall into the latter category of versions to be re-translated number fifteen, and Guṇabhadra's earlier translation of the *SMD*, entitled *Shengman shizihou yisheng dafangbian fangguang jing* (勝鬘獅子吼一乘大方便方廣經), is one of them. The Tibetan version, on the other hand, was translated by Jinamitra, Surendrabodhi, and Ye shes sde in the ninth century. They gave the text the Tibetan title *'Phags pa lha mo dpal phreng gi seng ge'i sgra shes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo*.

Many ideas are indeed common to both texts, but these ideas are explained more fully in the *SMD*. As has been discussed in the chapter on “the main theme and a structural analysis of the *AAN*,” the well-known distinction of the two kinds of wisdom of

Schøyen Collection by Hermes Publications. The *SMD* manuscript has been edited by Matsuda Kazunobu, in vol. 1 of the series (2001).

the *tathāgatagarbha*, as “empty” and “non-empty,” discussed in the *SMD*, has its prototypical form in the *AAN*.

Furthermore, the *SMD*, like the *Lotus Sūtra*, also expounds the concept of the “One Vehicle” (*ekayāna*), of which the teaching of the three vehicles of the *śrāvakayāna*, the *pratyekabuddhayāna*, and the *bodhisattvayāna* are provisional. The “One Vehicle” is understood to be the “Mahāyāna” in the *SMD* --- it is clear that the term “Mahāyāna” is to be understood a little differently from what is commonly referred to as the movement that began around the first century B.C.E. The “Mahāyāna” here is one that is identified as the *Buddhayāna*, which leads one to the realization of the *tathāgatagarbha*. The concept of “Mahāyāna” in the *Dasheng qixin lun (Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna)* might be influenced by the *SMD*. The ultimate meaning (*nītārtha*) of the Buddha’s teachings is said to be found only in the final One Vehicle. The *SMD* further connects the discussion of the One Vehicle with the *tathāgatagarbha* and the *nirvāṇadhātu*. The *SMD* states:

Lord, ‘incomparable rightly completed enlightenment’ is an expression for the Nirvāṇa-realm. ‘Nirvāṇa-realm’ is an expression for the Dharmakāya of the Tathāgata. The ultimate realization of the Dharmakāya is the One Vehicle. Lord, the Tathāgata is not one thing, and the Dharmakāya something else, but the Tathāgata is himself the Dharmakāya. The ultimate realization of the Dharmakāya is the ultimate of the One Vehicle. ... Lord, ... the Tathāgata-Arhat-Samyaksaṃbuddhas in the world without refuge and without a protector are the imperishable refuge, the permanent refuge, the steadfast refuge at the uttermost limit.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁹ Wayman & Wayman, *op. cit.*, pp. 92-3.

Several things are worth noting in this passage. First, it identifies the *nirvāṇadhātu* as an expression for the *dharmakāya*. Searching through the entire *AAN*, however, one nowhere finds the term “*nirvāṇadhātu*”; it only equates the *sattvadhātu* directly with the *dharmakāya*. With this identification of the *nirvāṇadhātu* with the *dharmakāya*, one can construct the relationship between the *sattvadhātu* and the *nirvāṇadhātu*. The identification of the two undoubtedly brings us closer to the almost trite formula of “*saṃsāra* is *nirvāṇa*, and *nirvāṇa* is *saṃsāra*.”

Secondly, the ultimate realization of the *dharmakāya* is said to be the One Vehicle, the *Buddhayāna*. Though it is not an exact repetition, the idea of streaming all three vehicles into one is similar to “dissolving” the three kinds of sentient beings into the one taste of the realm of nonduality. This may sound a little farfetched, but upon closer examination, the One Vehicle in the *SMD* is not discussed as merely a “vehicle” or a certain superior teaching only, but also as the “ultimate realization” of the *dharmakāya*. Such an “ultimate realization” apparently refers to a kind of enlightening experience, one that is best described, in accordance with the teachings of the Mahāyāna literature, as a nondual experience. In this way, the link between the *ekayāna* (“One Vehicle”) in the *SMD* and the nondual *ekadhātu* in the *AAN* can be established.

Thirdly, in the citation above, the Tathāgata is said to be “the imperishable refuge, the permanent refuge, the steadfast refuge at the uttermost limit.” In the *AAN*, there are also discussions of the *dharmakāya* as the “permanent refuge” and the “steadfast refuge.”

Fourthly, the *SMD* takes the *tathāgatagarbha* to be the basis of *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*, as the text states:

Lord, *saṃsāra* is based on the Tathāgatagarbha. ... But, Lord, the Tathāgatagarbha is not born, does not die, does not pass away to become reborn. The Tathāgatagarbha excludes the realm with the characteristic of the constructed. The Tathāgatagarbha is permanent, steadfast, eternal. Therefore, the Tathāgatagarbha is the support, the holder, the base of constructed [Buddha natures] that are nondiscrete, not dissociated, and knowing as liberated from the stores [of defilements]; and furthermore is the support, the holder, the base of external constructed natures that are discrete, dissociated, and knowing as not liberated.²⁶⁰

The notion of the *tathāgatagarbha* being the basis of both the conditioned and the unconditioned realms is clearly the same concept of the *ekadhātu* which encompasses both the *sattvadhātu* and the *dharmakāya*.

Fifthly, the *SMD* teaching that “the *tathāgatagarbha* is the support, the holder, and the base of the constructed”²⁶¹ is also echoed in the following passage from the *AAN*:

Śāriputra, you should know that the *tathāgatagarbha* whose existence as the *dharmatā* is the same and eternal till the ultimate limit is the root of all

²⁶⁰ Ibid., pp. 104-5.

²⁶¹ 如來藏者離有為相，如來藏常住不變，是故如來藏，是依、是持、是建立。(T353, 222b)

dharmas, endowed with all *dharmas*, replete with all *dharmas*. With regard to the worldly *dharmas*, it is not apart or separate from the reality of all *dharmas*; it supports all *dharmas* and upholds all *dharmas*. Śāriputra, on the basis of this eternal, permanent, cool, and unchanging refuge, which is non-arising and non-vanishing, because of the inconceivable pure *dharmadhātu*, I speak of the *sattva*.²⁶²

In addition, the qualities of the *dharmakāya* are described in both texts using exactly the same adjectives: “eternal” (常, *nitya*), “permanent” (恒, *dhruva*), “quiescent” (清涼, *śiva*), and “steadfast” (不變, *śāśvata*). Moreover, in the *AAN*, the qualities of the *dharmakāya* are said to be nondiscrete, inconceivable, outnumbering the sands of the Ganges, and knowing as liberated.²⁶³ This is almost the exact description of the *aśūnya-tathāgatagarbha* found in the *SMD*. In other words, as discussed earlier, the natural qualities and virtues of the *dharmakāya* can be seen to be “non-empty,” while the *dharmakāya* itself is “empty” of all defilement stores.

The striking similarities of the two texts cannot be seen as merely coincidental. It is also inappropriate simply to construe a theory of evolution or development from the *AAN* to the *SMD*, since the central teachings of the *AAN*, namely, the notion of “no increase and no decrease” and the three states of *tathāgatagarbha*, are completely absent

²⁶² 舍利弗當知，如來藏未來際平等恒及有法者，即是一切諸法根本，備一切法具一切法，於世法中不離不脫真實一切法，住持一切法，攝一切法。舍利弗，我依此不生不滅常恒清涼不變歸依、不可思議清淨法界，說名眾生。(T668, 467c)

²⁶³ 舍利弗，如我所說法身義者，過於恒沙不離不脫不斷不異、不思議佛法如來功德智慧。舍利弗、如世間燈，所有明色及觸不離不脫；又如摩尼寶珠，所有明色形相不離不脫。舍利弗，如來所說法身之義亦復如是，過於恒沙不離不脫不斷不異、不思議佛法如來功德智慧。(T668, 467a)

from the *SMD*. It is unlikely that a development of ideas in a text would fail to retain the central ideas of the root text. We are then left with the option of seeing the two texts as related doctrinally but not necessarily the idea that one develops into another. Given its emphasis on the teaching of the One Vehicle, it may be further suggested that the *SMD* is related not only to the *AAN*, but also to the *Lotus Sūtra* and the *TGS*.

There are also teachings in the *AAN* that are not found in the *SMD*. For example, the *AAN* gives a simple but clear definition of “*icchāntika*”: those beings who are attached to the dualistic view of the *dharmakāya* and the *sattvadhātu* (and hence of *nirvāṇa* and *samsāra*) are called the “*icchāntika*”. This same passage on the *icchāntika* of the *AAN* also appears in the *Wushangyi jing* (無上依經; **Anuttarāśraya-sūtra*).²⁶⁴ The *icchāntika*, however, is not discussed at all in the *SMD*.

There is no clear indication in the *AAN* whether these *icchāntikas* could attain Buddhahood in the future, or whether they contain the *tathāgatagarbha* like other beings who are not *icchāntikas*. Judging from the content of the text, the answer seems to be positive. Indeed, if the *icchāntikas* are understood to be absolutely excluded from

²⁶⁴ The only extant version of this text is Paramārtha’s Chinese translation in 557 C.E (T669). A careful examination of the content of the *Wushangyi jing* reveals that it has exactly the same structure as the *RGV*. Takasaki does not think, however, that the *RGV* is modeled after the *Wushangyi jing*, but on the contrary, he suggests that the *Wushangyi jing* appeared after the *RGV* and was composed as an imitation of the *RGV*. In Takasaki’s words, the former is “a kind of sutralization of the latter” (*A Study on the Ratnagotravibhāga*, p. 50). That the *Wushangyi jing* contains sentences that are clearly quotations from other *sūtras* in the *RGV* is another clue that makes Takasaki suspect that this text is merely an imitation of the *RGV*. The passage on the “*icchāntika*” in the *AAN* is one of those quoted passages in question. To date there is no textual support for the existence of the *Wushangyi jing* in India. The only two commentarial works which have quoted this *sūtra*, the *Foxing lun* and Vasubandhu’s commentary on the *Mahāyānasamgraha*, were both translated by Paramārtha, but the quotation from the *Wushangyi jing* in the latter work is missing from Xuanzang’s and Dharmagupta’s translations.

Buddhahood, the notions of *tathāgatagarbha* and the *icchantika* would be logically contradictory: the theory of *tathāgatagarbha* lies in the claim that all sentient beings possess the innate potential to achieve perfect Buddhahood, or, using the expression of the *TGS*, it is said that “all sentient beings possess the *tathāgatagarbha*” (*sarvasattvās tathāgatagarbhāḥ*). If this notion holds true, the idea that certain beings have absolutely no possibility of achieving perfect enlightenment cannot be accepted. On the other hand, if certain beings are indeed *agotra*, are cut off from the possibility of attaining Buddhahood, then the notion of the pervading *tathāgatagarbha* must be wrong.

Two other Mahāyāna *sūtras*, the *Aṅgulimālyasūtra* (*AMS*) and the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* (*MPN*), both being the “Mahāyāna version” of *sūtras* existing in the Pāli canon, can be considered to be closely related to the *AAN* in their presentation of the *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine. The concept of *icchantika* will be examined more fully in the chapter on the *MPN*.

Chapter Eight: The *AAN* and the *Aṅgulimālyasūtra*

Guṇabhadra translated this Mahāyāna version of the *Aṅgulimālyasūtra* (*AMS*) sometime in the mid-fourth century. A Tibetan version was also made by Śākyaprabha in the eighth century. As for the dating of this text, Takasaki is insistent that the first three *tathāgatagarbha* scriptures are, in chronological order of composition, the *TGS*, the *AAN*, and the *SMD*, and hence the composition of the *AMS* must postdate them. Kagawa, on the other hand, provides convincing arguments (focusing on the more primitive descriptions of the qualities of the *dharmakāya*), in placing the composition of the *AMS* before the composition of both the *AAN* and the *SMD*.²⁶⁵ As frequently noted in this thesis, rather than becoming entangled in various theoretic speculations about how these texts evolved and developed, or when they were composed, it is more valuable to see them as coming from a rich oral tradition. These oral teachings were *compiled*, not merely *composed*, at different periods in different regions.

The dramatic story of Aṅgulimālya in the *AMS* is well known in both Mahāyāna and pre-Mahāyāna Buddhist traditions: Aṅgulimālya an ignorant heretic who, having killed nine hundred and ninety-nine people to acquire their fingers to string as a “rosary” for his teacher, was on the point of killing his own mother to make up the number one thousand required. He was prevented from doing this by the Buddha, whom he attempted to kill instead. The Mahāyāna version is more dramatic in portraying the miraculous powers of the Buddha in evading Aṅgulimālya, who was eventually converted to Buddhism and instantaneously attained a profound insight into reality. He spoke from his

²⁶⁵ Kagawa Takao, “Nyoraizō kyōten no seiritsu ni tsuite,” p. 198.

enlightening experience, criticizing the inferior understanding of the disciples of the Buddha, such as Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana, and then began a debate with Mañjuśrī on the proper understanding of *sūnyatā*, *nirvāṇa*, *tathāgatagarbha*, and *dharmakāya*. This is a profoundly interesting debate, particularly if we study it in conjunction with the debates and distinctions between the Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka's understanding of the ultimate truth in the dGe lugs school and that of the Great Madhyamaka position of the rNying ma, the bKa' brgyud, and in the Jo nang schools of Tibetan Buddhism.²⁶⁶ The highlight of the dialogue between Aṅgulimālya and Mañjuśrī occurs when the former asks the latter for the meaning of the "emptiness of emptiness." Mañjuśrī explains that all the Buddhas are like empty space (*ākāśa*), without marks of existence, arising, and form. Similarly, the Dharma, the wisdom of liberation, the non-obstructive wisdom of the Tathāgata and the liberation are all utterly non-existent, empty and quiet, like space. Aṅgulimālya immediately replies with a harsh accusation that such a view is that of an ignorant being who mistakes illusory conceptualizations for the reality. He further criticizes this view of Mañjuśrī as a theory of nihilistic emptiness, understanding emptiness as the destruction of all phenomena, mistaking what is non-empty to be empty. On this point, Aṅgulimālya says:

It is like seeing the melting of hailstones [which are illusory when taken to be real gem stones], and [going on] recklessly to regard all other truly existing phenomena [as similarly non-existent],

²⁶⁶ This interesting comparison here came to my attention through the teaching of Master Tam Shek-wing. For discussions of the distinctions between Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka and the Great Madhyamaka, see, for example, S.K. Hookham's *The Buddha Within* and John Pettit's *The Beacon of Certainty*.

Your [understanding of emptiness] right now is just like that, recklessly generating the thoughts of nihilistic emptiness.

Having seen the empty *dharmas*, you assume that the non-empty *dharmas* are also empty [as such].

[But indeed,] there are certain *dharmas* which are empty; there are certain *dharmas* which are non-empty.

All kinds of defilements (*kleśa*) are like those hailstones,

And the destruction of all kinds of non-virtuous [*karma*] is like the melting of those hailstones.

[On the other hand, however,] the Tathāgatas always abide like the real gemstones,

The liberation of the Tathāgatas is also [truly existing] like the real gemstones.²⁶⁷

Accordingly, Aṅgulimālya accuses Mañjuśrī's theory, not knowing the true and profound meaning of *sūnyatā*, of being as small and insignificant as mosquitoes.

It has been mentioned that the delineation of the empty and non-empty aspects of the *tathāgatagarbha* in the *SMD* finds its prototype in the *AAN*. It seems, however, that the empty and non-empty distinction discussed here is even more “primitive” than that in the *AAN*. Similarly, Kagawa also finds the presentation of the four qualities of the *dharmakāya* in the *AMS* to be less polished than in other *tathāgatagarbha* texts, thereby concluding that the composition of the *AMS* must predate that of the *AAN* and the *SMD*.²⁶⁸ Nonetheless there is no doubt that the two texts share many doctrinal similarities.

²⁶⁷ 猶如見雹消 濫壞餘真實 汝今亦如是 濫起極空想 見於空法已 不空亦謂空 有異法是空 有異法不空 一切諸煩惱 譬如彼雨雹 一切不善壞 猶如雹融消 如真琉璃寶 謂如來常住 如真琉璃寶 謂是佛解脫 (T120, 527c)

²⁶⁸ Kagawa Takao, “Nyoraizō kyōten no seiritsu ni tsuite,” p. 198.

One possible doctrinal connection between the *AAN* and the *AMS* is the idea of the “one refuge” emphasized in the *AMS*. The *AAN* stresses that the inconceivable pure *dharmadhātu* is the refuge which is non-arising, non-vanishing, permanent, eternal, cool, and steadfast. It implicitly suggests that this is the “true refuge” for sentient beings. In the *AMS*, echoed also in the *SMD* and the *MPN*, the idea of “One Refuge” (*ekaśaraṇa*), instead of the three refuges in the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Saṅgha, is expounded. Although the *MPN* speaks of the “One Refuge” from the perspective of the Buddha-nature, the *AMS* is closer to the *SMD* in explaining the concept from the teaching of the One Vehicle. The two explanations, however, are not contradictory, as the teaching of the One Vehicle is precisely one that leads to the realization of the *tathāgatagarbha*. This is clear in the *SMD* although less clearly stated in the *Lotus Sūtra*. In other words, the *SMD* manifestly takes the *tathāgatagarbha* to be the basis of the One Vehicle. In Alex Wayman’s words:

That ‘embryo’ [*garbha*] potentiality is not predestined to various enlightenments; rather all sentient beings arrive at an identical enlightenment or nirvāṇa, because their ‘species’ (*gotra*) is precisely that ‘embryo of the Tathāgata.’²⁶⁹

The *buddhadhātu* or Buddha-nature, on the other hand, is simply another designation to express the teaching of the *tathāgatagarbha*. As a result, we find in the *RGV* the harmonious incorporation of both explanations of the “One Refuge,” so that one no longer perceives the seeming differences between the two explanations.

²⁶⁹ Wayman & Wayman, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

Furthermore, we also find in the *AAN*, the *AMS*, and the *SMD* the identification of the *tathāgatagarbha* as the innate purity of the mind. For example, in the *AMS* it is said that:

This innate purity of the mind is precisely the *tathāgatagarbha*, which is superior to all *dharmas*.²⁷⁰

It is further stated that the defilements come from not knowing this innate purity of the mind, the *tathāgatagarbha*.²⁷¹ We are here reminded of the *AAN* teaching that perverted views arise from not knowing the *ekadhātu*. Although the terminology and the presentation are different, there is no doubt that the teaching concerning the arising of ignorance in these two texts resonates very closely.

In addition, we also find in the *AMS* the characteristic *AAN* teaching on the identification of the *sattvadhātu* and the *ekadhātu*:

Mañjuśrī asked the Buddha, “Lord, is it because the whole *sattvadhātu* is the *ekadhātu* that all the Buddhas do not kill?” The Buddha answered, “Indeed, it is so. Killing in the world is just like committing suicide, as it is the killing of the *ātmadhātu*.”²⁷²

The text places further emphasis on the identification of the *sattvadhātu* and the *ekadhātu* with the *ātmadhātu*:

The whole *sattvadhātu* and *ātmadhātu* are indeed the *ekadhātu*.²⁷³

²⁷⁰若自性清淨意，是如來藏勝一切法。(T120, 540a)

²⁷¹不知自性心如來藏，入無量煩惱義。(T120, 540a)

²⁷²文殊師利白佛言：世尊，以一切眾生界是一界故，諸佛離殺生耶？佛言：如是，世間殺生如人自殺，殺自界故。(T120, 540c)

²⁷³一切眾生界、我界即是一界。(T120, 540c)

The *ātmadhātu*, however, is not referred to in the *AAN*, but is discussed in detail in the *MPN* and later in commentarial works such as the *RGV* and the *FXL*. The absence of the term “*ātmadhātu*” is indeed one of the arguments used by scholars who favour the idea that the *AMS* postdates the *AAN*. Whatever the case, the *AMS* can therefore be seen as a text that provides a doctrinal connection between the seemingly dissociated *AAN* and *MPN*, although the *AMS* never goes into detail in clarifying what “*ātmadhātu*” means or how it differs from the non-Buddhist notion of the *ātman* belief. However, it is evident that this notion of the *ātmadhātu* is closely related to the teaching of the “*ātmapāramitā*” in the *SMD*. The *ātmapāramitā* (the perfection of self) is presented along with the *guṇapāramitā* (the perfection of virtue), the *nityapāramitā* (the perfection of permanence), and the *śukhapāramitā* (the perfection of bliss), as descriptions of the qualities of the *dharmakāya*. Carefully distinguished from the non-Buddhist belief in the *ātman*, the *ātmapāramitā* is spoken of as the quality of the *dharmakāya* realizing and embodying the principle of reality. Like the *tathāgatagarbha*, these four qualities are said to be present fully and completely in all sentient beings, although they are concealed by the adventitious defilements. An even fuller explanation of these four qualities of the *dharmakāya* is to be found in the *MPN*.

The *AMS* is distinguished from other *tathāgatagarbha* texts by its lengthy exposition of the correct understanding of *śūnyatā*, *dharmakāya*, *nirvāṇa*, and *tathāgatagarbha*. This does not mean that such clarification cannot be found in other

tathāgatagarbha literature, but it presents the correct and incorrect views on these important concepts in the form of intense dialogues and debates. The reader is gradually led through the different levels of misunderstanding, to understand that a higher level of misunderstanding is built on a lower level of clarification, and it continues step by step until the final, ultimate view is revealed. This is rarely seen in Buddhist literature, with only a few similar examples such as the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa*, which predates the compilation of all the *tathāgatagarbha* scriptures but expounds a closely related teaching on the *tathāgatagotra*, nonduality, and so forth.

Chapter Nine: The *AAN* and the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*

Takasaki placed the compilation of the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* (*MPN*) as contemporaneous with the *SMD*, that is after the *TGS* and the *AAN*, because he found that the central teachings of the *MPN* are all found in the *SMD*, but the notion of the four *guṇapāramitās* is present in the *SMD* and the *MPN* but not in the *TGS* and the *AAN*.²⁷⁴ However, Katsumata Shunkyō dates the *MPN* after the appearance of the *SMD*.²⁷⁵ In either case, scholars are unanimous in dating the *MPN* after the compilation of the *AAN*. The much more detailed exposition of the meaning of the four qualities of the *dharmakāya*, the “One Refuge,” the Buddha-nature, the *ekadhātu*, and the *icchāntika* (concepts which are all to be found in the *AAN* and the *SMD*) might be indicative that the compilation of the *MPN* is indeed later than the compilations of the *AAN* and the *SMD*. This does not rule out the possibility that these texts, along with the *AMS*, the *TGS*, the *Lotus Sūtra* all spring from the same pool of oral teaching.

The Kharoṣṭhī fragments of a Gāndhārī version of the *MPN* are now available in the *Manuscripts in the Schøyen Collection*, an edited publication of Indian Buddhist manuscripts discovered in Afghanistan.²⁷⁶ Three other Sanskrit fragments of the text were found earlier.²⁷⁷ A complete Sanskrit version of the *MPN*, however, is not extant. The first Chinese translation of the *MPN* was completed in 417 C.E. by Buddhahadra and Faxian (法顯), followed by a longer version translated by Dharmakṣema in 421

²⁷⁴ Takasaki Jikidō, *Nyoraizō shisō no keisei*, p. 180.

²⁷⁵ Katsumata Shunkyō, *Bukkyō ni okeru Shinshikisetsu no kenkyū*, pp. 597-601.

²⁷⁶ This manuscript is edited by Mark Allon and Richard Salomon. See note 259 above.

²⁷⁷ See Takasaki Jikidō, “The *Tathāgatagarbha* Theory in the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*,” pp. 1024-1015.

C.E.²⁷⁸; the latter text was also translated into Tibetan by Wang phan shun, dGe ba'i blo gros, and rGya mtsho'i sde and is entitled *'Phags pa yongs su mya ngan las 'das pa chen po'i mdo*. The *AAN* was translated at some time between these two versions of the *MPN*. A collation of these two versions of the *MPN* was made available by Huiyan (慧嚴), Huiguan (慧觀), and Xie Lingyun (謝靈運) in the mid-fifth century.²⁷⁹ A fourth version in Chinese translation was made by Jñānabhadrā in the mid-seventh century.²⁸⁰ In addition to the translation by Wang phab shun, there is another Tibetan version, entitled *'Phags pa yongs su mya ngan las 'das pa chen po theg pa chen po'i mdo*, translated by Jinamitra, Jñānagarbha, and Devacandra in late eighth century.

The relationship between the *MPS* and the *AAN* seems to be much more remote than that between the *SMD* and the *AAN*; nevertheless, there are ideas in the *MPS* that can help us understand the *AAN*. For example, in the discussion on the four characteristics of permanent, blissful, self, and pure, it is said:

What is called 'self' is the Tathāgata. Why is this so? The [Buddha-] body (*sku*) being infinite is free from the net of doubt, and it neither acts nor grasps, so that it is said to be 'permanent.' In virtue of non-production and non-cessation (*anutpāda, anirodha*) it is said to be 'blissful' (*sukha*). In virtue of the absence of impurities it is said to be 'very pure' (*parisuddha*). In virtue of the absence of

²⁷⁸ These two Chinese translations of the *MPN*, both entitled *Da ban niepan jing* (大般涅槃經), are listed no. 7 and no. 374 in the Taishō edition respectively.

²⁷⁹ *Da ban niepan jing* (大般涅槃經), T375.

²⁸⁰ This fourth version of Chinese translation is entitled *Da ban niepan jing houfen* (大般涅槃經後分), T377.

ten marks, it is said to be ‘empty’ (*sūnya*). Consequently, the Tathāgata is permanent, blissful, self, very pure, empty and without marks.²⁸¹

In this passage, we see an innovative understanding that on account of “non-production and non-cessation,” it is said to be “blissful” (*sukha*). “Non-production and non-cessation” is certainly related to “no increase and no decrease,” and refers to the one *dharmadhātu* (*eka-dharmadhātu*) or the purified *dharmadhātu* (*dharmadhātuviśuddha*), which is nondual and nonconceptual. As the *Buddhabhūmisūtra* says:

In space, there appear the arising and ceasing of diverse forms. Yet space neither arises nor ceases. Likewise, within the purified dharma realm (*dharmadhātuviśuddha*) of the Tathāgatas, there appear the arising and ceasing of awareness, manifestation, and performance of all the activities for sentient beings. Yet the purified dharma realm has neither arising nor ceasing.²⁸²

“The purified dharma realm” (*dharmadhātuviśuddha*) refers to both *tathatā* and the Buddha’s nondual realization of it. One can extrapolate from the passage in the *Buddhabhūmisūtra* to claim that there appear the increase and decrease of diverse forms in reality, yet reality neither increases nor decreases; though increase and decrease of phenomena are posited conventionally, there are no increase and decrease in the purified and nondual domain of the Tathāgatas. So in an indirect way, the above *MPS* passage indeed points us towards an understanding of the *eka-dharmadhātu* and to the notion of “no increase and no decrease” in a positive way. That is to say, the attainment of this state of nonduality is not a cold indifference towards all phenomena, but rather a blissful

²⁸¹ Translation by D. Seyfort Ruegg from the Tibetan version (kha fol. 221 a-b), quoted in Seyfort Ruegg’s “The Notion of an ‘Immanent Absolute’ (tathāgatagarbha) as a Problem in Hermeneutics,” p. 230.

²⁸² John Makransky, *Buddhahood Embodied*, p. 93.

experience which is free from “the net of doubt.” The Tibetan version of the *MPN* also contains the sentence, *sems can thams cad la sangs rgyas kyi khams yod do*, which Takasaki renders into Sanskrit as: *asti buddhadhātuḥ sarvasattveṣu*.²⁸³ The idea that “the *buddhadhātu* is in all sentient beings (*sarvasattveṣu*)” finds its counterpart in both the *TGS* and the *AAN*.

Like the *AAN*, the *AMS* and the *SMD*, the *MPS* also explicates, albeit briefly, the Buddha-nature in terms of the notions of “empty” and “non-empty.” The *MPS* explains that,

When one sees that all is empty, failure to see the non-empty will not be called the Middle Way. When one sees all up to [the limit of] not-self, failure to see the self will not be called Middle Way. What is called the ‘Middle Way’ is Buddha-nature.²⁸⁴

What is indicated here is that truly recognizing what is “empty” and what is “non-empty” is indeed the “Middle Way.” This same idea can be found in the *Laṅkāvatāra*:

Mahāmati, the notion of *kṣaṇika* is known as “empty.” The *ālayavijñāna* known as the *tathāgatagarbha* without the permeation of the common evolution-consciousness is known as “empty”; replete with the permeation of non-defiled (*anāsrava*) *dharmas*, it is known as “non-empty.”²⁸⁵

²⁸³ Takasaki Jikidō, “The *Tathāgatagarbha* Theory in the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*,” p. 1022.

²⁸⁴ Seyfort Rugg, “The Buddhist Notion of an ‘Immanent Absolute’ (*tathāgatagarbha*) as a Problem in Hermeneutics,” p. 233 (Seyfort Rugg cites this passage from the Tibetan version of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*, kha, fol. 130a-b).

²⁸⁵ 大慧，言剎尼迦者，名之為空。阿梨耶識名如來藏，無共意轉識熏習故名為空；具足無漏熏習法故。名為不空。(T671, 559c). The sentence quoted here, curiously, is found only in Bodhiruci’s version, but is absent in all other Chinese translations and the extant Sanskrit version. This, however, may be the translation of a version of the *Laṅkāvatāra* that has been lost. According to Fazang, when he assisted Śikṣānanda on the translation of the *Laṅkāvatāra*, he was faced with a total of five different versions of the work, and they had to collate carefully these different versions while also comparing the collation with the two earlier Chinese translations.

What is more important in the *Laṅkāvatāra* regarding the bifurcation of “empty” and “non-empty” aspects of reality is that such a distinction is merely a provisional teaching for those who have not realized the nondual and nonconceptual reality. It is stated in the *Sagāthaka* section of the *Laṅkāvatāra* that:

The arising and the non-arising, the empty and the non-empty,
As well as the own-nature and the lack of own-nature,
Are all non-differentiated,
[And are all] unattainable in [the realization of] Mind-only.²⁸⁶

To the conceptual mind, therefore, the teachings in the *AAN*, the *AMS*, and the *SMD* regarding the empty and non-empty aspects of reality are useful in guiding practitioners toward a correct conceptual understanding of reality, not falling into the extreme of permanence or annihilation. However, when the mind truly attains the realization of the *dharmadhātu* which is nondual and nonconceptual, practitioners will not cling to the concepts of the dualistic division of reality into the empty and non-empty, for the realization of the ultimate reality is a pure experience which transcends all modes of concepts or thoughts, and is also said to be completely nondual. This nonduality, according to the citation from the *MPN* quoted earlier, is the true Middle Way realized by the Buddhas. Throughout the *MPN*, we find discussions of the *tathāgatagarbha* in terms of Buddha-nature (*foxing*; *buddhadhātu*). Indeed, the *MPN* explains *buddhadhātu* by using the analogy of gold hidden inside the house of a poor woman; this borrowing from one of the nine similes of the *tathāgatagarbha* in the *TGS* confirms the closeness in the

²⁸⁶ In Śikṣānanda’s translation: 智者不分別 若生若不生 空及與不空 自性無自性 但惟是心量 而實不可得 (T672, 632a); in a contemporary new Chinese translation by Tam Shek-wing: 生非生與空非空 以及自性非自性 是皆一切無分別 於唯心中無所得。 (Tam Shek-wing, trans. *Lengjia jing fanben xinyi* (楞伽經梵本新譯), Taipei: Buddhall Publications, 2005.)

meaning of the two terms. In addition, the teaching in the *MPN* that “all sentient beings possess the Buddha-nature” not only echoes the *TGS* proclamation that “all sentient beings have the *tathāgatagarbha*,” but also agrees with the *AAN* teaching that “the *sattvadhātu* is precisely the *dharmakāya*, and the *dharmakāya* is precisely the *sattvadhātu*.”

Perhaps the most characteristic feature of the *MPN*, in addition to its use of the term “*buddhadhātu*,” lies in its lengthy exposition of the nature and the future of the *icchantikas*, which can be interpreted as referring to “those who are attached to great desires.” The idea of the *icchantika* is only mentioned briefly in the *AAN* as referring to those who, owing to their attachment to dualistic views, are migrating into darkness. Nothing else is mentioned about their characteristics or the future possibility of the *icchantikas* attaining Buddhahood. The definition of the *icchantika* in the *MPN*, however, is far more complex and more negative. The description of the *icchantikas* ranges from their being “cut off from all the good roots” to being “incurable.” It is even said that they are never able to attain enlightenment. Even so, in later chapters of the *MPN* one does find a more gentle view of the *icchantika* that does not exclude them from future Buddhahood. As noted by many modern scholars, such as Liu Ming-wood, there are broadly speaking three views on the *icchantika* in the *MPN*. The first part, running from chapters one to five, emphasizes the present condition of the degradation of the *icchantika*. The second, chapters six to nine, is ambivalent, charging the *icchantikas* for their ceaseless desires on the one hand but also affirming that they are susceptible to good influence on the other. The last part, encompassing chapters ten to thirteen, finally

acknowledges that the *icchantikas* can in the future attain perfect enlightenment because they, like all other sentient beings, possess the Buddha-nature.²⁸⁷ I do not see any real difficulty in reconciling the three views of the *icchantika* with the *tathāgatagarbha*, for the exclusion of the *icchantika* from future Buddhahood should not be taken literally. It should be recognized that in Mahāyāna Buddhism all things and all persons, including the *icchantikas*, are understood to be without a fixed nature. The *tathāgatagarbha*, however, is not an “own-nature” itself nor a substantial, pure “locus” underlying all sentient beings. It is simply an aspect of the mind which intuitively experiences all things just as they truly are, and is nondual with the emptiness of all things. Likewise, the *icchantikas* cannot be taken to be certain beings who possess a fixed nature that cannot attain this natural state of wisdom. Rather, it seems more plausible that the concept refers to the “current state” of those who are themselves attached to great desires, and hence have no belief or interest in the Mahāyāna teachings. It is from this perspective that these beings are spoken of as having no hope of attaining enlightenment *if they remain in such a state*. Using the example given in the *MPN*, which illustrates the concept of Buddha-nature as cheese in milk, the *icchantikas* can be likened to milk that never allows itself to be curdled, although the potential of the milk turning into cheese is never completely absent. The two ideas, *icchantika* and *tathāgatagarbha*, therefore, are not contradictory as they might seem from the perspective of the *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine. As Takasaki comments in his study of the *RGV*:

²⁸⁷ Cf. Liu Ming-Wood, “The Problem of the *icchantika* in the Mahāyāna *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*.”

As a Buddhist technical term, it [i.e., *icchantika*] means one who longs only for worldly pleasure (= *bhavābhilāṣin*), more strictly, one who abuses the Buddhist doctrine, esp. that of Mahāyāna. The capacity for Enlightenment for this *Icchantika* is usually denied as being ‘*aparinirvāṇagoṭraka*’. But from the viewpoint of the *tathāgatagarbha* theory, the *Icchantika* is said to be able to get enlightenment as taught in this text.²⁸⁸

From this standpoint, the definitions of the *icchantika* in the *AAN* and the *MPN* are not contradictory but complementary.

²⁸⁸ Takasaki Jikidō, *A Study on the Ratnagoṭravibhāga*, p. 202, n.22.

Chapter Ten: Other *Sūtras* on the *Tathāgatagarbha* Teaching

There are of course other *tathāgatagarbha* texts that are also related but it would be too repetitive to examine them here for the same ideas that are common in texts such as the *Jñānalokālaṃkārasūtra*, the *Mahābherihāraśūtra*, the *Dhāraṇīśvararājasūtra*, the *Gaṇḍavyūhasūtra*, the *Mahāyānadaśadharmakasūtra*, the *Mahāmeghasūtra*, and the *Suvarṇaprabhāśasūtra*, etc. For example, in the *Mahābherihāraka*, one finds an explicit connection of the *tathāgatagarbha* with the notions of *ekadhātu* and *ekayāna*.²⁸⁹ Katsumata suggests that this text is the first *tathāgatagarbha sūtra* that explicitly links the idea of the *ekayāna* with the *tathāgatagarbha*, and hence predates the *SMD* and the *MPN*.²⁹⁰ Furthermore, the *sattvadhātu* is also said to be “infinitely luminous and pure;” this clearly expounds the same idea expressed in the *AAN* that the *sattvadhātu* is the *dharmakāya*.²⁹¹ The terms *tathāgatagarbha* (如來藏), *tathāgatadhātu* (如來性), and *buddhadhātu* (佛性) are also used interchangeably in the *Mahābherihāraśūtra*, just as in the Chinese translation of the *MPN* the term *foxing* (Buddha-nature) is used in a way that carries exactly the same meaning as the *tathāgatagarbha* as discussed in other texts. Similarly, in the *Dasazhe niqianzi suoshuo jing* (大薩遮尼乾子所說經), one also finds a series of ten illustrations of the *tathāgatadhātu*:

Within the storehouse of all defilements and pollutions, the Tathāgata-nature (*tathāgatadhātu*) is complete and fulfilled, just as gold inside rock, fire inside

²⁸⁹ The identification can be found in the Buddha’s reply to Kāśyapa’s question: 迦葉白佛言：世尊，若一切眾生有如來藏一性一乘者，如來何故說有三乘聲聞乘緣覺乘佛乘？(T270, 297b)

²⁹⁰ Katsumata Shunkyō, *Bukkyō ni okeru shinshikisetsu no kenkyū*, p. 607.

²⁹¹ 當知一切眾生，皆亦如是，彼眾生界無邊明淨 (T270, 297b)

wood, water underground, cheese in milk, oil inside sesame seeds, gems inside the matrix, statue inside the mould, embryo inside the womb, and sun behind clouds. Therefore, I proclaim that within the body of defilements there is the *tathāgatagarbha*.²⁹²

The citation here clearly resonates not only with the *MPN* and the *TGS*, but also with the *AAN* in its emphasis that “within the body of defilements there is the *tathāgatagarbha*.”

There are of course many more Mahāyāna *sūtras* that are not generally considered to be *tathāgatagarbha* texts but nevertheless present teachings that are closely related to the *tathāgatagarbha*, such as the notions of the *tathāgatagotra* in the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa* and the *tathāgatajñāna* in the *Avatamsakasūtra*. In the *Vimalakīrti*, for example, the following passage is particularly illuminating when read in conjunction with the *AAN* teaching that “the *sattvadhātu* is the *dharmakāya*”:

Mañjuśrī asked, “Householder, why is this room all empty and has no servant?” Vimalakīrti replied, “All Buddha-fields are likewise empty.” [Mañjuśrī] asked, “Why empty?” [Vimalakīrti] replied, “Because of emptiness [therefore they are] empty.” [Mañjuśrī] further asked, “What kind of emptiness is this emptiness?” The reply was, “This emptiness is the emptiness of non-conceptuality.” Again asked, “Can emptiness be conceptualized?” The reply given, “Such conceptualization is also empty. Why is it so? Because emptiness cannot be conceptualized as ‘empty’.” Again Mañjuśrī asked, “Where should this emptiness be sought?” The reply was, “This emptiness should be sought among the sixty-two [heretic] views.” To the question, “Where should the sixty-two views be sought?” The reply came, “In the liberation of all the Buddhas.” Again being asked, “Where should the liberation of all the Buddhas be sought?”

²⁹² 一切煩惱諸垢藏中，有如來性湛然滿足，如石中金、如木中火、如地下水、如乳中酪、如麻中油、如子中牙、如藏中寶、如模中象、如孕中胎、如雲中日。是故我言，煩惱身中有如來藏。(T272, 359b)

Vimalakīrti replied, “It should be sought in the mentality of all sentient beings.”²⁹³

One also finds the famous statement in the *Avataṃsaka* that “the mind, the Buddha, and the sentient being, these three have no differentiation.”²⁹⁴ This unites not only the sentient being with the Buddha, but also the mind, and hence one can affirm from this that the cited verse implicitly identifies the innate purity of the mind with the nondual *ekadhātu* from which the sentient beings and the Buddhas are non-differentiated.

In addition, there is also a large corpus of Mahāyāna *sūtras*, which usually have Mañjuśrī as the leading Bodhisattva, conveying the same line of thought without actually using the term “*tathāgatagarbha*.” These *sūtras* include the *Acintyabuddhaviṣayanirdeśa*, the *Mañjuśrī-vikāra-sūtra*, and the *Viśeṣacinta-brahma-paripṛicchā-sūtra*, which all expound the teachings of nonduality, nonconceptuality, the supreme equality (*samatā*) of *nirvāṇa* and *saṃsāra* and of the Buddhas and the sentient beings. A striking example comes from the *Mañjuśrī-parinirvāṇa-sūtra*, which describes the scene when Mañjuśrī died and was cremated as follows:

At that time, the body of Mañjuśrī was like a mountain of red gold, with a height of one and a half *zhang* ... Deep inside the heart [area of Mañjuśrī], there was a statue of [the Buddha made of] real gold, sitting in the cross-legged position, with a height of six feet, sitting on the lotus [throne].²⁹⁵

²⁹³妙吉祥言：居士，此室何以都空復無侍者？無垢稱言，一切佛土亦復皆空。問何以空。答以空空。又問：此空為是誰空？答曰：此空無分別空。又問：空性可分別耶？答曰：此能分別亦空，所以者何？空性不可分別為空。又問：此空當於何求？答曰：此空當於六十二見中求。又問：六十二見當於何求？答曰：當於諸佛解脫中求。又問：諸佛解脫當於何求？答曰：當於一切有情心行中求。(T476, 568a)

²⁹⁴心佛及眾生 是三無差別 (T278, 465c)

²⁹⁵是時文殊師利身如紫金山，正長丈六。… 身內心處有真金像，結加趺坐，正長六尺在蓮華上。(T463, 480c)

The image here reminds one of the famous passage in the *TGS* that within all sentient beings there sit the Tathāgatas, who are cross-legged and motionless, and all of whom have the Tathāgata's wisdom and knowledge.

Chapter Eleven: The Problems of Dating the *Sūtras*

We may summarize as follows the relative chronology by four Japanese scholars (discussed above) of five of the *tathāgatagarbha* texts that are commonly considered to be the earliest:

Takasaki Jikidō:

TGS → *AAN* & *SMD* & *MPN* → *AMS*

Kimura Taiken:

TGS → *AAN* → *SMD* → *MPN* → *AMS*

Katsumata Shunkyō:

TGS → *AAN* → *AMS* → *SMD* → *MPN*

Kagawa Takao:

TGS → *AMS* → *AAN* → *MPN* (Faxian's version) → *SMD* → *MPN* (Dharmakṣema's version)

The reasoning of the four Japanese scholars for their chronology is in all cases convincing in various ways. All four scholars demonstrate sound arguments for their placing of the sequence of the composition and development of these texts. Some of these arguments have been commented on earlier in this thesis. An examination of these four sequences demonstrates that they are indeed contradictory, reminding one of the situations depicted in the Kurosawa Akira movie, *Rashōmon*. The only unanimous view is the dating of the *TGS* as the earliest *tathāgatagarbha* text. None of these dating schemes, however, can convincingly counter all the points carefully laid out in the other schemes. It is also impossible to plan yet another scheme that would reconcile all the

valid arguments posted in the four existing schemes. This leads one to either of the following two conclusions: 1) none of these four schemes can be accepted as truthfully reflecting how these *tathāgatagarbha* texts came to be, and the truth must lie elsewhere; or 2) one of the schemes reflects exactly how these *tathāgatagarbha* texts evolved. I am inclined more towards the former conclusion.

One of the problems present in these schemes is that they all assume that these texts were composed one after another as a “one-time composition.”²⁹⁶ These scholars in examining the elements that make up these texts construe the dating by assuming that they have come down through the centuries without many changes in content. In fact these texts might all have had a long oral history before they were written down, and even after these teachings were committed to writing it is also possible that many editions and additions have taken place before the version that we have received came into being. These texts did not simply appear as a result of the innovative composition of someone who expected the Buddhist community to unquestioningly accept them, even though the community had never heard of them previously, as the authentic teachings of the Buddha. It is indeed very likely that some versions of oral teachings akin to these ideas were already in existence much earlier. Even the widely accepted theory of the development of the *Prajñāpāramitā* literature in four phases²⁹⁷, suggested by Edward Conze, cannot

²⁹⁶ Although in Kagawa Takao’s scheme there is a recognition of the continuous development of the *MPN* as a result of the influence of the *SMD*, in its basic assumption of the linear development of Buddhist texts it is not really different from that of the other three Japanese scholars mentioned here.

²⁹⁷ The first phase is the composition of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* along with the *Ratnaḡuṇasamḡcayagāthā*; the second, the *Śatasāhasrikā*, the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā* and the *Aṣṭadaśasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*; the third, the *Vajracchedikā* along with the *Abhisamayālamkāra*; the fourth, the *Adhyardhaśatikā Prajñāpāramitā*. See E. Conze, *The Prajñāpāramitā Literature*, pp. 9-25; E. Conze, *Selected Sayings from the Perfection of Wisdom*, p. 11. The *sūtras* listed here are only the representatives of Conze’s theory of four phases of development of the *Prajñāpāramitā-sūtras*.

account for Paul Williams' query as to how it is possible that the relatively late *Vajracchedikā* in Conze's scheme is cited by Nāgārjuna in his *Sūtrasamuccaya*.²⁹⁸ For this reason Williams suggests that, "The issue must be left open, but at the moment there is [a] reasonable possibility that the *Vajracchedikā* in some form or another dates from a very early phase of *Prajñāpāramitā* literary activity."²⁹⁹ On the other hand, Christian Lindtner and Leonard Priestley have also suggested, using independent and completely different arguments, that there is a close kinship between Nāgārjuna's writing and the *Laṅkāvatāra*, commonly accepted as having been composed at a much later date than the time of Nāgārjuna's writings. Lindtner, supported by Nancy McCagney, argues strongly that Nāgārjuna quotes the *Laṅkāvatāra* five times in his *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, twice in the *Yuktiṣaṣṭikā* and three times in the *Catuhstava*,³⁰⁰ while Priestley suggests that "... Nāgārjuna's philosophy and the *Laṅkāvatāra* represent cognate but distinct developments in Buddhist thought, belonging to roughly the same period and showing their kinship in their similar use of 'bhāva'."³⁰¹ Moreover, Lambert Schmithausen also suggests that Vasubandhu quotes verses from the *Laṅkāvatāra* in his *Triṃśikā*, a text that, once again, is commonly believed to predate the *Laṅkāvatāra*.³⁰² These findings all suggest that the compilation of the oral Buddhist teachings is a much more complex process than the

²⁹⁸ Paul Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism*, p. 42.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁰ See Chr. Lindtner, *Nāgārjuniana: Studies in the Writing and Philosophy of Nāgārjuna*. Many of the Lindtner's arguments concerning the kinship between Nāgārjuna's writings and the *Laṅkāvatāra* are summarized in Nancy McCagney, *Nāgārjuna and the Philosophy of Openness*, pp. 35-44.

³⁰¹ Leonard C.D.C. Priestley, "The Term 'bhāva' and the Philosophy of Nāgārjuna," p. 132.

³⁰² Lambert Schmithausen, "A Note on Vasubandhu and the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*," in *Asiatische Studien* 46 (1) (Sondernummer zu Ehren von Jaques May), pp. 392-397.

continuous development of ideas that we have imagined it to be. An elaborated theory of the scheme of the development of a series of Buddhist texts (sometimes based on the examination of the complexity of the teachings presented and sometimes the translations of these texts in China) is at best speculation. Such an elaborated theory cannot be seriously accepted as accurately reflecting how these Buddhist texts arose. Accordingly, this thesis will not even attempt to discuss which of the four schemes presented by the Japanese scholars is the most appropriate. The basic premise of their construction is at odds with my approach to these Buddhist texts, that takes into consideration the oral tradition and transmission of these teachings, which could have been revised, clarified, and expanded under the influence of other oral or written teachings as they developed in the history of compiling, transmitting, and editing these texts. We have no way to prove whether a linear development of these texts has ever existed.

Clearly, then, the approach here is to a certain extent similar to the one adopted by the *RGV-vyākhyā* in its explanation of the teaching of the *tathāgatagarbha*: making use of the *tathāgatagarbha* texts, together with some that are not considered by modern academia as preaching the *tathāgatagarbha* thought, as a whole, but without constructing convoluted theories with regard to the dating of the texts. This, it must be emphasized, is not to avoid the issue of dating. It is rather a matter of questioning the validity of the whole approach of dating the Buddhist texts as a “one-time composition.”

The dating of the Buddhist treatises, the *sāstras*, is equally challenging to Buddhist scholars, even though they are *compositions* rather than ongoing compilations of teachings extant previously in the oral-aural format. Furthermore, determining the

authorship of these texts is sometimes a daunting task. What follows is an examination of a few treatises of the *tathāgatagarbha* teaching, all of which can be considered to have a close affinity with the classical Yogācāra tradition, at least in terms of the authorship ascribed to these texts. Special attention will be paid to how these works show an understanding of and make use of the *AAN*.

Chapter Twelve: The *AAN* and the *Ratnagoṭravibhāga*

The *Ratnagoṭravibhāga* (*RGV*), also known as the *Mahāyānottaratantra-sāstra*, is considered in the Tibetan translation to be one of the “Five Works of Maitreya” (*byams pa'i chos lnga*). The authorship of the root verses of the *RGV* is therefore traditionally attributed to Maitreya, while its commentarial section is ascribed to Asaṅga. The Chinese tradition, however, has a different list of the “Five Works of Maitreya,” and the *RGV* is not included in this list. In that tradition the *RGV*, including its commentary (the *RGV-vyākhyā*), is said to be composed by Sāramati.³⁰³ Modern scholars are equally divided in their opinion of the authorship of this text. E. Obermiller, who first brought the attention of modern scholarship to the *tathāgatagarbha* teaching, and who made the first English translation of the *RGV* based on his studies with Don grub Buddhayin, then the abbot of the Chilūtai Monastery in Lhasa,³⁰⁴ considered the *RGV* to be a work composed by Asaṅga, on the basis of his interpretation of the comments of Bu ston in the *Chos 'byung*. Obermiller observes:

In Bu-ton's *History of Buddhism* it is moreover said that Āryasaṅga has written down the 5 treatises after having heard them from Maitreya in the Tuṣita heavens. This might be simply interpreted in the sense that Āryasaṅga and no other was the actual author of the 5 works.³⁰⁵

Those who take into consideration the claims from both the Tibetan and the Chinese traditions include Takasaki Jikidō and Tam Shek-wing. The former ascribes the

³⁰³ This derives from Fazang's claim, which accepts the remarks of Devaprajñā, in his commentary to the *Dasheng fajie wuchabie lun*.

³⁰⁴ E. Obermiller, trans., *The Sublime Science of the Great Vehicle to Salvation, Being a Manual of Buddhist Monism*, p. 110-111.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

root verses to Maitreya and the commentary to Sāramati.³⁰⁶ Tam Shek-wing holds a more developed theory regarding the authorship of the *RGV*. He believes that the root verses were composed by Maitreya, the commentary by Asaṅga, and that additional verses were added by Sāramati; he then concludes that there was a thorough editing of the entire text by Maitripa after his re-discovery of the work in a stūpa in the eleventh century.³⁰⁷ On the other hand, there are the scholars who accept almost unconditionally the Chinese traditional claim of the *RGV*'s authorship. Ui Hakuju is convinced that Sāramati composed the whole text.³⁰⁸ Yamaguchi Susumu and Nakamura Zuiryū believe that Sāramati composed only the root verses. The former believes that the commentarial verses were composed by Maitreya, the historical man, and that the commentarial prose was written by Asaṅga. The latter takes the entire commentary to be the work of Vasubandhu.³⁰⁹ E. H. Johnston proposed that the unknown "Sāramati" may in fact be a reference to a certain Sthiramati, and hence attributes the authorship of the text to the latter; this would be the same Sthiramati who composed a commentary on the *Kāśyapaparivarta*. At the same time Johnston also emphasized that "Asaṅga has nothing to do with the *Ratnagoṭravibhāga*."³¹⁰ This view, however, has not received much

³⁰⁶ Takasaki Jikidō, *A Study on the Ratnagoṭravibhāga*, pp. 61-2.

³⁰⁷ Tam Shek-wing, *Baoxinglun xinyi*, pp. 215-227; on Maitripa's re-discovery of the *RGV*, see George N. Roerich, *The Blue Annals* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, reprinted 1976), p. 347.

³⁰⁸ Ui Hakuju, *Hōshōron kenkyū*, pp. 89-97.

³⁰⁹ See Nakamura Zuiryū, *Bon kan taishō kokyō ichijō hōshōron kenkyū*, p. 61.

³¹⁰ H.S. Prasad, ed., *The Uttaratantra of Maitreya*, pp. 62-3. In modern scholarship, however, the relationship between the *RGV* and the Yogācāra tradition has not been established with any assurance. Johnston, for example, has made a number of points to demonstrate the differences in the use of terms in the *RGV* and other works ascribed to Asaṅga. But according to the Tibetan tradition, the *RGV* is a work of Maitreya, and this attribution can also be traced in the Saka script fragment manuscript, which quotes verses of the *RGV* and identifies them as the work of Maitreya (Cf. H.W. Bailey and E.H. Johnston, *A*

scholarly support. Though the issue of the authorship of the *RGV* remains unresolved, there is no doubt that the *AAN* has exerted an influence on the composition of the *RGV* and the *RGV-vyākhyā*.

There is only one extant Chinese translation of the *RGV*, made by Ratnamati in 511 C.E. However, the *Kaiyuan shijiao lu* (開元釋教錄) reports that there were actually two translations, one by Ratnamati and the other by Bodhiruci, who were collaborating on a single translation until a difference of opinion arose and each turned to work on his own individual translation. A careful comparison of the Sanskrit, Tibetan, and Chinese versions of the *RGV* in its citation of the *AAN* reveals that it is indeed possible that the extant Chinese translation might be the collaborative work of the two translators. Of the nine quotations of the *AAN*, there are two occasions (which will be examined below) where the Chinese version cites a more extensive quotation from the *AAN* than can be found in the Sanskrit and the Tibetan versions. The most straightforward explanation for this, of course, is that the original Sanskrit version that the Chinese translation is based on was different from the Sanskrit manuscript discovered by Rāhula Sāṃkṛtyāyana (E.H. Johnston, who edited it, dates it as coming from the late tenth or from the eleventh century).³¹¹ Indeed, the fact that the structure and the verses of the Chinese translation

Fragment of the Uttaratantra in Sanskrit, pp. 86-89. The differences in the use of terms might be explained by Obermiller's comment that "[w]e do not, however, exclude the possibility that Āryāsaṅga could have written different works from different points of view, without changing his main standpoint. We know that such a practice was familiar to the Indian scholars belonging to diverse philosophical systems..." (*The Sublime Science of the Great Vehicle to Salvation*, p. 96).

³¹¹ Sanskrit fragments were discovered by H.W. Bailey in 1935 among the Central Asian manuscripts, and identified by E.H. Johnston as the verses from chapters one and three of the *RGV*. The complete Sanskrit manuscript was discovered soon after by Rāhula Sāṃkṛtyāyana in a Tibetan monastery; it was edited by Johnston and published, after Johnston's death, in 1950, under the title *The Ratnagotravibhāga Mahāyānottaratantraśāstra* (with indexes by T. Chowdhury).

differ markedly in many places from both the Sanskrit and Tibetan versions suggests that the two translations were not based on a version that the extant Sanskrit version replicates exactly.³¹² However, on closer examination, it is rather surprising that eight of the nine citations of the *AAN* in the Chinese version of the *RGV* correspond almost word-for-word with the Chinese translation of the *AAN*, the *BBJ*, by Bodhiruci, since the *BBJ* did not exist until 520 C.E., nine years after the completion of the translation of the *RGV*. The reported conflict between Ratnamati and Bodhiruci makes it hard to believe that Bodhiruci would adopt word-for-word the translation of Ratnamati from the *RGV* in the case where the corresponding passages are cited, almost ten years after their separation and after both Bodhiruci and Ratnamati had already established their own schools, which developed into the Northern and the Southern Dilun (地論) Schools respectively. The most likely explanation is that Bodhiruci also took part in the translation of the *RGV*, and hence it is not really the case that Bodhiruci was shamelessly plagiarizing the translation of his opponent. This presents another possible explanation, in addition to Takasaki's view that it was simply a mistake, as to the reason why the *Kaiyuan shijiao lu* claims that the two translators collaborated on the *RGV* translation.

The *RGV-vyākhyā* is not the only known Indian exegetical work that cites the *AAN*. Other Indian compositions that quoted the *AAN* include at least the *Dasheng fajie wuchabie lun* (*DSFJWCBL*), if one does not consider the *Foxing lun* and the *Dasheng qixin lun*, whose origin as Indian works has been seriously questioned by modern

³¹² See the observations on the differences in these three versions in Tam Shek-wing, *Baoxinlun xinyi*, pp. 201-212, the section on the “notes on editing” (校勘記).

scholars. However, while the *DSFJWCBL* cites the *AAN*, it does not give any attribution to its citation. Were it not quoted extensively in the *RGV-vyākhyā*, the importance of the *AAN* would have been largely overlooked. It could even have been regarded as a Chinese apocryphal work. The *AAN* is not the most frequently cited work in the *RGV-vyākhyā*; that would be the *SMD*, which is quoted a total of twenty-five times. There is, in addition to the nine times when it is cited, an explanation in the *RGV-vyākhyā* that is expressed in the language of the *AAN*.

The content of the *RGV* is constructed around the seven *vajrapadas*³¹³: 1) the Buddha; 2) the Dharma; 3) the Saṅgha; 4) the *dhātu*; 5) the *bodhi*; 6) the *guṇas*; and 7) the *karman*. The extant Sanskrit text begins with the commentarial verses and prose that explain the structure of the *RGV* in terms of these seven *vajrapadas*. It is in this introductory section that the author of the commentary makes use of passages from different *sūtras* to explain briefly these seven topics. In this section the *AAN* is cited on two occasions to explain the fourth and the sixth *vajrapadas*, that is, the *dhātu* and the *guṇa*. In explaining the *vajrapada* of *dhātu*, the following passage from the *AAN* is cited:

Śāriputra, the [true meaning of the] sentient beings belongs to the domain (*gocara*) of the Tathāgatas. Śāriputra, the Śrāvakas and the Pratyekabuddhas cannot use their right wisdom to contemplate this meaning of the sentient beings, let alone the direct realization [of such]. [The same also applies to] the ignorant ordinary beings, who need to rely entirely on faith in the Buddha concerning this meaning. Therefore, Śāriputra, according to faith in the Tathāgatas is this

³¹³ The term “*vajrapada*” is explained in the *RGV*-commentary as follows: “The word ‘*vajrapada*’ (adamantine subject) means the term (*pada*), i.e., the basis (*sthāna*), which expresses the meaning of the Enlightenment (*adhigama*) which is similar to a thunderbolt [or diamond] (*vajra*).” (Takasaki, *A Study on the Ratnagotravibhāga*, p. 142)

meaning of the sentient beings [to be known]. Śāriputra, this [meaning of] the sentient beings is the ultimate truth. Śāriputra, the ultimate truth is the *sattvadhātu*. Śāriputra, the *sattvadhātu* is the *tathāgatagarbha*. Śāriputra, the *tathāgatagarbha* is the *dharmakāya*.³¹⁴

This passage illuminates the central teaching of the *ekadhātu* in the *AAN*, and it is through this teaching of the *ekadhātu* that the notion of *dhātu* of the *RGV* is considered by the authors of the *RGV* and the *RGV-vyākhyā* to be adequately explained. In other words, the *dhātu* in the *RGV* is considered to be nondual, with no differentiation between and conceptualization of the *sattvadhātu* and the *dharmakāya*. It is also clear from the contents of the *RGV* that follow that this fourth *vajrapada* is also explained fully in the chapter on the *tathāgatagarbha*, the fourth chapter in the *RGV*; thus the identification of the *dhātu* and the *tathāgatagarbha* is implicitly established.

The sixth *vajrapada*, the *guṇas*, on the other hand, is explained through the following *AAN* passage:

Śāriputra, the meaning of the *dharmakāya*, as explained by the Tathāgata, is the Buddha *dharmas* and the Tathāgata's wisdom (*jñāna*) and qualities (*guṇa*) which

³¹⁴ The translation here follows the citation in Ratnamati's Chinese translation of the *RGV*, which corresponds very well to the extant Sanskrit version (see, for example, Takasaki, *A Study on the Ratnagotravibhāga*, p. 143): 舍利弗，言眾生者，乃是諸佛如來境界，一切聲聞辟支佛等，以正智慧不能觀察眾生之義，何況能證毛道凡夫！於此義中唯信如來。是故舍利弗，隨如來信此眾生義。舍利弗，言眾生者，即是第一義諦；舍利弗，言第一義諦者，即是眾生界；舍利弗，言眾生界者，即是如來藏；舍利弗，言如來藏者，即是法身故。(T1611, 821a). This is the only citation that differs from Bodhiruci's translation: 爾時世尊告慧命舍利弗：此甚深義乃是如來智慧境界，亦是如來心所行處。舍利弗，如是深義一切聲聞緣覺智慧所不能知、所不能見、不能觀察，何況一切愚癡凡夫而能測量！唯有諸佛如來智慧，乃能觀察知見此義。舍利弗，一切聲聞緣覺所有智慧，於此義中唯可仰信，不能如實知見觀察。舍利弗，甚深義者即是第一義諦；第一義諦者即是眾生界；眾生界者即是如來藏；如來藏者即是法身。(T668, 467a) It seems that the version Bodhiruci's translation is based on is more extensive than the citation in the *RGV*.

are nondiscrete, inseparable, inconceivable, and more numerous than the sands of the Ganges. Śāriputra, it is like a lantern in the world, whose luminosity, form, and touch are nondiscrete and inseparable. Furthermore, it is like wish-fulfilling jewels, whose luminosity, shapes, and forms are nondiscrete and inseparable. Śāriputra, the meaning of the *dharmakāya* is just so, being nondiscrete and inseparable from the inconceivable Buddha *dharmas* as well as the wisdom and qualities (*guṇa*) of the Tathāgata more numerous than the sands of the Ganges.³¹⁵

That is to say, the *guṇas* of the Tathāgata should be considered as naturally present, though empty, being inseparable from the wisdom of emptiness. In the *RGV*, the same idea is more fully explained in a later passage in which the analogy of the heavenly gongs that emit sound without being struck is used. The reality, then, is maintained to be not a mere nullity or nihilistic realm of “emptiness.” This is in line with the teaching of the empty and non-empty aspects of the *tathāgatagarbha* that have been discussed earlier.

The third citation comes from the section on the detailed exposition of the Jewel of the Dharma. In this section, the *RGV-vyākhyā* states that there are eight qualities of the Dharma-jewel: 1) inconceivability (*acintyatva*); 2) nonduality (*advayatā*); 3) non-conceptualization (*nirvikalpatā*); 4) purity (*śuddhi*); 5) its manifestation (*abhivyaktikaraṇa*); 6) being the antidote [against the defilements] (*pratipakṣatā*); 7) deliverance (*virāga*); and 8) cause of deliverance (*virāgahetu*). It is further said that,

³¹⁵ Again, this translation is based on Ratnamati’s Chinese version: 舍利弗，如來所說法身義者，過於恒沙不離不脫不思議佛法如來智慧功德。舍利弗，如世間燈，明色及觸不離不脫；又如摩尼寶珠，明色形相不離不脫。舍利弗，法身之義亦復如是，過於恒沙不離不脫不思議佛法如來智慧功德故。(T1611, 821b). This is the first of two occasions where the citation of the *AAN* in the Chinese version is much more extensive than the Sanskrit and the Tibetan versions. In Takasaki’s English translation, this citation reads, “O Śāriputra, that which is called the Absolute Body, preached by the Tathāgata, is of indivisible nature, of qualities inseparable from the wisdom, that is to say, [indivisible from or endowed] with the properties of the Buddha which far surpass the particles of sands of the Gaṅgā in number.” (p. 144)

among these eight qualities, the first three explain the Noble Truth of *nirodha*, while the next three elucidate the Noble Truth of the Path leading towards this state of *nirodha*. It is to explicate further the first two qualities, of the *nirodha-satya*, that the *AAN* is cited:

Śāriputra, the *dharmakāya* of the Tathāgata is cool (*śīva*), because its nature (*dharma*) is nondual and inconceivable.³¹⁶

One can see that the attainment of the *dharmakāya*, itself being nondual and inconceivable, is identified as the attainment of the third Noble Truth, the *nirodha-satya*. This is also suggested in the Tibetan translation of this passage, where *śīva* is translated as 'gog pa, that is, “the *dharmakāya* of the Tathāgata is the *nirodha*.” The *RGV* commentary further explains that “dual” (*dvaya*) refers to the *karma* (worldly deeds) and *kleśa* (defilements), and that “conceptualization” (*vikalpa*) refers to irrational thought (*ayoniśomanasikāra*), which gives rise to *karma* and *kleśa*. That means the irrational thought is the root of the origination of *karma* and *kleśa*, which also means that “conceptualization” is the root of the origination of “duality.” This corresponds well with the *AAN* teaching that it is owing to ignorance of the *ekadhātu*, because of “conceptualization,” that the dualistic views of “increase” and “decrease” originate.

In the section on the *tathāgatagarbha*, explaining the *vajrapada* of the ‘*dhātu*,’ we are given ten topics concerning the *tathāgatagarbha* (1. 29): 1) own-nature (*svabhāva*); 2) cause (*hetu*); 3) result (*phala*); 4) functions (*karman*); 5) union (*yoga*); 6)

³¹⁶ 舍利弗，如來法身清涼，以不二法故，以無分別法故。(T1611, 824a)

manifestations (*vr̥tti*); 7) different states (*avasthāprabheda*); 8) all-pervadingness (*sarvatraga*); 9) inalterability (*avikāra*); and 10) indivisibility (*abheda*). The first topic, the *svabhāva* of the *tathāgatagarbha*, is indeed a warning against falling into the extreme of permanence, which leads to attachment to worldly life, and the extreme of annihilation, the attachment which takes the nihilistic view “emptiness” as the reality. The *RGV-vyākhyā* states:

In brief there are those three kinds of living beings among their multitudes: 1) those who cling to the worldly life (*bhavābhilāṣin*), 2) those who seek for deliverance from it (*vibhavābhilāṣin*), 3) those who wish neither of both (*tadubhayānabhilāṣin*). Of them those who cling to the worldly life would be known as twofold. a) The people whose intention is against the path to Emancipation and who never belong to the family of the perfect Nirvāṇa (*aparinirvāṇagoṭraka*), those are only seeking for Phenomenal Life and not for Nirvāṇa. And b) Those people who, although belonging to this Our Religion (*īhadhārmika*), have definitely fallen into the former’s way. Some of these are hostile to the Doctrine of the Great Vehicle.³¹⁷

It is with reference to the first kind of beings that the *RGV-vyākhyā* cites the *AAN* to describe them:

Śāriputra, if there are monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen who originate the views of “oneness” or “duality”, the Buddhas and Tathāgatas are not their teachers, and these people are not my disciples. Śāriputra, by originating dualistic views, these people migrate from darkness to darkness, from gloom to gloom. I call these beings the *icchantikas*.³¹⁸

³¹⁷ Translation quoted from Takasaki Jikidō, *A Study on the Ratnagoṭravibhāga*, pp. 202-203.

³¹⁸ 舍利弗，若有比丘比丘尼優婆塞優婆夷，若起一見若起二見，諸佛如來非彼世尊，如是等人非我弟子。舍利弗，是人以起二見因緣，從闇入闇從冥入冥，我說是等名一闍提。(T1611, 828c).

The Sanskrit and the Tibetan versions, however, have a simpler citation, and do not mention the *icchantikas*.³¹⁹ If the meaning of “*icchantika*” is interpreted as those who have great desires, the inclusion of this sentence “I call these beings the *icchantikas*” is indeed even better than if it were excluded since the *RGV-vyākhyā* here describes those who are attached to worldly affairs, hence those who have “great desires.” However, the passage cited in the Sanskrit and Tibetan versions merely explains that those who are attached to conceptualized views of “oneness” or “duality” are not true Buddhists. The naming of these beings as “*icchantikas*” provides the link between the *RGV-vyākhyā* and the *AAN* passage cited: beings have great desires because of conceptualization. If we accept Takasaki’s suggestion that the *Wushengyi jing* (**Anuttarāśraya-sūtra*) is a “sutralization” of the *RGV*, the following passage of the *Wushengyi jing* no doubt comes from Ratnamati’s version of the *RGV*:

There are three kinds of worldly beings: 1) those who cling to existence; 2) those who cling to nonexistence; 3) those who are not clinging to either existence or nonexistence. Those who are attached to existence are of two kinds: 1) those who turn their back on the path towards *nirvāṇa* and hence do not possess the nature of *nirvāṇa*, who desire *samsāra* but do not aim for *nirvāṇa*; 2) those who follow my teachings but do not respect the Mahāyāna teaching, only slandering it. Ānanda, these sentient beings are not my disciples. The Buddha is not their teacher, and is not their refuge. These beings are like the born-blind; they will surely fall into great darkness. [As though wandering in the] wilderness and

³¹⁹ Takasaki’s translation reads: “I am not their teacher; they are not my pupils. O Śāriputra, I say of them that they are chiefly filled with darkness, as migrating from darkness to another darkness, from gloom to greater gloom.” (p.203) This is the second occasion where the Chinese version of the *RGV* contains a more extensive quotation from the *AAN* than the Sanskrit and Tibetan versions.

further entering into a black and dirty dense forest of thorns, bound by *samsāra* in the future and trapped in the net of the *icchāntika*, they cannot be set free.³²⁰

Note that this passage is clearly a re-writing of the corresponding *RGV-vyākhyā* passage cited above, with the inclusion of a quotation from the *AAN*. Unless we can find proof that another Sanskrit version of the *RGV-vyākhyā* exists, which contains the extra citation from the *AAN* containing the discussion of the *icchāntika*, this passage of the *Wushengyi jing* demonstrates clearly that it was composed in accordance with Ratnamati's version of the *RGV*.³²¹

The fifth citation of the *AAN* appears in the explanation of the fifth topic concerning the *tathāgatagarbha*, union (*yoga*). The quotation here is included in the extra citation of the Chinese version in explaining the *vajrapada* of *guṇas* discussed above. In the extant Sanskrit version, this citation reads:

O Śāriputra, just as a lantern is of indivisible nature and its qualities are inseparable from it. That is to say, [it is] indivisible [inseparable], from light, heat and colour. The precious stone is also [indivisible, inseparable], from its light, colour and shape. In the same way, O Śāriputra, the Absolute Body, taught by the Tathāgata is of indivisible nature, of the qualities inseparable from Wisdom (i.e. Enlightenment). That is to say, [indivisible, inseparable], from the

³²⁰世間中有三品眾生：一者著有；二者著無；三者不著有無。著有者復有二種，一者背涅槃道無涅槃性，不求涅槃願樂生死；二者於我法中不生渴仰誹謗大乘。阿難，是等眾生，非佛弟子、非大師、非歸依處。如是人等已住愚盲，必墮嶮怖大闇之中，於曠野地更入黑穢棘刺稠林，以生死縛作於後際，落闍提網不能自出。(T669, 471b)

³²¹ This passage of the *Wushengyi jing* is cited in the *Nengxian zhongbian huiji lun* (能顯中邊慧日論) composed by Huizhao (慧沼) (T1863).

Properties of the Tathāgata which are far beyond the sand of the Gaṅgā in number.³²²

Strangely enough, this citation is absent from Ratnamati's version in the explanation of "yoga." However, this cited passage clearly inspired the composition of the following verse in *RGV* 1.44:

In the immaculate basis, the supernatural faculties,
The Wisdom and Immaculateness are inseparable from Reality;
Therefore, they have a resemblance to a lantern,
On account of its light, heat and colour.³²³

It is explained that the light, heat and colour of a lantern in the world resemble the fivefold supernatural faculties (*abhijñā*), the wisdom that destroys the unwholesome influence (*āsravaḥ*), and the extinction of such unwholesome influence, respectively. These three are nondiscrete, inseparable, not different, and coherent with each other and the "immaculate basis" (*vimalāśraya*). This is therefore known as "union" (*yoga*).

In the discussion of the seventh topic concerning the *tathāgatagarbha*, "different states" (*avasthāprabheda*), we find the sixth citation of the *AAN*. "Different states" refers to the various states of the *tathāgatagarbha*, manifest as ordinary sentient beings (*pṛthagjana*), the Bodhisattvas, and the Buddhas. These three are said to be impure

³²² Quotation from Takasaki's translation, *A Study of the Ratnagotravibhāga*, pp. 228-9. The original Sanskrit reads: *tadyathā sārīputra pradīpaḥ / avinirbhāga-dharmā / avinirmukta-guṇaḥ / yad-uta ālokaḥ / varnatābhiḥ / maṇir vāloka-varṇa-saṁsthānaiḥ / evam eva sārīputra tathāgata-nirdiṣṭo dharmakāyo 'vinirbhāga-dharmāvinirmukta-jñāna-guṇo yad-uta gaṅgā-nadī-vālikā-vyativṛttāis tathāgata-dharmair iti //* (E.H. Johnston edition, p. 39)

³²³ Takasaki, *A Study of the Ratnagotravibhāga*, p. 227. The Sanskrit reads: *abhijñā-jñāna-vaimalya-tathatāvyatirekataḥ / dīpālokaḥ / varṇasya sādharmyaṁ vimalāśraye //* (E.H. Johnston edition, p. 38)

(*aśuddha*), partly pure, partly impure (*aśuddhaśuddha*), and perfectly pure (*suviśuddha*).

The three states of *dharmakāya* are explained in the *AAN* as follows:

Śāriputra, this same *dharmakāya*, concealed (*gūḍha*) by limitless defilements more numerous than the sands of the Ganges, following the course of the world since beginningless time, wandering and floating to and fro in the [ocean of] life-and-death (*saṃsāra*), is known as the ordinary sentient being.

Śāriputra, this same *dharmakāya*, becoming averse to the sufferings of the worldly [phenomenon of] life-and-death (*saṃsāra*), abandoning all kinds of desires, coursing in the ten *pāramitās* which epitomize the eighty-four thousand categories of Dharma-teachings (*dharmaskandha*), practicing the *bodhicarya*, is known as the Bodhisattvas.

Śāriputra, this same *dharmakāya*, completely free from all the concealments of worldly defilements, going beyond all sufferings, transcending all pollutants of defilements, attaining purity and the perfect purity, abiding in the other shore of pure *dharma*, arriving at the place which all sentient beings look toward, perfectly knowing and being unsurpassable in all spheres (*viśaya*), free from all hindrances and all obstructions, attaining comforting strength in all *dharmas*, is known as Tathāgata-Arhat-Samyaksaṃbuddha.³²⁴

The following explanation of the eighth topic concerning the *tathāgatagarbha*, all-pervadingness (*sarvatraga*), is a further explication of the common feature of these three states --- the nonconceptuality of the innate mind (*cittaprakṛti*). This nonconceptual nature pervades all three states, equal, non-differentiated; and is always present. The following passage from the *AAN* is therefore quoted:

³²⁴ 舍利弗，即此法身過於恒沙無量煩惱所纏，從無始來隨順世間生死濤波去來生退，名為眾生。舍利弗，即此法身厭離世間生死苦惱，捨一切欲，行十波羅蜜攝八萬四千法門，修菩提行，名為菩薩。舍利弗，即此法身得離一切煩惱使纏，過一切苦、離一切煩惱垢，得淨得清淨，得住彼岸清淨法中，到一切眾生所觀之地，於一切境界中更無勝者，離一切障、離一切礙，於一切法中得自在力，名為如來應正遍知。(T1611, 832a-b)

Śāriputra, the *dharmakāya* is not apart from the *sattvadhātu*, and the *sattvadhātu* is not apart from the *dharmakāya*. The *sattvadhātu* is precisely the *dharmakāya*, and the *dharmakāya* is precisely the *sattvadhātu*. Śāriputra, these two are nondual (*advaya*) in meaning but are only different in words.³²⁵

In this way, the connection between the three states of *dharmakāya* and the idea of the *ekadhātu* is clearly established. Taking these two explanations in the *AAN* together gives rise to the following two verses (*kārikās*) from the root text of the *RGV*:

Impure, [partly] pure and [partly] impure,
And perfectly pure – these are said of
The Ordinary beings, the Bodhisattvas,
And the Tathāgatas, respectively. (1. 47)

Just as being of indiscriminative nature,
Space pervades everywhere,
Similarly all-pervading is the Essence,
The immaculate nature of the mind. (1. 49)³²⁶

This latter verse also resonates well with the following verse in the *Mahāyāna-sūtrālamkāra*:

Just as space pervades everywhere,
Thusness also pervades everywhere.
Space pervades in the multitude of forms,
Similarly Thusness also pervades all sentient beings.³²⁷

³²⁵ 舍利弗，不離眾生界有法身、不離法身有眾生界；眾生界即法身、法身即眾生界。舍利弗，此二法者義一名異。(T1611, 832b)

³²⁶ Takasaki, *A Study on the Ratnagotravibhāga*, p. 230-233. The verses in Sanskrit: *aśuddho 'śuddhaśuddho 'tha suśuddho yathā-kramam / sattva-dhātur iti prokto bodhisattvas tathāgataḥ // sarvatrānugataṃ yadvaṃ nirvikalpātmakaṃ nabhaḥ / citta-prakṛiti-vaimalya-dhātuḥ sarvatragas tathā //* (E.H. Johnston edition, pp. 40-41)

³²⁷ *yathāmbaram sarvagataṃ sadā matam tathaiḥ tat sarvagataṃ sadā matam / yathāmbaram rūpagaṇesu sarvagataṃ tathaiḥ tat sattvagaṇesu sarvagam //* (9.15) Cf. Surekha Vijay Limaye, trans. *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra* by Asaṅga, pp. 112.

What pervades all states of beings, regardless of their being pure or impure, is the principle of reality, whether it is designated as *dharmakāya*, *dharmatā*, *dharmadhātu*, or *tathatā*. The reality remains permanent, eternal, quiescent, and steadfast. Its manifestation is only seemingly different owing to the differences in the conditions of the innate mind. This characteristic of “inalterability” (*avikāra*), the ninth topic concerning the *tathāgatagarbha*, is said to be the ultimate refuge of sentient beings. This “inalterability” is identified as the perfectly pure state of the Buddha mind, being nondual, nonconceptual, indestructible, uncreated, unborn, unceasing, permanent, eternal, quiescent, and steadfast. It is therefore the everlasting and ultimate refuge. Accordingly, the *AAN* is cited to illustrate the teaching:

Śāriputra, the *dharmakāya* of the Tathāgata is eternal, since it is inalterable and inexhaustible. Śāriputra, the *dharmakāya* of the Tathāgata is permanent, as it is the everlasting refuge and remains the same till the future limit. Śāriputra, the *dharmakāya* of the Tathāgata is quiescent, as it is nondual and nonconceptual. Śāriputra, the *dharmakāya* of the Tathāgata is unchanging, as it is indestructible and is uncreated (*akṛtrima*).³²⁸

The cited passage here clearly inspired the composition of two commentarial verses of the *RGV-vyākhyā* that carry the same meaning as the passage but exist only in the later of the two Sanskrit manuscripts and in the Tibetan version.³²⁹

³²⁸ 舍利弗，如來法身常，以不異法故、以不盡法故。舍利弗，如來法身恒，以常可歸依故、以未來際平等故。舍利弗，如來法身清涼，以不二法故、以無分別法故。舍利弗，如來法身不變，以非滅法故、以非作法故。(T1611, 835b)

³²⁹ See 1.81, 82 in E. Obermiller’s translation, *The Sublime Science of the Great Vehicle to Salvation*, p. 204. Johnston considers these two verses as interpolations (E.H. Johnston, *The Ratnagotravibhāga Mahāyānottaratantraśāstra*, p. 54, n.7).

The final quotation from the *AAN* comes in the explanation of the tenth topic concerning the *tathāgatagarbha*, its “indivisibility” (*asambheda*). In brief, it explains that the *dharmakāya*, the Tathāgata, the ultimate truth, and the highest *nirvāṇa* are indivisible like the sun and its rays; these four terms are synonymous, depicting different aspects of the nondual reality. To explain these four as a whole, the *RGV-vyākhyā* cites the *AAN* along with the *SMD* as follows:

“Śāriputra, the *tathāgatagarbha* is known as the *dharmakāya*.”

“Lord, the *tathāgatagarbha* does not exist apart from the *dharmakāya*; Lord, the *dharmakāya* does not exist apart from the *tathāgatagarbha*.”

“Lord, it is in accordance with the Truth of Cessation that the *tathāgatagarbha* is spoken of. Lord, this is to say that the *dharmakāya* of the Tathāgata has infinite, limitless qualities (*guṇa*).”

“Lord, *nirvāṇa* is precisely the *dharmakāya* of the Tathāgata.”³³⁰

The Chinese version makes it clear that the first sentence cited comes from the *AAN*, and the remaining three come from the *SMD*. However, neither the Sanskrit nor the Tibetan version contains such attributions. It is indicative that the author of the *RGV-vyākhyā* saw the two *sūtras* as teaching essentially the same concerning the indivisibility of the *dharmakāya*, the Tathāgata, the ultimate truth, and *nirvāṇa*.

“Innovative” is not exactly an appropriate adjective to use here, but the way the author of the *RGV-vyākhyā* interpreted and made use of the *AAN* does open our eyes to an understanding of the profound meaning of the *AAN* in connection not only with the ten

³³⁰舍利弗言：如來藏者，即是法身故。... 世尊，不離法身有如來藏。世尊，不離如來藏有法身。世尊，依一苦滅諦說名如來藏。世尊，如是說如來法身無量無邊功德。世尊言：涅槃者，即是如來法身故。(T1611, 835c).

topics concerning the *tathāgatagarbha* as given in the *RGV*, but also with other *tathāgatagarbha* texts. It also points to the interrelationship between the ideas of *tathāgatagarbha*, *cittaprakṛti*, *dharmakāya*, *dhātu*, *icchāntika*, *nirvāṇa*, *nirodha-satya*, *paramārtha-satya* and *vimalāśraya*. In the following chapter, an examination of the *DSFJWCBL* will lead to an understanding of the *tathāgatagarbha* in connection with yet another concept in Mahāyāna Buddhism: the *bodhicitta*.

Chapter Thirteen: *The AAN and the Dasheng fajie wuchabie lun*

The *Dasheng fajie wuchabie lun* (**Mahāyānadharmadhātvaṣeṣasāstra*, 大乘法界無差別論, hereafter *DSFJWCBL*) is a short text closely related to the *RGV*, but surviving only in Chinese translation. This work is attributed to Sāramati (沙羅末底), also known as Jianwei (堅慧), a claim which Takasaki finds reliable.³³¹ According to Fazang's commentary on this work, Sāramati was a first stage Bodhisattva who was born in Central India about seven hundred years after the *mahāparinirvāṇa* of the Buddha. It is in his commentary that Fazang refers to Sāramati as the author of the *RGV*.³³²

It is clear that the *DSFJWCBL* is modeled after the *RGV*, most apparently in its discussion of the *bodhicitta* under twelve divisions, as 1) fruit (*phala*); 2) cause (*hetu*); 3) own-nature (*svabhāva*); 4) synonym (*paryāya*); 5) indivisibility (*abheda*); 6) different states (*avasthāprabheda*); 7) undefilement (*asamkṣipta*); 8) eternity (*nitya*); 9) union (*yoga*); 10) non-beneficial actions (*anarthakriyā*); 11) beneficial actions (*arthakriyā*); and 12) one *dhātu* (*ekadhātu*). These twelve topics correspond almost exactly with the ten topics concerning the *tathāgatagarbha* as discussed in chapter one of the *RGV*. What is interesting, then, is the way the *DSFJWCBL* equates the *bodhicitta* with the mind of innate purity, and then the *dharmadhātu* and the *dharmakāya*, thereby implicitly identifying *bodhicitta* with the *tathāgatagarbha*.

³³¹ Takasaki, *A Study on the Ratnagotravibhāga*, p. 46.

³³² T1838, 63c.

It is evident that the composition of the *DSFJWCBL* is based largely on the *RGV*, and it would seem that it is intended to be a concise version of the *RGV*. This is apparent from their similarity in content, structure, and the selection of words. The *DSFJWCBL* is structured around the ten topics concerning the *tathāgatagarbha*, and chapters two and four, of the *RGV*. Of the twelve topics concerning the *bodhicitta* discussed in the *DSFJWCBL*, numbers 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, and 9 are direct borrowings from the ten topics concerning the *tathāgatagarbha* in the *RGV*. Number 4 establishes the identity between the *bodhicitta* and the *dharmakāya*, by claiming that upon the attainment of Buddhahood, the *bodhicitta* is named the *dharmakāya*, which is replete with the fourfold qualities of being permanent, blissful, self, and pure; hence, “*bodhicitta*” can be regarded as synonymous with “*dharmakāya*.”³³³ The same exposition on the *dharmakāya*, however, can also be seen in the explanation of the “result” (*phala*) aspect of the *tathāgatagarbha* in the *RGV*, which even has a similar verse.³³⁴ Numbers 7 and 8 have almost exactly corresponding verses in the *RGV* in the section explaining the ninth topic concerning the *tathāgatagarbha*, inalterability (*avikāra*).³³⁵ Numbers 10 and 11 also find their

³³³ 云何異名？頌曰：至於成佛位 不名菩提心 名為阿羅訶 淨我樂常度 ... 復次此菩提心，永離一切客塵過惡，不離一切功德成就，得四種最上波羅蜜，名如來法身。如說世尊如來法身，即是常波羅蜜、樂波羅蜜、我波羅蜜、淨波羅蜜。如來法身，即是客塵煩惱所染自性清淨心差別名字。又如說：舍利弗，此清淨法性即是法界。我依此自性清淨心，說不思議法。(T1626, 892c).

³³⁴ 淨我樂常等 彼岸功德果 厭苦求涅槃 欲願等諸業 (T1611, 814a)

³³⁵ The *DSFJWCBL*: 云何無染？譬如明淨日 為雲之所翳 煩惱雲若除 法身日明顯 此復云何？於不淨位中，現有無量諸煩惱，而不為染，譬如日輪為雲所覆而性常清淨。此心亦爾，彼雜煩惱但為客故。云何常恆？頌曰 譬如劫盡火 不能燒虛空 如是老病死 不能燒法界 如一切世間 依虛空起盡 諸根亦如是 依無為生滅。(T1626, 893a-b) The corresponding passage in the *RGV*: 如虛空淨心 常明無轉變 為虛妄分別 客塵煩惱染 (T1611, 814b) 火不燒虛空 若燒無是處 如是老病死 不能燒佛性 ... 如是陰界根 住煩惱業中 諸煩惱業等 依不善思惟 ... 法身及如來 聖諦與涅槃 功德不相離 如光不離日 (T1611, 814a)

counterpart in two of the nine illustrations of the *tathāgatagarbha* in the *RGV*.³³⁶ Lastly, the idea of number 12 can be traced to the *RGV* in the passages relating to the “indivisibility” of the *dharmakāya*, the Tathāgata, the ultimate truth, and *nirvāṇa*.³³⁷

These corresponding verses are similar, but not exact replications. Though such similarities might support Fazang’s claim that the *RGV* was also composed by Sāramati, I would argue that the differences should alert us to question such a claim. If Sāramati were the author of both the *DSFJWCBL* and the *RGV*, and the former was intended to be a condensed version of the latter, why did he not simply select the most important verses from the *RGV* and construct a summarized version based on the selected verses? Why, on the one hand, did the author expand the root verses of the *RGV* into much longer commentarial verses and prose, but on the other hand, make a condensed version out of the expanded form of the *RGV*? Why is the *bodhicitta* not discussed in the *RGV* as a synonym for the *tathāgatagarbha*, while the writer has reorganized the tenfold meaning of the *tathāgatagarbha* to demonstrate the link between the two notions? Unconvoluted and easy answers to these questions cannot be found if one insists that Sāramati is the author behind the *DSFJWCBL* and the *RGV* with its commentary. It is clear that the *DSFJWCBL* was composed later than the *RGV*; perhaps it is also reasonable to suggest that the aim of the *DSFJWCBL* is not simply to be a summary of the *RGV*. It is rather to

³³⁶ The *DSFJWCBL*: 云何不作義利? 頌曰: 煩惱藏纏覆 不能益眾生 如蓮華未開 如金在糞中 亦如月盛滿 阿脩羅所蝕 (T1626, 893b); the corresponding verses in the *RGV*: 菱花中諸佛 眾蜂中美蜜 皮檜等中實 糞穢中真金 (T1611, 814b).

The *DSFJWCBL*: 云何作義利? 頌曰: 如池無垢濁 如蓮大開敷 亦如上真金 洗除眾糞穢 如虛空清淨 朗月星圍繞 離欲解脫時 功德亦如是 (T1626, 893c); the corresponding verses in the *RGV*: 如清淨池水 無有諸塵濁 種種雜花樹 周匝常圍遶 如月離羅喉 日無雲翳等 無垢功德具 顯現即彼體 (T1611, 816b)

³³⁷ Takasaki also gives his own comparison of the two works in his *A Study on the Ratnagotravibhāga*, pp. 15-16.

establish the concepts of the *dharmadhātu* and the *tathāgatagarbha* as equivalent to that of *bodhicitta*, and hence to place the teachings of the *RGV* within the broader Mahāyāna context, to emphasize that the *bodhicitta* and the *tathāgatagarbha* are one in meaning but are different only in words. Furthermore, the *dharmadhātu* is also identified as the mind of innate purity (*prakṛtipariśuddhacitta*), a term which is also said to be a synonym for “*dharmakāya*”, and hence a link, less direct, is also established with the early *Aṅguttara-Nikāya* teaching of the Pāli canon.

We can also note that the *DSFJWCBL* frequently cites the *AAN* and the *SMD* but without attribution. For example, the discussion of the empty and non-empty aspects of the *tathāgatagarbha* in connection with the analogy of the light, heat, and form of the lantern clearly stems from both the *AAN* and the *SMD*, as the bifurcation of the *tathāgatagarbha* into its “empty” and “non-empty” aspects is never mentioned in the *AAN*, and these two aspects are never discussed through the analogy of a lantern in the world in the *SMD*.

In addition, the idea that the *sattvadhātu* does not exist apart from the *dharmadhātu*, and vice versa, clearly stems from the *AAN*. What is of particular interest is the way this passage has been translated into Chinese. Bodhiruci’s version is:

是故舍利弗，不離眾生界有法身、不離法身有眾生界；眾生界即法身、法身即眾生界。(T668, 467b)

Devaprajñā's translation of this passage in the *DSFJWCBL* is very similar, with the exception that “*buli*” (不離) is replaced by “*buyi*” (不異):

是故舍利弗，眾生界不異法身、法身不異眾生界；眾生界即是法身、
法身即是眾生界。(T1626, 893a)

The word “*yi*” (異) in Chinese can mean both “different” and “separate.” The stylistic choice of “*buyi*” here in conjunction with the use of “*jishi*” (即是) reminds us of the famous passage in Xuanzang's translation of the *Heart Sūtra*: “Śāriputra, form is not different from emptiness, emptiness is not different from form; form is empty, and emptiness is form” (舍利子，色不異空、空不異色；色即是空、空即是色。). This might well be taken as a reflection of the popularity of the *Heart Sūtra* at the time when Devaprajñā translated the *DSFJWCBL* into Chinese, so that Fazang and others, who assisted in the translation, polished the translation to make it read more familiar to Chinese Buddhists.

In addition, the following verses in the *DSFJWCBL* clearly reflect the influence of the *AAN*:

The *dharmakāya* of the sentient beings
Has no marks of differentiation.
It is not constructed and is without cessation,
And is also without the defilements from impurities.³³⁸

The impure are the *sattvadhātu*;
[Those who have attained] purity within impurities are the Bodhisattvas;

³³⁸ 法身眾生中 本無差別相 無作無初盡 亦無有染濁 (T1626, 892c)

The most perfectly pure
Is known as the Tathāgata.³³⁹

Just as the light, heat, and form
Are inseparable from the lantern,
Likewise the Buddha *dharmas*
Are just so with the *dharmatā*.³⁴⁰

This [*dharmatā*] is the *dharmakāya*,
And also the Tathāgata,
And so it is also
The Noble Truths and the ultimate meaning.³⁴¹

The purity of the *sattvadhātu*
Should be understood to be the *dharmakāya*;
The *dharmakāya* is precisely *nirvāṇa*,
And *nirvāṇa* is the Tathāgata.³⁴²

However, I am not suggesting here that the author of the *DSFJWCBL* necessarily composed these works with the *AAN* in mind. Rather, it seems more likely, given the close resemblance between the structure of the *DSFJWCBL* and the *RGV*, that the author of the *DSFJWCBL* intended to summarize the main teachings of the *RGV* and place them in conjunction with the *bodhicitta*. Hence these verses might be a result of the direct influence of the *RGV* with only an indirect influence coming from the *AAN*. In either case, we are given a connection between the teachings of the *ekadhātu*, *dharmakāya*,

³³⁹ 不淨眾生界 染中淨菩薩 最極清淨者 是說為如來 (T1626, 893a)

³⁴⁰ 如光明熱色 與燈無異相 如是諸佛法 於法性亦然 (T1626, 893b)

³⁴¹ 此即是法身 亦即是如來 如是亦即是 聖諦第一義 (T1626, 893c)

³⁴² 眾生界清淨 應知即法身 法身即涅槃 涅槃即如來 (T1626, 894a)

tathāgatagarbha, *sattvadhātu*, and the general Mahāyāna concept of the *bodhicitta*. The connection, as discussed in the Introduction, is not an arbitrary construction. The *Foxing lun*, which will be examined in a later chapter, is another work that gives a similar focus from a soteriological perspective in relation to the two concepts.

Chapter Fourteen: The *AAN* and the *Dasheng qixin lun*

Although it has been generally noted by many modern scholars that the *Dasheng qixin lun* (大乘起信論; hereafter, *DSQXL*) was composed with the *AAN* in mind, the delicate relationship between the two is worth examining in greater detail.

It has become something of a cliché to refer to the *DSQXL* in conjunction with the phrase “Chinese apocrypha,” mostly on the basis of the earlier studies by Japanese Buddhologists.³⁴³ Many of the arguments in these studies were constructed and presented so convincingly that this view of the *DSQXL* is now accepted as a “fact,” to the extent that some scholars hardly consider these findings critically anymore before they unite in claiming the work to be a forgery originating in China. As the allegation that the *DSQXL* is not a text brought into China from India gains popularity, it seems that the difference between the claims that “the *DSQXL* is a work written in China” and that “the *DSQXL* is a work composed by Chinese” has gradually become obscured. In other words, the first claim suggests that the *DSQXL* was composed by a certain Indian Buddhist, probably Paramārtha while he was residing in China, but the work was somehow wrongly attributed to the Aśvaghōṣa of the second century CE who composed works such as the *Buddhacarita*. The second claim, however, goes a step further, asserting that Indian Buddhists like Paramārtha have nothing to do with the writing of the *DSQXL* whatsoever; it is suggested that the text is a completely Chinese apocryphal work written by a Chinese scholar who produced Buddhist writings under the disguise of a

³⁴³ As there has been no English equivalent for the Chinese words *yijing* (疑經) or *weijing* (偽經), Buddhist scholars borrowed the rubric *apocrypha*, a term derived from the Greek *apokruphos*, from the scholarship of biblical studies, where it was originally used to designate doctrines or texts where authorship is doubtful.

genuine Indian text. One of the possible motives behind the forgery could be the forger's desire to have his or her particular interpretation of a Buddhist doctrine accepted as authentic.

For example, Dan Lusthaus uncritically accepts the Japanese findings when he states:

The *Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith* had long been suspected as a Chinese apocryphal text, in fact almost from the moment it appeared in China in the sixth century.³⁴⁴

But in fact, if we check the catalogues of Buddhist texts in China, the *DSQXL* is not listed or referred to as an “apocryphal” text at all. The *Zhongjing mulu* (眾經目錄), compiled by Fajing (法經), *et al.* in 594 C.E., is the earliest Chinese categorical record that mentions the *DSQXL*. The *DSQXL* is listed in the category of “doubtful texts” (*yihuo* 疑惑), where it is stated:

People said that this work is translated by Paramārtha, but we cannot find it in the listing of the catalogue of Paramārtha's works; we therefore list it [in the category of] “doubtful” (*yi*) [texts].³⁴⁵

The *Zhongjing mulu*, however, has another listing of texts that are considered to be “forgeries” (*weiwang* 偽妄), and the *DSQXL* is not listed in that category. The doubt of Fajing and others, as Paul Demiéville also suggests³⁴⁶, is not an allegation that the text was a Chinese fabrication. It is, on the contrary, an uncertainty whether it was Paramārtha or someone else who translated this text into Chinese; in other words, the

³⁴⁴ Dan Lusthaus, “Critical Buddhism and Returning to the Sources,” in *Pruning the Bodhi Tree*, ed. by Jamie Hubbard & Paul Swanson, p. 33.

³⁴⁵ 人云真諦譯，勘真諦錄無此論，故入疑。(T2146, 142a)

³⁴⁶ Paul Demiéville, “Sur L'Authenticité du Ta Tch'eng K'i Sin Louen,” in *Choix D'Études Bouddhiques*, p. 6.

authenticity of the text as a composition of Aśvaghōṣa's was not in fact questioned. Moreover, Chinese scholar-monks contemporary with Paramārtha quote the *DSQXL* extensively, without ever questioning either the authorship or the translation of the text. Among these Chinese scholars are Tanyan (曇延, 516-588), Huiyuan (慧遠, 523-592), Zhiyi (智顛, 538-597), and Jizang (吉藏, 549-623). The *Lidai sanbao ji* (歷代三寶記), completed in 597, just three years after the *Zhongjing mulu*, also confirms that the *DSQXL* was authored by Aśvaghōṣa and translated by Paramārtha. The first time that the *DSQXL* was regarded as an “apocryphal text” was late in the Tang period when the Korean monk Chinsung (珍嵩) mentioned in his *Huayanjing tanxuanji siji* (華嚴經探玄記私記) that,

The composition of the one-fascicle *Qixinlun*, attributed to Aśvaghōṣa, is based on the two-fascicle *Jiancha jing*. In the catalog of Daoxuan, it is stated: because this [*Jiancha jing*] is a forged *sūtra*, therefore the *Qixinlun* which is based on it is a forged commentarial work.³⁴⁷

However, when we examine Daoxuan (道宣)'s catalogue, we find no such allegation. Nevertheless, such a comment did lead modern Japanese scholars, notably Mochizuki Shinkō, to investigate the relationship between the two texts. But regardless of whether these later allegations are true or not, the comment of Lusthaus, that the *DSQXL* has been treated as an apocryphal text since its appearance in the sixth century, is not only unwarranted, but also shows that he was carelessly adhering to previous findings without giving them sufficient consideration.

³⁴⁷ The work is lost, but we find quotations from it in Xianbao (賢寶)'s *Baoce chao* (寶冊抄). The original Chinese reads: 馬鳴起信論一卷依漸剎經二卷造此論，而道跡師目錄中云：此經是偽經故，依此經造起信論，是偽論也。(T2453, 826) Here, *Jiancha jing* (漸剎經) is later corrected by Japanese scholars as referring to the *Zhancha jing* (占察經), a view that is unanimously accepted by modern scholars.

I am not singling out Lusthaus's view for criticism here since the general trend in modern studies of Buddhism seems to deny more readily than to affirm traditional claims, as if denying them would make research appear more "academic." A recent article by Jan Nattier, for example, develops a convoluted argument to prove that the *Heart Sūtra* is simply another Chinese apocryphal text.³⁴⁸ According to Nattier, the *Heart Sūtra* was originally a type of "condensation" (*chaojing* 抄經) from the Chinese translation of the *Large Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra* (i.e., the *Da bore boluomiduo jing*), and this "condensation" was popularized by Xuanzang, who later made a redaction of the Chinese condensation text back into Sanskrit.

In passing, we may note that this postulation is full of problems. Nattier compares, with confidence, the differences in vocabulary and grammatical categories between the Sanskrit version of the *Large Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra* and that of the *Heart Sūtra*, reaching the rather biased conclusion that some passages in the Sanskrit version of the latter "simply [do] not 'ring' properly ... to the well-trained Sanskrit ears."³⁴⁹ The relative passages in the *Large Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra* and the *Heart Sūtra* in question have already been quoted on p.122 above. The use of "*anutpannā aniruddhā*" for "not arising, not vanishing" is exactly what Nāgārjuna uses in his opening verses in the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*. The use of "*anūnā aparipūrṇāḥ*," as discussed earlier, also corresponds well to the original Sanskrit title of the *AAN*. The claim that the

³⁴⁸ Jan Nattier, "The *Heart Sūtra*: A Chinese Apocryphal Text?", pp. 153-223.

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 178.

Sanskrit in the *Prajñāpāramitā-hṛdaya* is not “good Sanskrit” seems to be too weak a case to prove that it is a redaction from Chinese by Xuanzang. Furthermore, it is well known that Xuanzang had in his possession the whole corpus of the *Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* which he had brought back from India. It would be a much easier task for him to have made use of the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā* to reconstruct a Sanskrit version of the *Heart Sūtra*, instead of re-composing a Sanskrit text out of it using inferior Sanskrit. On the other hand, Nattier’s finding that Xuanzang did not *translate* the *Heart Sūtra* into Chinese but his role involved “composing, editing, or popularizing,”³⁵⁰ and even translating the text into Sanskrit, also overlooks the fact that in the *Datang neidian lu* (大唐內典錄), composed by Daoxuan (道宣), the disciple of Xuanzang, it is stated categorically that Xuanzang did translate the *Heart Sūtra* into Chinese.³⁵¹

What has been discussed here may seem to be slightly off the main argument. Nonetheless, it does demonstrate that the current academic study of the translation of Buddhist texts in China is in many ways an oversimplification of the process and often results in findings that are misleading. While it cannot be denied that many apocryphal Chinese texts have been produced in China, to take a prejudicial stand in regarding texts preserved in the Chinese canon, although without much textual evidence for their existence in India, as Chinese forgeries is an oversimplification of the tradition of

³⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 189.

³⁵¹ See T2128, 282c. Nattier’s remark that “The so-called ‘Kumārajīva version’ is associated with his name for the first time only in an 8th century catalogue, the *K’ai-yüan shih-chiao lu*; likewise there is no mention of a translation by Hsüan-tsang prior to the publication of the same catalogue” (*ibid.*, p. 174) cannot be accepted, as the *Datang neidian lu* was already completed in 664 C.E., just two years after the death of Xuanzang, and more than sixty years before the *Kaiyuan shijiao lu* (開元釋教錄), which was composed in 730 C.E.

translation in China. For example, modern scholarship has accepted that Paramārtha intentionally added much material to his translation, that compounds the Sanskrit original with his newly added commentarial materials. This is quite clear when we compare Paramārtha’s version of the *She dasheng lun* (攝大乘論) and the *Zhuanshi lun* (轉識論) to Xuanzang’s translation and the Tibetan translations of the *Mahāyānasamgrahabhāṣya* and Vasubandhu’s *Triṃśikā*. However, when we make such an accusation, we are actually assuming that Paramārtha was translating the Buddhist texts by himself, in a fashion similar to the modern practice of academic translation of Buddhist texts: as, for example, Edward Conze translated the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā* into English; but during the translation process Paramārtha could not resist the temptation to blend in some of his own insights or insert comments into the text. The conclusion in Nattier’s article, referred to above, is also based primarily on the assumption that Xuanzang and Kumārajīva were translating the Buddhist scriptures single-handed, since she challenges the assumption that “...if a single individual (e.g. Kumārajīva) were to translate both the *Heart Sūtra* and the *Large Sūtra* into Chinese from Sanskrit originals, the two Chinese translations should agree word for word *even though the Sanskrit texts do not*” (the italics are Nattier’s). Later, she also assumes that “...this is especially true of a translator like Kumārajīva, who is renowned not for a wooden faithfulness to the Sanskrit original but for his fluid and context-sensitive renditions.”³⁵² From the discovery of Paramārtha’s “notorious” behaviour in tampering with the Sanskrit texts, it is therefore natural to go

³⁵² Nattier, *op. cit.*, p. 186.

one step further and assume that Paramārtha composed works on his own but ascribed them to Vasubandhu and others.

According to historical records, the process of translating Buddhist scriptures in ancient China was actually quite complicated. It is easy for us to overlook the role of the editors and amanuenses who assisted in the translation process. We learn about this complicated translation process from a number of colophons, biographies of the Buddhist monks in China such as the *Gaoseng zhuan* (高僧傳, compiled by Hui Jiao 慧皎), or from Buddhist textual catalogues such as the *Chu sanzang ji ji* (出三藏記集, compiled by Seng You 僧祐), in which the roles of the members within the translation bureau are described in detail. The general process has been summarized by Erik Zürcher:

The master either had a manuscript of the original text at his disposal or he recited it from memory. If he had enough knowledge of Chinese (which was seldom the case) he gave an oral translation (*k'ou-shou* 口授), otherwise the preliminary translation was made, “transmitted”, by a bilingual intermediary (*ch'uan-i* 傳譯). Chinese assistants – monks as well as laymen – noted down the translation (*pi-shou* 筆授), after which the text was submitted to a final revision (*cheng-i* 正義, *chiao-ting* 校定). During the work of translation, and perhaps also on other occasions, the master gave oral explanations (*k'ou-chieh* 口解) concerning the contents of the scriptures translated.³⁵³

Since we know very little about the how the team of Paramārtha translated the Buddhist texts, we do not have any concrete idea about where the extra passages from Paramārtha's translation came from. In the case of the *DSQXL*, before we become so certain about the allegation that it was composed by Paramārtha, we should also take

³⁵³ Erik Zürcher, *The Buddhist Conquest of China*, p. 31. See also Kenneth Ch'en, “Some Problems in the Translation of Chinese Buddhist Canon,” and de Jong, “Buddha's Word in China.”

notice of the fact that the “rumour” about this forged composition first came from a circle related to Daoxuan, a disciple of Xuanzang who endorsed the new school of Yogācāra teachings that are at odds with the *tathāgatagarbha* tradition.

Trying to argue that the *DSQXL* is not an apocryphal Chinese work against the almost unanimous agreement of scholars nowadays is a daunting task, and the present dissertation does not aim to do so, because this is really not the main topic of the thesis. Arguing for *DSQXL* as an “authentically” Indian work is beyond the scope of this study. However, a careful examination of the relationship between the *AAN* and the *DSQXL* does reveal some interesting details which suggest that the *DSQXL* might not be originally written in Chinese. If the *DSQXL* was truly an Indian composition, it is reasonable to assume either that the author of the text was Paramārtha or that it was a text brought into China by him, since Paramārtha was the only Indian monk we know in China at that time who was closely associated with this stream of Buddhist thought. In either case, it would be indicative that the *DSQXL* was originally composed by someone from Northern India or Central Asia³⁵⁴, probably within the classical Yogācāra circle, and that it circulated along with the *TGS*, the *AAN*, the *SMD*, the *RGV*, and other *tathāgatagarbha* texts.

While modern scholarship, in the East as well as in the West, tends to accept that the authorship of the *DSQXL* is of Chinese origin, William Grosnick is one of a very few scholars who are not convinced that the *DSQXL* was indeed composed by a Chinese. He

³⁵⁴ For a detailed discussion of the life and times of Paramārtha, including his birth place and his activities in China, see Diana Paul, *Philosophy of Mind in Sixth-Century China: Paramārtha's 'Evolution of Consciousness'*, pp. 11-37.

also argues, in opposition to an earlier article by Whalen Lai,³⁵⁵ that the use of *xin* (心) and *nian* (念) in the *DSQXL* cannot be seen as conclusive proof for a Chinese authorship of the text, but rather they faithfully reflect the Sanskrit terms *cittaprakṛti* and *ayoniśomanaskāra* that are used throughout the *RGV*.³⁵⁶ The following comments from Grosnick are especially worth noting:

Nor does it mean that the AFM [i.e. the *DSQXL*] was composed by a native Chinese. The style of composition is typical of Buddhist translations and (with the possible exception of the problematical triad *t'i, hsiang, and yung*), typically Chinese conceptual categories like *li* and *shih* or *pen* and *mo* simply do not occur. There are no allusions to any Confucian or Taoist classics and no highly literate rhetorical flourishes. This would leave open the possibility that the text was composed in Chinese by a foreign-born translator.³⁵⁷

We should note that “the style of composition is typical of Buddhist translations” is not a strong point of argument here, as one would expect a competent forger to compose in a style typical of Buddhist translated texts. However, a more convincing argument is seen in a later article, where Grosnick states that the three categories of *ti* (體 essence), *xiang* (相 attributes), and *yong* (用 function) “could not have been formulated by anyone who did not possess a knowledge of Sanskrit.”³⁵⁸

The terms *ti* and *yong* are no doubt borrowed from philosophical Daoism. We learn that there was a *geyi* (格義), or “matching-concept,” stage during the earliest period of Buddhist history in China, when terminology familiar to the Chinese, stemming

³⁵⁵ Whalen W. Lai, “A Clue to the Authorship of the *Awakening of Faith*: Śikṣānanda’s Redaction of the Word ‘Nien,’” pp. 34-53.

³⁵⁶ See William Grosnick, “*Cittaprakṛti* and *Ayoniśomanaskāra* in the *Ratnagoṭravibhāga*.”

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 44-5.

³⁵⁸ William Grosnick, “The Categories of *T'i, Hsiang, and Yung*: Evidence that Paramārtha Composed the *Awakening of Faith*,” p. 66.

mainly from philosophical Daoist texts, was employed to translate Buddhist texts. Even though Sengzhao (僧肇) criticized the *geyi* practice, he nevertheless introduced the use of Daoist *ti-yong* as a hermeneutical device to explain the meaning of *prajñā*. However, to include *xiang* and discuss the three as a triad is something unprecedented in Chinese literature. Not only do these terms coincide with the Sanskrit terms *svabhāva*, *guṇa*, and *vr̥tti* in the *RGV*,³⁵⁹ but they also correspond seamlessly with the *trikāya* (three-body) theory, the *dharmakāya*, the *sāmbhogikakāya*, and the *nairmāṇikakāya*. Moreover, we also find in an ancient *tantra*, the *Kun byed rgyal po'i mdo*, one of the root *tantras* of the “mind class” (*sems sde*) in the rNying ma tradition of Tibetan Buddhism, a discussion of the three aspects of the “primordial ground” (*gdod ma'i gzhi*) of the ultimate reality, namely essence (*ngo bo*), attributes (*rang bzhin*), and compassion (*snying rje*), in relation to the three bodies of the Buddha.³⁶⁰ This *tantra* dates, at the latest, to the eighth century. The similarities can hardly be regarded as coincidental. While the *Kun byed rgyal po'i mdo* also discusses the supremacy of the pure mind, i.e., the *bodhicitta*, it would be too convoluted a theory to suggest that it was the Chinese composition of the *DSQXL*, having been translated into Sanskrit, that influenced Buddhist thinking in India and subsequently led to the production of this *tantra*. Rather, it is much more likely that there exists such a trend in Buddhism of explaining the reality through a triad relating to the three-*kāya* teaching and the belief in the supremacy of the pure mind; or even more practically speaking (as the rNying ma school of Tibetan Buddhism maintains) that there exists a

³⁵⁹ Ibid., pp.67-78.

³⁶⁰ Cf. Neumaier-Dargay, trans. *The Sovereign All-Creating Mind, The Motherly Buddha*, pp. 31-36; 51-53.

stage of practice in which the practitioner, having entered into the pure state of the mind, holds such a mind to be real. The doctrine of upholding the supremacy of the pure mind, which is nondual with the *dharmatā*, is known as the *gzhan stong* (“extrinsic emptiness”) tradition in Tibet.³⁶¹ This trend of Buddhist thought, however, is not regarded as “non-Buddhist,” but as an incomplete stage on the path of Bodhisattvahood.³⁶² So, for the present, let us first leave aside the preconception that the *ti, xiang, yong* triad in the *DSQXL* is indicative of its Chinese origin, but open our mind to see the circumstantial evidence that it might be of Indian origin.

There are subtle differences between two versions of the *DSQXL*. Some of these differences have been articulated by Professor Whalen Lai.³⁶³ Although there is no doubt that Śikṣānanda’s “re-translation” of the *DSQXL* is based heavily on the earlier version attributed to Paramārtha, what interests us, however, is not how similar the versions are, but what the subtle differences between them are. For example, in Paramārtha’s version, at the beginning of the text, it states:

“Mahāyāna” is explained in two ways. What are the two? The first one is the “principle” (*fa*), and the second one is the “meaning” (*yi*).³⁶⁴

In Śikṣānanda’s version, however, this passage is phrased as follows:

What is the establishment of the meaning [of this text]? It refers to Mahāyāna in its two kinds: the *youfa* and the *fa*.³⁶⁵

³⁶¹ Cf. S.K. Hookham, *The Buddha Within*.

³⁶² Cf. Tam Shek-wing, *Dazhongguan lunji*; John Pettit, *Beacon of Certainty*.

³⁶³ Whalen W. Lai, “A Clue to the Authorship of the *Awakening of Faith*: ‘Śikṣānanda’s’ Redaction of the Word ‘Nien’,” pp. 34-53.

³⁶⁴ 摩訶衍者，總說二種。云何為二？一者法；二者義。(T1666, 575c).

³⁶⁵ 云何立義分？謂摩訶衍略有二種：有法及法。(T1667, 584b)

Śikṣānanda's version goes on to explain that "youfa" (有法) refers to the mind of all sentient beings, and that this mind epitomizes all phenomena (*fa* 法) of the secular and the transcendent. The major difference between the two versions lies in the use of "fa" and "yi" in the earlier version, whereas in the later version "youfa" and "fa" are used instead. While no original Sanskrit text of this work is extant (even if it were originally composed in India), the Sanskrit words "dharmin" and "dharma," which are usually translated as "youfa" and "fa" in Chinese, seem to fit into the context of the passage very well. If there was really no Sanskrit original of the *DSQXL* for Śikṣānanda and his team of translators/editors to work on, it would mean that Śikṣānanda's new translation team must have had very creative minds to re-write the above passage with such subtle differences and to replace the two terms in question with a standard Chinese translation of *dharmin* and *dharma*, which seamlessly fits into the context of the passage. Conversely, it is much more reasonable to suppose that Paramārtha translated *dharma* as "yi," having used "fa" to translate *dharmin*, which is not a perfect translation but nonetheless is acceptable.³⁶⁶ It also does not make much sense to claim that the Sanskrit that Śikṣānada based himself on is a redaction from Chinese by Xuanzang, because if that were so, Xuanzang would probably have rendered "fa" (法) as *dharma* and "yi" (義) as *artha*.

³⁶⁶ Cf. The discussion by D.T. Suzuki in his translation of Śikṣānanda's version of the *DSQXL*, *Açvaghosha's Discourse in the Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna*, p. 52 n.

Another example can be found in a later passage, regarding the own-characteristic (*svalakṣaṇa*) of Thusness (*tathatā*) where it is stated:

All ordinary humankind, Śrāvakas, Pratyekabuddhas, and all Buddhas do not increase or decrease; they are not born in the past or afterwards. [The realm of Thusness is] eternal and ultimate. From the beginningless past, its nature is endowed with all qualities, which are of the meaning of great wisdom and illuminosity, of the meaning of radiating throughout the *dharmadhātu*, of the meaning of knowing just as it is, of the meaning of the original purity of the mind, of the meaning of eternity, bliss, self, and purity, of the meaning of coolness, unchangingness, and freedom (*aiśvarya*).³⁶⁷

The corresponding passage in Śikṣānanda's version is fairly similar in meaning, with mostly subtle changes that are all reasonable and clarify the meaning better, but with one major change: instead of describing Thusness as “cool” (*chingliang* 清涼), the new version changes this epithet to “quiescent” (*jijing* 寂靜). Such a change might be surprising both in the Chinese and English translations. The original Sanskrit of “coolness”, *śiva*, however, has the basic meaning of “happiness” or “auspiciousness,” which implies the meaning of “quiescence,” although “quiescence” is more often the translation of *śānti*. Such a change is not significant, and we have no better explanation as to why Śikṣānanda made such a change than to assume that when he worked on the new version of the *DSQXL*, instead of re-translating the whole text, he only polished the earlier version based on a Sanskrit version of the *DSQXL*, which was not a redaction by Xuanzang and which is not extant today. By correcting certain terms or passages in his Chinese version he made the presentation of the ideas of the Indian text more accurate.

³⁶⁷ 真如自體相者，一切凡夫、聲聞、緣覺、菩薩、諸佛，無有增減，非前際生、非後際生，畢竟常恒。從本以來，性自滿足一切功德：所謂有大智慧光明義故；遍照法界義故；真實識知義故；自性清淨心義故；常樂我淨義故；清涼不變自在義故。(T1666, 579a)

In claiming this I am not rejecting Whalen Lai's finding that "the AFMS (i.e. the Śikṣānanda version) was authored to counter the attacks of the new Wei-shih school. At that time, someone, comparable to Hakeda in our own time, tried to rectify the AFM by rendering it in such a way that it would not be too offensive to the better Yogācāra rationality."³⁶⁸ It is true that the conflicts between Xuanzang's transmission of the teachings from the new school of Yogācāra and the teachings of the *tathāgatagarbha* can be observed in the preface to Śikṣānanda's translation of the *DSQXL*. However, we should be careful to note that the new version might not be simply a "re-wording" of the earlier version of the *DSQXL* to make it more "acceptable" to the Faxiang school of Xuanzang. First of all, as discussed above, some of the changes in the new version can be more reasonably explained by accepting that the changes made were based on a Sanskrit text; secondly, many of these changes, again using the two examples shown, have no bearing whatsoever on its being accepted or not by the Faxiang school; thirdly, although in the preface to Śikṣānanda's "re-translation" of the *DSQXL* we learn that this new version is indeed a response to the Faxiang school who denounced the teachings in the *DSQXL*, particularly the teaching on the "mutual perfuming" of Thusness and ignorance,³⁶⁹ we do not see any changes in wording at all in Śikṣānanda's version regarding this particular doctrine. Furthermore, the new version was made at a time when the Faxiang school of Xuanzang was being heavily criticized, and it would be illogical for Śikṣānanda and Fazang, both of whom were associated with the Huayan school and

³⁶⁸ Whalen Lai, "A Clue to the Authorship of the *Awakening of Faith*: 'Śikṣānanda's' Redaction of the word 'Nien'," p. 50.

³⁶⁹ See "Preface to the New Translation of the *Dasheng qixin lun*" (新譯大乘起信論序) T1667, 583b-c.

participated in preparing the new version of the *DSQXL*, to try so hard to rewrite this particular text in order to calm down the dissenting voices of the Faxiang school, when on the other hand Fazang constructed the *panjiao* system of the Huayan school which relegates the teachings transmitted by Xuanzang to a low rank.

Modern scholars have often seen an indication of the Chinese authorship of the *DSQXL* in the concepts of *benjue* (本覺, “original enlightenment”), *shijue* (始覺, “actualization of enlightenment”), and *bujue* (不覺, “non-enlightenment”), since these terms are not seen in translations of Buddhist texts earlier than that but also appear in other equally “problematic” texts such as the *Jingang sanwei jing* (金剛三昧經, **Vajrasamādhi-sūtra*), *Renwang jing* (仁王經), and the *Zhancha jing* (占察經). The term *benjue* (which is also well-known in its Japanese pronunciation, *hongaku*) is often denigrated for having no Sanskrit equivalent, and is accordingly criticized by the scholars of Critical Buddhism, especially Matsumoto Shirō and Hakamaya Noriaki, as a non-Buddhist idea, under the rubric “*hongaku shisō*.”

However, it might be misleading to discuss treat these three terms as a triad. Indeed, what is said in the *DSQXL* is that,

As for the meaning of “original enlightenment,” the essence of mind is free from thoughts. [The state of mind] that is free from thoughts is equivalent to the element of space, which pervades everywhere without exception. The characteristic of oneness of the *dharmadhātu* is the undifferentiated *dharmakāya* of the Tathāgata. What is based on this *dharmakāya* is known as the original enlightenment. Why is it so? [It is because] the meaning of “original enlightenment” is [established] in contradistinction to the “actualization of enlightenment,” as such [a process of the] “actualization of enlightenment” is

assimilated to the “original enlightenment.” As for the meaning of the “actualization of enlightenment,” because of the “original enlightenment,” there is [the notion of] “non-enlightenment;” because of the “non-enlightenment,” there is the “actualization of enlightenment.” And to be enlightened to the origin of the mind is known as the “ultimate enlightenment.”³⁷⁰

Three states of mind are distinguished in this passage: 1) “non-enlightenment,” which is the state of ordinary sentient beings; 2) “actualization of enlightenment,” which is the state of the Bodhisattvas on the path toward the attainment of their innate Buddhahood; and 3) “ultimate enlightenment” (*jiujing jue* 究竟覺), which is the complete realization of enlightenment, and is of course referred to as the state of the Buddhas or Tathāgatas. It is these three states of “enlightenment” that should be used in juxtaposition, whereas “original enlightenment” can be seen as the basis of all three states of the mind.³⁷¹ This makes the “original enlightenment” sound very similar to the idea of the “innate purity of the mind” or “inherent enlightenment,” an idea that is very similar to the concept of “*foxing*” (佛性) or Buddha-nature.

Early scholarship suggested that the Sanskrit origin of “*foxing*” should be either “*buddhatā*” or “*buddhatva*”. After the discovery of the Sanskrit manuscript of the *RGV* and the intensive study that was made of it, Japanese scholars were convinced that neither

³⁷⁰ 所言本覺義者，謂心體離念。離念相者，等虛空界，無所不遍。法界一相，即是如來平等法身。依此法身，說名本覺。何以故？本覺義者，對始覺義說，以始覺者即同本覺。始覺義者，依本覺故，而有不覺；依不覺故，說有始覺；又以覺心源故，名究竟覺。(T1666, 576b)

³⁷¹ 復次本覺隨染，分別生二種相，與彼本覺不相捨離。云何為二？一者智淨相，二者不思議業相。智淨相者，謂依法力熏習，如實修行，滿足方便故，破和合識相，滅相續心相，顯現法身，智淳淨故。此義云何？以一切心識之相皆是無明，無明之相不離覺性，非可壞非不可壞，如大海水因風波動，水相風相不相捨離，而水非動性，若風止滅動相則滅，濕性不壞故。如是眾生自性清淨心，因無明風動，心與無明俱無形相不相捨離，而心非動性，若無明滅相續則滅，智性不壞故。不思議業相者，以依智淨，能作一切勝妙境界，所謂無量功德之相常無斷絕，隨眾生根自然相應，種種而見得利益故。(T1666, 576b) The passage here indicates that two states can arise out of the “original enlightenment”: “purity of wisdom” and “inconceivable *karma*”. The former corresponds to “actualization of enlightenment” (*shijue*), and the latter corresponds to “ultimate enlightenment” (*jiujing jue*). The state of “non-enlightenment” is not mentioned here.

buddhatā nor *buddhatva* could possibly be the Sanskrit origin of what was translated into Chinese as “*foxing*”. Ogawa Ichijō wrote a short but convincing article³⁷² that, having compared Ratnamati’s Chinese translation of the *RGV* and the recovered Sanskrit manuscript, concludes definitively that the term “*foxing*” is used to translate compounds of the terms “*dhātu*”, “*gotra*”, and “*garbha*”, which Ogawa regards as synonymous. In the same edition of the *Indogaku Bukkyōgaku Kenkyū*, Shinoda Masashige goes a step further, reaching the firm conclusion that it is most appropriate to regard the term “*foxing*” as the translation for “*buddhadhātu*”.³⁷³ This latter view was later supported by Takasaki Jikidō, who clarifies that the term “*buddhadhātu*” can be used to refer to both the “nature of the Buddha” and “the cause of the Buddha.” In other words, “*dhātu*” can be seen as an equivalent to “*dharmatā*” and “*hetu*”.³⁷⁴

These arguments are very well established, and have been generally accepted in the academic field. What I would like to add to these discussions is that Paramārtha has also rendered “*tathāgatagotra*” as “*foxing*”, as is evidenced in a passage in the *FXL*:

Because the three kinds of nature manifest the pure nature of the mind, which is known as the “store of the Tathāgata” (*rulaizang*), therefore the nine illustrations, such as the lotus, are mentioned. The three kinds of nature are: 1) the body of *dharma* (*fashen*); 2) Thusness (*ruru*); and 3) the Buddha-nature (*foxing*). Summarizing the nine illustrations into three categories, the first three are used to illustrate the body of *dharma*; the next one illustrates Thusness; the final five illustrate the Buddha-nature.³⁷⁵

³⁷² Ogawa Ichijō, “‘Busshō’ to buddhatva,” pp. 544-545.

³⁷³ Shinoda Masashige, “Busshō to sono gengo,” pp. 223-226.

³⁷⁴ Takasaki Jikidō, “Dharmatā, Dharmadhātu, Dharmakāya, and Buddhadhātu – Structure of the Ultimate Value in Mahāyāna Buddhism,” pp. 78-94.

³⁷⁵ 因三種自性為顯心清淨界名如來藏，故說九種如蓮花等譬。三種自性者，一者法身；二如如；三佛性。合此九譬為三，初三譬法身；次一譬如如；後五譬佛性。(T1610, 808a)

What is explored here is no doubt borrowed from the *RGV*, where we can read a similar passage:

In brief, through three kinds of meaning, it is said by the Bhagavat that all sentient beings always have the *tathāgatagarbha*. The three meanings are: 1) the *dharmakāya* of the Tathāgata penetrating all sentient beings; 2) the Tathāgata being Thusness (*tathatā*) as the undifferentiated totality; and 3) the existence of the *tathāgatagotra* [in sentient beings].³⁷⁶

And, in a later verse:

The [threefold] nature is the *dharmakāya*
Tathatā, and the *gotra*,
Which are known by the [nine] illustrations,
Of three, one, and five [respectively]. (1.144)³⁷⁷

Note that “*foxing*” in Paramārtha’s translation corresponds exactly to “*tathāgatagotra*” in the *RGV*. It is not uncommon, however, for Chinese translators to render “*tathāgata*” simply as “*fo*” or “*fotuo*,” instead of adhering to the more literally accurate translation, “*rulai*” (如來). Therefore, when “*foxing*” and “*rulaixing*” do not have too great a difference in meaning to the Chinese translators and editors rather than being different epithets when applied to the Buddha, it is possible that they would opt to use a term that speaks more naturally to Chinese readers: in which case it would be “*foxing*.”

But if “*foxing*” were indeed the translation of “*buddhadhātu*” and “*tathāgatadhātu*”, how would “*buddhatā*” and “*buddhatva*” have been translated into

³⁷⁶ *samāsatas trividhenārthena sadā sarva-sattvās tathāgatagarbhā ity uktam bhagavatā / yad uta sarvasattveṣu tathāgata-dharmakāya-parispharaṇārthena tathāgata-tathatā vyatibhedārthena tathāgatagotra-sambhavārthena ca* // (My translation, E.H. Johnson edition, p. 26; cf. Takasaki (1966), p. 198.)

³⁷⁷ *svabhāvo dharmakāyo 'sya tathatā gotram ity api / tribhir ekena sa jñeyaḥ pañcabhiś ca nidarśanaiḥ* // (E.H. Johnston edition, p. 69; cf. Takasaki (1966), p. 284.)

Chinese? It seems possible that Paramārtha’s team of translators, having used “*foxing*” to translate “*buddhadhātu*” and “*tathāgatadhātu*”, used “*benjue*” to translate “*buddhatā*” or “*buddhatva*”. These terms, however, are very close in meaning, and can be treated as synonyms. Instead of trying to render the term “*benjue*” literally back to its possible Sanskrit original, which modern scholars have discussed in detail, concluding that no Indian terminology exists and that the attempt to re-construct its Sanskrit equivalent is impossible, we may be slightly more “creative” in looking at this passage from a philosophical or doctrinal point of view and come up with the following suggestion.

The term “*benjue*” can be seen as a free rendering of “*buddhatā*” or “*buddhatva*”, which can both be literally translated as “*foxing*” in Chinese. Given that the idea of “*benjue*” is essentially very close in meaning to that of the “*foxing*”, and that throughout the *DSQXL* we cannot find the term “*foxing*” at all, there may be some ground to support this view. As we know, “*Buddha*” is usually transliterated into Chinese phonetically as “*fo*” (佛) or “*fotuo*” (佛陀); however, it is also translated as “*jue*” (覺) or “*juezhe*” (覺者). In other words, “*buddhatā*”, “*buddhatva*”, and “*buddhadhātu*” can all be translated as “*juexing*” (覺性). If the Chinese translators want to emphasize that such a *juexing* or Buddha-nature is innate within sentient beings, which indeed is an essential point of the theory, it is possible that they could creatively render the term as “*benjue*”, not only emphasizing that *buddhatva* or *buddhatā* is innate or intrinsic, but also placing this term in juxtaposition with other terms such as “*shijue*” and “*bujue*”. What is interesting is that the *DSQXL* itself never uses the term “*foxing*.” However, in the preface to Śikṣānanda’s

version, “*foxing*” appears a few times when other scriptural sources,³⁷⁸ from the *SMD* and the *MPN*, are cited.³⁷⁹

This is not mere speculation. We can in fact find a passage supportive of this claim in the *Dasheng qixinlun yiji* (大乘起信論義記), composed by Fazang, who was involved in Śikṣānanda’s second translation of the *DSQXL*. Fazang explains:

Here the term ‘*fo*’ refers to enlightenment (*jue*); the term ‘*xing*’ refers to what is original (*ben*). Therefore, ‘*foxing*’ is [also] expressed as ‘original enlightenment’ (*benjue*).³⁸⁰

If such a view about the problematic notion of “original enlightenment” is accepted, the *DSQXL* may not be as controversial as it seems to be to the Japanese scholars of Critical Buddhism. It may even be more “Indian” than we expect it to be. So far, criticism on the *DSQXL*, no matter how sophisticated and convincing it may be, does nothing more than demonstrate that the Chinese writing in the *DSQXL* uses terms that sound more Chinese than Sanskrit. But it may also be possible that the translators intentionally rendered the work in a way that catered to Chinese readers, to the extent that it reads like an indigenous Chinese composition.

Indeed, the three states of “enlightenment” remind us of the famous verse in the *RGV* that compares the purity of the Buddhas, the Bodhisattvas, and ordinary sentient beings. It also brings to mind the three states of mind in the *AAN* which we discussed earlier. According to the *Lidai sanbao ji* (歷代三寶記), Paramārtha’s version of the

³⁷⁸ 故勝鬘經云：由有如來藏，令厭生死苦樂求涅槃。又經云：闍提之人，未來以佛性力故，善根還生，如彼淨珠能清濁水，是勝義之常善，異太虛之無記。故經云：佛性常故非三世攝，虛空無故非三世攝，豈執事空以齊真理。… 故經云：然藥真味停留在山，猶如滿月。又云：雖處五道受別異身，而此佛性常恒不變。(T1667, 583c-584a)

³⁷⁹ In the *Shi mohoyan lun* (釋摩訶衍論), attributed to Nāgārjuna, there are many places where the terms “*benjue*” and “*foxing*” are mentioned together as if they are one term. For example: 寶喻中言大摩尼珠者，當喻何法？喻本覺佛性故。所以者何？本覺佛性隱藏眾生相續身中。(T1668, 650b).

³⁸⁰ 此中佛者是覺，性者是本，故名佛性為本覺也。(T1846, 270b)

DSQXL was completed in 550 C.E. If we are to accept this dating, it means that the translation of the *DSQXL* took place some twenty-five years after Bodhiruci's translation of the *AAN*. However, we cannot find any sentence that is directly borrowed from the *AAN* or the *SMD*. It seems that the author of the *DSQXL* quotes rather freely from various scriptures, unlike the *RGV* which is careful to quote the exact words from the *sūtras*. Nevertheless, it is clear that the *DSQXL* not only relies heavily on the *AAN* in delineating its teachings on the *tathāgatagarbha*, but that, in many of its passages, the *DSQXL* actually quotes from the *AAN* and comments on a possible misunderstanding of the text. For example, it is written in the *DSQXL* that,

Hearing the teachings in the *sūtra* that there is no increase or decrease in the *tathāgatagarbha*, and that its essence is replete with all excellent qualities, [ordinary sentient beings] might think that in the *tathāgatagarbha* there is plurality of mind and matter due to their inability to understand [the teaching].³⁸¹

Another passage in the *DSQXL* says:

Furthermore, [within] the essential characteristic of Thusness, the Śrāvakas, Pratyekabuddhas, Bodhisattvas, and Buddhas have no increase or decrease. They were not brought into existence in the beginning, nor will they cease to be at the end of time. [The nature of Thusness is] ultimately permanent and eternal.³⁸²

These are clearly based on a passage from the *AAN* which states:

Śāriputra, the *dharmakāya* of the Tathāgata is eternal (*nitya*), since it is inalterable and inexhaustible. Śāriputra, the *dharmakāya* of the Tathāgata is permanent (*dhruva*), as it is the everlasting refuge and remains the same until the future limit. Śāriputra, the *dharmakāya* of the Tathāgata is quiescent (*śiva*), as it

³⁸¹聞修多羅說：如來之藏，無有增減，體備一切功德之法，以不解故即謂如來之藏有色心法自相差別。(T1666, 580a)

³⁸²復次，真如自體相者，一切凡夫、聲聞、緣覺、菩薩、諸佛，無有增減，非前際生、非後際滅，畢竟常恒。(T1666, 579a)

is nondual and nonconceptual. Śāriputra, the *dharmakāya* of the Tathāgata is unchanging (*sāśvata*), as it is indestructible and is uncreated (*akṛtrima*).³⁸³

The use of the word “quiescent” (*chingliang*) here is also reminiscent of the passage in the *DSQXL* which has been discussed earlier.

Furthermore, other ideas in the *DSQXL* that are reflective of the teachings of the *AAN* are the numerous paragraphs of discussion on the notion of “one *dharmadhātu*,” which is a central idea in the *AAN*. In the *DSQXL*, it is stated:

The mind-as-Thusness is the essence of the teaching of the totality of the one *dharmadhātu*; this is known as the non-arising and non-vanishing of the [true] nature of mind.³⁸⁴

In a later passage, it is said:

The nature of the mind is said to be always [in a state of] no-thought, and because of that it is known as “unchanging.” [But] owing to not understanding the one *dharmadhātu*, the mind is not connected [with Thusness], and suddenly [conceptual] thoughts arise, and it is known as “ignorant”.³⁸⁵

The central notion of the “one *dharmadhātu*” in the *DSQXL* is discussed in relation to the mind. Although the idea of the “one *dharmadhātu*” can also be seen in other Mahāyāna scriptures, to discuss it in the context that not realizing, and hence not being in perfect unity with, this nondual *dharmadhātu* results in the state of ignorance seems to be a clear reference to the *AAN*.

The *DSQXL* goes on to explain:

³⁸³ 舍利弗，如來法身常，以不異法故、以不盡法故。舍利弗，如來法身恆，以常可歸依故、以未來際平等故。舍利弗，如來法身清涼，以不二法故、以無分別法故。舍利弗，如來法身不變，以非滅法故、以非作法故。(T668, 497a)

³⁸⁴ 心真如者，即是一法界大總相法門體，所謂心性不生不滅。(T1666, 576a)

³⁸⁵ 所謂心性常無念故，名為不變；以不達一法界故，心不相應，忽然念起，名為無明。(T1666, 577c)

Furthermore, the characteristic of arising and vanishing [of the mind] is of two kinds: first, it is coarse, due to the connection with the mind; and second, it is subtle, due to the non-connection with the mind. Here, the coarser of the coarse is the realm of ordinary sentient beings; the subtler of the coarse and the coarser of the subtle is the realm of the Bodhisattvas; and the subtler of the subtle is the realm of the Buddhas.³⁸⁶

The word “connected” (*xiangying* 相應) is mentioned twice in the passages quoted above. It is interesting to note that while the *AAN* discusses the state of enlightenment and non-enlightenment in terms of being “connected” or not with the pure *tathāgatagarbha*, the *DSQXL* discusses the three states, of the Buddhas, of the Bodhisattvas, and of ordinary sentient beings, in terms of the connection with the mind. This seems to be a reference to the *AAN* with its own twist. The Chinese term “*xiangying*” (相應) can be read as a translation for a number of Sanskrit terms, including “*yoga*”, “*saṃprayukta*”, “*saṃprayoga*”, and “*sahagata*”. However, if these passages in the *DSQXL* were originally from an Indian work referring to the *AAN*, the original Sanskrit for “*xiangying*” in the *DSQXL* would have been “*sambaddha*”, as we find in the extant Sanskrit original of the *RGV* that quotes the relevant passage from the *AAN*.

What is most controversial about the teaching of the *DSQXL*, however, is the idea that Thusness can permeate ignorance, and vice versa. This has been a crucial point that was attacked by scholars even before the appearance of Śikṣānanda’s second translation

³⁸⁶ 復次，生滅相者，有二種。云何為二？一者粗，與心相應故；二者細，與心不相應故。又粗中之粗，凡夫境界；粗中之細及細中之粗，菩薩境界；細中之細，是佛境界。(T1666, 577c). Note that the “realm of the Buddhas” is not mentioned in Śikṣānanda’s version (T1667, 586b).

at the latest.³⁸⁷ While it is beyond the scope of the present thesis to discuss this problem in detail, I would like to comment that: 1) we do not know if the Sanskrit original (if there was one) of “*xunxi*” (熏習) or permeation is “*vāsanā*”, the same word used in Yogācāra Buddhism when discussing the theory of the permeation of the karmic seeds; and 2) it is arguable whether one needs to confine oneself to only one way of using the term “*xunxi*”, in accordance with the usage in the new school of Yogācāra transmitted into China by Xuanzang. In Bhāvaviveka’s *Prajñāpradīpa* (*Bore deng lun shi*, 般若燈論釋), for example, it is said:

The wonderful *dharma* is called “wonderful *dharma*” because it is pure; it is called pure because it can extinguish the fire of the permeation of defilements.³⁸⁸

And again, it is also stated in the same work that:

Because of your various conceptualizations permeating [your innate] wisdom, therefore you stubbornly claim the Tathāgatas [to be either existing or nonexisting], and they are all untrue.³⁸⁹

The *Prajñāpradīpa* was translated by Prabhākaramitra into Chinese in 632 C.E. Its Sanskrit original has been lost, and it survives only in Chinese and Tibetan translations. Although modern scholarly opinion is unanimous in seeing the Chinese version as a very poor translation of Bhāvaviveka’s work, the extent of its accuracy is not really our concern here. What attracts our attention is the use of the term “*xunxi*” in a context that is completely unrelated to the notion of karmic seeds stored in the *ālayavijñāna*. This Chinese translation was made *before* Xuanzang came back from India to compile the

³⁸⁷ See the preface to Śikṣānanda’s translation of the *DSQXL*, which says: 故使偏見之流，執成唯識，誹毀此論真妄互熏，既形於言，遂彰時聽，方等甘露翻為毒藥。(T1667, 583c)

³⁸⁸ 妙法者，謂清淨故，名為妙法；能滅煩惱熏習火故，名為清淨。(T1566, 135b)

³⁸⁹ 汝以種種分別習氣熏習智慧故，執說如來，是皆不然。(T1566, 120b)

Cheng weishi lun and establish the clear-edged definition of “permeation,” following the teachings of Dharmapāla’s Yogācāra system.

While we will not pursue this issue any further here, it is important to point out that the refutation of the theory of “mutual permeation” in the *DSQXL*, and hence assigning a Chinese authorship to this text, relies on a definition of the notion of “permeation” (*vāsanā*) along the lines of the new school of Yogācāra only.

What has been discussed above is intended to leave open the idea that there is indeed much evidence for an Indian origin of the *DSQXL*. As with the *RGV*, the writing of the *DSQXL* shows familiarity with several *tathāgatagarbha* texts and the Yogācāra doctrines. Also, like the *RGV*, the *DSQXL* is not itself a commentarial work on any specific *tathāgatagarbha* text in the way that, say, Vasubandhu’s *Madhyāntavibhāga-vṛtti* is a commentary on Maitreya’s *Madhyāntavibhāga*. But there is no doubt that the *RGV* is a work that attempts to clarify and explain the principle and teachings of the *tathāgatagarbha*. The *DSQXL* can be understood as a work with similar intentions. It warns us against the possible misinterpretation of these *tathāgatagarbha* texts by pointing out these easily misunderstood passages from the *AAN*, the *SMD*, and others, and offers remedies in each case. It also discusses what it considers to be the correct understanding of emptiness (*sūnyatā*) by relating it to the notion of “knowing what is emptied as such and knowing what is not emptied as such,” in the same vein as does the *SMD*. It is also clear, as we discussed earlier, that the teachings on the nondual *dharmadhātu* and the correct understanding of the *tathāgatagarbha* in the *AAN* are

intended to rectify the nihilistic interpretation of “emptiness,” and hence the “middle way” (*madhyamāpratipad*), expounded in the *Prajñāpāramitā*. This same message is also emphasized in the *DSQXL*. Its discussion of the relationship between the *dharmakāya* and the *tathāgatagarbha* is also similar to what we find in the *AAN* and in the classical Yogācāra tradition.³⁹⁰ Indeed, the basic premise of the *DSQXL* is characteristic of both the *tathāgatagarbha* and classical Yogācāra thinking. For example, it is stated in the *DSQXL* that the “mind subject to life-and-death” exists on the basis of “the mind of Thusness”. This is a teaching that Dan Lusthaus finds “illogical,” and he goes on to ask “What does it mean to say that non-enlightenment arises from or is produced by original enlightenment?”³⁹¹ This teaching can in fact be found in the *SMD*:

Lord, the life-and-death cycle (*samsāra*) is based on the
tathāgatagarbha.³⁹²

The same, of course, can be said about the distinction of tainted-Thusness (*samalā tathatā*) and untainted-Thusness (*nirmalā tathatā*) in the *RGV*. It is exactly because the “mind subject to life-and-death” is based on the “mind of Thusness,” that such a conventional, ignorant state of mind can be said to have the potential to be transformed into the mind that is of “one taste” with Thusness. This process of transformation is known as the “transformation of basis” (*zhuanyi*; *āśrayaparivṛtti*) in the Yogācāra tradition. In the *DSQXL* such a process is not detailed; rather, there is simply a general description of a process of “actualization of enlightenment” (*shijue*), a process that moves from the state of “non-enlightenment” (*bujue*) to one that undertakes a meditative

³⁹⁰ Cf. Paul Griffiths, et al., *The Realm of Awakening*, pp. 15-30.

³⁹¹ Dan Lusthaus, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

³⁹² 世尊，生死者依如來藏。(T353, 222b)

cultivation of tranquility and insight (*zhiguan*; *śamatha-vipaśyanā*), at the completion of which one realizes that the “ultimate enlightenment” (*jiujing jue*) achieved is identical to the utterly pure *dharmakāya* that has always been innate as the “original enlightenment” (*benjue*) within every sentient being without exception. The doctrine of the *tathāgatagarbha* and *ālayavijñāna* in the *DSQXL* is clearly oriented towards a soteriological concern, rather than the kind of philosophical discourse that is more characteristic of Chinese commentarial works.

Moreover, the two aspects of the mind in the *DSQXL* clearly correspond to the bifurcations in Mahāyāna Buddhism, such as *dharmatā* and *dharmā*, ultimate truth and conventional truth, the unconditioned (*asaṃskṛta*) and the conditioned (*saṃskṛta*), emptiness and dependently arisen phenomena, and so on. The absolute in the *DSQXL* is identified as “the mind as thusness” (*xin jenru* 心真如), while the phenomenal is identified as “the mind subject to birth-and-death” (*xin shengmie* 心生滅).³⁹³

Such an idea of the bifurcation of the mind seems grounded firmly in the Yogācāra tradition. It is stated in the *DSQXL*:

As for the mind subject to birth and death, it is on the basis of the *tathāgatagarbha* [theory] that there is the mind of birth-and-death. What is “neither birth nor death” (*nirvāṇa*) diffuses harmoniously with “birth-and-death” (*saṃsāra*), and [the two] are neither identical nor different.³⁹⁴

³⁹³ It is not clear what the original Sanskrit of these terms is, if the *DSQXL* was originally composed as an Indian work. The term “*zhenru*” (真如), technically speaking, should be the translation for the Sanskrit “*bhūtatathatā*”; however, it is often used in the Chinese canon as a translation for “*tathatā*”. On the other hand, Chinese translations also sometimes use “*shengsi*” or “*shengmie*” to translate “*saṃsāra*”. Given the two aspects of the mind identified here, it is possible to refer to “the mind as *tathatā*” and “the mind as *saṃsāra*.”

³⁹⁴ 心生滅者，依如來藏故有生滅心。所謂不生不滅與生滅和合，非一非異。(T1666, 576b)

In the *Dharmadharmatāvibhaṅga*, regarded as one of the “Five Texts of Maitreya” in the Tibetan tradition, it is said that *dharmas* and *dharmatā* are neither the same nor different. While the *Dharmadharmatāvibhaṅga* discusses the relationship and distinction of *dharmas* and *dharmatā* as the defining characteristics of *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*, the *DSQXL* discusses exactly the same two categories according to how our human mind perceives them. In the *Dharmadharmatāvibhaṅga*, *dharmatā* (or reality-itself) is not described as an ontological monistic entity in contradistinction to *dharmas* (or phenomena). *Dharmatā* is said to be “truly existent,” not because it is postulated as an ontological entity, but because it exists simply the way it is. In other words, using the words of the *DSQXL*, *dharmatā* exists “harmoniously” (*hehe* 和合) with *dharmas*. What constitutes *dharmatā*, which is equivalent to *tathatā*, also receives a very similar definition in both the *DSQXL* and the *Dharmadharmatāvibhaṅga*. In the *DSQXL* *tathatā* is described:

Therefore, all *dharmas* are primordially free from the marks of language, free from the marks of words, free from the marks of [the dualistic perspective of having] objects of the mind; they are ultimately equal, without changes, and are indestructible, and are nothing other than the one mind. This is known as Thusness (*tathatā*).³⁹⁵

In the *Dharmadharmatāvibhaṅga*, the defining characteristic (*lakṣaṇa*) of *dharmatā* is explained as follows:

As for the other, the defining characteristic of *dharmatā*
Is Thusness, which is free from the distinction of

³⁹⁵ 是故一切法從本以來，離言說相、離文字相、離心緣相，畢竟平等、無有變異、不可破壞，唯是一心，故名真如。(T1666, 576a)

apprehensible object and apprehending subject
Or of the representable and that which represents.³⁹⁶

What has been discussed seems not to be directly related to the *AAN*. However, if the theory that “the *DSQXL* was originally composed by an Indian Buddhist belonging to the classical Yogācāra tradition” is granted, this would be the only Indian treatise besides the *RGV* that clearly makes use of the *AAN*. I do not intend to present any conclusive evidence for whether the *DSQXL* is an Indian composition or a Chinese apocryphal work, let alone determine whether it is one of Paramārtha’s translations. What I aim to do, however, is to make a cautious claim that we should be careful not to overlook the possibilities. It could indeed be possible that it was composed originally by an Indian. If that were truly to be the case, and if we could penetrate through the “sinification” of the Chinese translators and editors of this text, what we are reading is another Indian Buddhist composition that is inspired by the *AAN*.

Furthermore, the study of the *AAN* can help us understand the teachings in the *DSQXL*, taking us beyond the Chinese phraseology in the *DSQXL* which would no doubt carry with it a Daoist tone more than a Buddhist one. For example, we need not understand the “pure essence of the mind” to be non-empty and as the truly existent foundation that gives rise to all kinds of phenomena. This idea sounds more like a Daoist “way” than the Buddhist Thusness. Rather, we can make use of our understanding of the *AAN* that the “one *dharmadhātu*” is itself merely a “designation,” that it is also empty

³⁹⁶ According to the critical edition of the *Dharmadharmatāvibhaṅgakārikā* by Tsultrim Phuntsok (1990):
gzhan yang chos nyid mtshan nyid ni / gzung ba dang ni 'dzin pa dang / brjod par bya dang rjod par byed / khyad med de bzhin nyid yin no //

like everything else but replete with all kinds of qualities of the Enlightened One. In this way, we would better appreciate the teachings of the *DSQXL* about the two aspects of the mind. By “penetrating through” the linguistic barrier when reading the *DSQXL*, making use of the teachings in the *AAN*, the message in the *DSQXL* can be understood in a new light. What is significant is that the *DSQXL* often quotes from the *tathāgatagarbha* texts, including the *AAN*, and warns against the possible misunderstanding of these texts. That means a detailed study of the *DSQXL* can also prevent us from misunderstanding these scriptures. In other words, our understanding of the *AAN* and the *DSQXL* can “mutually permeate” one another.

The influence of the *Dasheng qixin lun* on the formation of Chinese Buddhist traditions cannot be overestimated. It contributed to the development of the Tiantai and Chan traditions, and Fazang’s commentary on the *DSQXL* was also instrumental in the formation of the *tathāgatagarbha* theory in the subsequent development of the Huayan tradition. That the composition of the *DSQXL* often quotes from the *tathāgatagarbha* texts, including the *AAN*, means that the *AAN* has indeed been a significant influence on the formation of various Chinese Buddhist schools. For example, we can, in this light, see that the *AAN* has cast an indirect but significant influence on the formation of Zongmi (宗密)’s thought, and hence on distinctive Huayan doctrines such as the emphasis on the “one *dharmadhātu*” and the interpenetration of the mundane and the transcendental.

Chapter Fifteen: The *AAN* and the *Foxing lun*

Besides the *DSQXL*, the *Foxing lun* (**Tathāgatadhātuśāstra*; 佛性論, hereafter, *FXL*) is another text that discusses the *tathāgatagarbha*, the translation being also attributed to Paramārtha. Little is known about the text's origin or the Chinese translation. The earliest attribution of its authorship to Vasubandhu is found in the *Kaiyuan shijiao lu*, composed in 730 C.E. during the Tang dynasty, more than 150 years after its translation. According to the research of Sallie King, the Japanese scholar Ui Hakuju placed the date of its translation between 557 and 569, while Takemura Shōhō placed it circa 558 C.E.³⁹⁷

It is apparent that “Buddha-nature” (*foxing* 佛性) in this text is not a free Chinese rendition of the term “*tathāgatagarbha*,” because both “*foxing*” and “*rulaizang*” (如來藏) are used quite frequently in the text. Takasaki renders its Sanskrit title as *Buddhagotraśāstra*.³⁹⁸ On the basis of a close examination of the contents of the *FXL* and the *RGV*, as discussed in the earlier section on the *DSQXL*, it seems likely that the original Sanskrit word for “*foxing*” is “*tathāgatadhātu*” or “*buddhadhātu*”, rather than “*buddhagotra*”. Nevertheless, “*foxing*” can be taken as very similar in meaning to “*tathāgatagarbha*”, as it is clear from the *FXL* that “*foxing*” is used in exactly the same context as that of “*tathāgatagarbha*” in the *RGV*.³⁹⁹ The subtle difference between the two terms, as it is understood by the author of the *FXL*, seems to lie in the use of “*tathāgatagarbha*” when it is referring to the obscured state of the *dharmakāya* in all

³⁹⁷ Sallie King, *Buddha Nature*, p. 24.

³⁹⁸ Takasaki Jikidō, *A Study on the Ratnagotravibhāga*, p. 47-9.

³⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

sentient beings,⁴⁰⁰ while “Buddha-nature” is employed to discuss the essence of all beings being pure or enlightened, equal to the Thusness (*tathatā*) of all phenomena.⁴⁰¹ Nevertheless, in the *MPN*, which in its Chinese translation employs only the term “*foxing*” without ever alluding to the *tathāgatagarbha*, many passages discuss *foxing* with exactly the same meaning as we find in other *tathāgatagarbha* texts in their discussion of the *tathāgatagarbha*. For example, the *MPN* states:

All beings are possessed of the Buddha-nature (*foxing*). Because of this nature, all are able to sever the knots of the billions of defilements and attain the most perfect enlightenment, except for the *icchantikas*.⁴⁰²

This is an obvious parallel to the teachings in the *TGS*. The *MPN* even uses the analogy of gold hidden inside the house of the poor, one of the famous nine similes of the meaning of the *tathāgatagarbha* in the *TGS*, to illustrate the meaning of the Buddha-nature. So, regardless of what the Sanskrit original of “*foxing*” might be, the discussions of the concept of the Buddha-nature in the *FXL* can indeed help us understand the notion of the *tathāgatagarbha*.

The *FXL* has been largely neglected in modern Buddhist studies, not only in the West, where the only research on this text has been undertaken by Sallie B. King⁴⁰³, but

⁴⁰⁰ The *FXL* states, for example: “Because of the three kinds of nature as the revelation of the pure element of the mind, referred to as the *tathāgatagarbha*, therefore the nine similes such as lotus are mentioned.”

(因三種自性為顯心清淨界名如來藏，故說九種如蓮花等譬。T1610, 808a)

⁴⁰¹ King has a different theory about the subtle differences between “Buddha-nature” and “*tathāgatagarbha*.” See King, *The Active Self: A Philosophical Study of the Buddha Nature Treatise and Other Chinese Buddhist Texts*. Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, May, 1981, Temple University, pp. 79-81.

⁴⁰² 一切眾生皆有佛性，以是性故斷無量億諸煩惱結，即得成於阿耨多羅三藐三菩提，除一闍提。(T374, 404c)

⁴⁰³ Sallie B. King, *The Active Self*. To my knowledge Sallie B. King is the only Western scholar to have paid attention to the delicate relationship between the *FXL* and the *AAN*. She has since her doctorate published several articles including “Two Epistemological Models for the Interpretation of Mysticism”

in the East as well, where Takemura Shōhō is the only Japanese scholar to have published a book-length textual study of it.⁴⁰⁴ The lack of scholarly interest in the *FXL* is probably owing to the unresolved arguments about the actual authorship of this text. Furthermore, only one Chinese translation of this text is extant; while the general assumption is that this composition is based on the *RGV* and is therefore nothing more than a summary of the latter work. This assumption led Hattori Masaaki to suggest that the *FXL* is no more than an incomplete Chinese translation of the *RGV*. It is obvious that the *FXL* explains the idea of the Buddha-nature (*foxing*) through the maxims and structure of classical Yogācāra; indeed, the text is attributed to Vasubandhu, although modern Japanese scholars such as Takasaki Jikidō and Hattori Masaaki suspect that “the text was not translated but actually written by Paramārtha based on his knowledge of the *Ratnagoṭravibhāga*.”⁴⁰⁵ On the basis of his studies on the *RGV* and the *Wushangyi jing* (無上依經; *Anuttarāśraya-sūtra*) and his attribution of the composition of the latter text to Paramārtha, Takasaki suspects that the *FXL* was written by Paramārtha after he composed the *Wushangyi jing*.⁴⁰⁶ However, Takasaki did not produce any substantial argument to support his assumption other than the fact that the *FXL* is the only work that cites the *Wushangyi jing*, the latter composition being earlier argued by him to be

(1988) in: *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* vol. 56; “Buddha nature and the concept of person” (1989) in: *Philosophy East and West*, Volume 39, No. 2; “Buddha Nature Thought and Mysticism” (1990) in: *Buddha Nature: A Festschrift in Honor of Minoru Kiyota*, as well as a book, *Buddha Nature* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991). These later publications draw, for the most part, on material from various sections of her unpublished dissertation, and they usually have little reference to the *AAN*; consequently I have here focused on her dissertation.

⁴⁰⁴ Takemura Shōhō, *Busshōron Kenkyū* (Tokyō: Hyakkaengan, 1978).

⁴⁰⁵ Sallie King, *Buddha Nature*, pp. 23-4.

⁴⁰⁶ Takasaki Jikidō, *A Study on the Ratnagoṭravibhāga*, pp. 47-52.

Paramārtha's composition, constructed as a summarization and "a kind of sutralization" of the *RGV*.⁴⁰⁷

King has demonstrated an insightful understanding of the relationship between the *AAN* and the *FXL* in her unpublished Ph.D. dissertation. The relationship between the *AAN* and the *FXL*, as King puts it, "is not completely obvious, though it is quoted in the latter several times...Thus, in the case of the *NINDS* [= *AAN*], its relationship with the *BNT* [= *FXL*] is primarily philosophical and secondarily textual."⁴⁰⁸ Specifically, the study of the *AAN* not only assists in clarifying some of the difficult passages in the *FXL*, but also helps us understand the source of the teachings in the *FXL* as coming in part from the *AAN*, particularly on the teaching of the non-dual *dharmadhātu*. King also states:

[I]t may also be noted that the theme of this sūtra [i.e. the *AAN*] is very much in harmony with the tenor of the *BNT* [i.e. the *FXL*]. Both emphasize the all-sufficiency of sentient beings (seen in the light of their *tathāgatagarbha* or Buddha nature) and downplay the transcendence of the Buddha, resisting the urge to glorify him. Both affirm ordinary reality as immediately ultimate. As we have seen, it is again and again emphasized throughout the *BNT* that the Buddha nature is identical with the nature of the ordinary person. This is very similar to the teaching of the *NINDS* [i.e. the *AAN*]. Thus, we may see the *NINDS* as a philosophical progenitor of the *BNT*.

In a tangible sense there is an indirect link between the two texts via the intermediary position of the *Ratna*, on which the *BNT* relied and which in turn drew from this *sutra*. There is also a direct link as evidenced by the quotations in the *BNT* drawn from this *sutra*...

The *NINDS* shares with the *BNT* a nondualistic philosophy and an emphasis on ordinary human reality as the locus of supreme value. These two elements are

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid., pp. 49-50.

⁴⁰⁸ Sallie King, *The Active Self*, p. 4.

interrelated: the denial of ontological transcendence in the former must result in a religious context in a denial of axiological transcendence. This is summed up in both texts with an affirmation of strict identity between the ordinary sentient being, on the one hand, and the *tathāgatagarbha* or Buddha nature, on the other.⁴⁰⁹

The *FXL* is therefore also evidence that shows how the classical Yogācāra tradition makes use of the *AAN* and employs its teachings in its unique soteriological model. Although the *FXL* only cites the *SMD* with attribution several times, its thesis clearly reflects the essential teachings in the *AAN*. It is for this reason that it is important not to exclude this text from our study of the *AAN*.

The *FXL* is composed in four chapters, embedded with commentarial material which is inserted into various places beginning with the words “the commentary says” (*shiyue* 釋曰). It is not known who provided these explanations to the text, although it is possible that they are Paramārtha’s explanation to his team of editors and amanuenses when he orally translated the text.⁴¹⁰ The first chapter begins with the refutation of five kinds of error, in order to illustrate the main thesis of the text that all sentient beings possess the Buddha-nature. This chapter therefore contains the subtitles “eradicating the heretical views” and “eradicating the [erroneous] Mahāyāna views [on the Buddha nature]”; five kinds of virtue are illustrated as a result of the refutations. The second chapter then continues by establishing a soteriological model for the realization of the Buddha-nature, through the discussions of the Three Naturelessnesses, the Three Natures,

⁴⁰⁹ Sallie King, *The Active Self*, pp. 185-8.

⁴¹⁰ According to the *Lidai sanbao ji*, Paramārtha composed a work entitled *Foxing yi* (*The Meaning of Buddha Nature*), which is no longer extant but which it is plausible to assume to have been a commentary on the *FXL*. It is possible that the commentarial sections in the *FXL* either formed the basis for Paramārtha’s full-length commentary, or that they are quotations from that work.

the “five *dharmas*” taught in the *Laṅkāvatāra*, the meaning of the *tathāgatagarbha* and its relationship with the *bodhicitta*, etc.. This is followed by the refutation of the erroneous interpretation of the Buddha-nature. Compared with the first chapter, which focuses on eradicating wrong views on the Buddha-nature, the second chapter concentrates on illustrating the essence and the correct understanding of the Buddha-nature through the model of Yogācāra praxis. The third chapter epitomizes what has been discussed in terms of various causes and their corresponding results. The discussion is again centered on placing the Buddha-nature within the Yogācāra model, and in this chapter it is examined through the process of “transformation of basis.” The culmination of this process of transformation is further discussed in detail, on the subjects of the “*dharmakāya*” and the nature of “nonconceptual wisdom.” In the final chapter we can observe the author of the *FXL* relying chiefly on the *RGV* as it demonstrates the ten characteristics of the Buddha-nature with the ten topics concerning the *tathāgatagarbha* in the *RGV*. The nine similes of the *tathāgatagarbha*, discussed in detail in the *RGV*, are also explained in a very similar manner in this chapter, using the same categorization of these nine similes into various levels of purities and impurities, as discussed earlier in this thesis. This is again a demonstration that covers the whole range of the process towards perfect enlightenment from the initial stage of practice. The discussion of the sixfold “middle way” in this chapter is highly soteriological in nature, not simply a philosophical exegesis.⁴¹¹

⁴¹¹ My summary of the contents of the *FXL* here is entirely different from Sallie King’s. My summary places emphasis on how the text lays out the classical Yogācāra teachings in relation to the notion of Buddha-nature, so that it can be read as a guide that gradually unfolds teachings on meditative practice towards the personal realization of the Buddha-nature. For comparison, King’s summary can be found in

A characteristic of the modern Japanese studies on the *FXL* is that they mainly focus on the similarities between the *RGV* and the *FXL*, in order to argue for Paramārtha’s authorship, on the basis of his understanding of the *RGV*. However, the distinctive teachings of the *FXL* also deserve our attention. In brief, the *FXL* places the discussion of the *tathāgatagarbha* entirely in the context of Buddhist soteriology of the Yogācāra model through the doctrines of the Three Naturelessness and the Three Natures. It also instructs on the “transformation of basis” (*āśrayaparivṛtti*; *zhuanyi* 轉依), the culmination of which is the perfect realization of the *dharmakāya*. In other words, the *tathāgatagarbha* is fully revealed without being obscured by the adventitious defilements when the process of the ultimate “transformation of basis” is completed. This is in line with the classical Yogācāra teaching, as we read in the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra* (9:37):

Because of the non-differentiation among all things,
And because of the attainment of the pure *tathatā*,
Therefore it is said that all sentient beings
Are said to have the *tathāgatagarbha*.⁴¹²

Its commentary explains:

This verse demonstrates that the *dharmadhātu* is the *tathāgatagarbha*. “Because of the non-differentiation among all things” refers to the non-differentiation between all sentient beings and all Buddhas; hence it is named *tathatā*. “Because

The Active Self, pp. 28-9. King also discusses the sixfold middle way on pp. 128-42. For a modern study of the “sixfold middle way” in the *FXL*, from the perspective of the rNying ma hermeneutics of Tibetan Buddhism, see Tam Shek-wing, *Four Levels of Pratītyasamutpāda and the Profound Prajñāpāramitā*. It is through the freedom from six pairs of twofold extremes that the six kinds of “middle way”, namely the six successive levels of realization of the “middle way”, are attained. The six pairs of extremes are: 1) what can be eliminated and the elimination; 2) what is feared and the fear; 3) what is being attached to and the attachment; 4) the correct and the mistaken; 5) the mental-construction and without mental-construction; and 6) the not produced and the co-production.

⁴¹² 一切無別故 得如清淨故 故說諸眾生 名為如來藏 (T1604, 604c)

of the attainment of the pure *tathatā*” refers to the attainment of the pure *tathatā* as the own-nature; therefore it is named the Tathāgata. Owing to this meaning, it is therefore said that all sentient beings are known as having the *tathāgatagarbha*.⁴¹³

In a later passage, it is further explained that “the purity” of the *tathatā* and the *dharmadhātu* is to be achieved through the process of the “transformation of basis”:

This freedom from defilements is the Bodhisattvas’ state of the “transformation of basis”. Why is it so? Because of the attainment of the first stage...Bodhisattvas at this first stage attain the understanding of the equality of the *dharmadhātu*.⁴¹⁴

In other words, it is through the process of the “transformation of basis” that Bodhisattvas begin to realize the pure *tathatā* or the *dharmadhātu*. The description of the *dharmadhātu* as “equal” (*sama*) is simply another way to illustrate the nondual nature of reality.

The *FXL* is unique in its attempt to clarify the meaning of “*garbha*” in *tathāgatagarbha*, a topic which has been discussed in the “Introductory” chapter of the present thesis. Furthermore, the *FXL* also provides a link between the *bodhicitta* and the *tathāgatagarbha*, thereby treating the cultivation of the *bodhicitta* as the cause of realizing the Buddha nature, i.e., the cause of “progressive endeavour” (*jiaxing* 加行; *prayoga*). This is also a unique contribution of the *FXL* that furthers our understanding of the *tathāgatagarbha* according to the commonly acknowledged Mahāyāna notion of

⁴¹³ 此偈顯示法界是如來藏。一切無別故者，一切眾生一切諸佛等無差別，故名為如。得如清淨故者，得清淨如以為自性，故名如來。以是義故，可說一切眾生名為如來藏。(T1604, 604c)

⁴¹⁴ 此離垢，即是菩薩轉依位。何以故？得初地故。... 菩薩於初地即得通達平等法界。(T1604, 625b)

the *bodhicitta*. It is the only work, other than the *DSFJWCBL*, that identifies the connection between the *bodhicitta* and the *tathāgatagarbha*. As King has stated:

Since *bodhicitta* is the “cause” of which realization of Buddha nature or Buddhahood is the effect, this makes it clear that *bodhicitta* itself directly contributes to the constitution of Buddha nature. Thus, everything said about *bodhicitta* – in particular, its active nature – applies to Buddha nature as well.⁴¹⁵

In the *FXL*, the author makes it clear that the Buddha-nature should also be understood as Thusness (*tathatā*) revealed through the realization of the twofold emptiness of both person and phenomena. In this way, as also noticed by King, the *tathāgatagarbha* is treated as being in complete harmony with the notions of *bodhicitta*, the *pariniṣpanna-svabhāva*, and Thusness (*tathatā*).

It is argued in the text that it is misleading to regard the Buddha-nature as either existing or non-existing, for both views (*dṛṣṭi*) are extreme positions and are the result of conceptual-elaborations (*prapañca*), which result in viewing the Buddha-nature and Thusness as a fixed entity with its own-nature. What is emphasized in the text is that the so-called Reality (the nondual *dharmadhātu*, the nonduality between the Buddha-nature and the Thusness realized) is “unfixed,” dynamic and non-static. It is therefore “empty” (*śūnya*) by nature but it is also replete with infinite Buddha qualities. This is seeing in accordance with reality (*yathābhūtarśana*), and therefore seeing all beings as most assuredly endowed with this principle under the name of the “Buddha-nature.” In this way, we are also reminded how to comprehend the identification of the profound meanings of the ultimate truth (*paramārtha-satya*), the *sattvadhātu*, the *tathāgatagarbha*,

⁴¹⁵ Sallie King, *The Active Self*, p. 77.

and the *dharmakāya* discussed in the *AAN*. The “objective” realm of the *dharmadhātu* and the “subjective” realm of enlightened wisdom are demonstrated to be nondual in the *FXL*; in other words, it warns us of the danger of misinterpreting the *AAN* teachings with our conceptual understanding that what knows and what is known are different and separate. The *FXL*’s insightful differentiation of “emptiness” (*śūnyatā*) from our conceptual understanding of “nothingness” (*buyou*) also helps us understand the “empty” and “non-empty” aspects of the *tathāgatagarbha*. The *FXL* is also careful to distinguish the non-Buddhist belief in the “Self” (*ātman*) from the concept of the Buddha-nature. To sum up, what modern scholars generally think to be three separate traditions, viz., the Madhyamaka, the Yogācāra, and the *tathāgatagarbha*, are discussed in the *FXL* as being in harmony. Such a “non-separatist” approach in understanding the three integrated whole is indeed what the author of the *FXL* takes to be the correct way to understand the Buddha-nature. Such an approach directs us to understanding other *tathāgatagarbha* texts, including the *AAN*, in a new way, an approach that the modern philosophical studies of these texts have ignored. However, it is the perspective of the Yogācāra praxis that is illustrated in most detail in the text.

In the *FXL*, the *tathāgatadhātu* is described in terms of the perfect union of the Three Naturelessnesses (*tri-niḥsvabhāvatā*). The Three Naturelessnesses are the Naturelessness of Characteristic (*lakṣaṇa-niḥsvabhāvatā*), the Naturelessness of Arising (*utpatti-niḥsvabhāvatā*), and the Naturelessness of the Ultimate (*paramārtha-niḥsvabhāvatā*), which are translated by Paramārtha as the *wuxiang xing* (無相性),

wusheng xing (無生性), and *wuzhen xing* (無真性). These Three Naturelessnesses altogether constitute the *tathāgatadhātu* (understood as synonymous with the *tathāgatagarbha* in the text), as it is stated in the *FXL*:

The Three Naturelessnesses are: 1) the Naturelessness of Characteristic; 2) the Naturelessness of Arising; and 3) the Naturelessness of the Ultimate. They epitomize the nature of the Tathāgatas in its entirety. Why is it so? Because these three Nature[lessnesses] constitute its essence.⁴¹⁶

As has been discussed in the section on “classical Yogācāra” above, the classical Yogācāra tradition understands the relationship between the Three Natures and the Three Naturelessnesses in a way that resembles the relationship between the conventional truth and the ultimate truth. This is different from the interpretations of the new school of Yogācāra, which treats the Three Naturelessnesses as subordinate to the Three Natures, as evidenced in the *Cheng weishi lun* compiled by Xuanzang. The differences of the two schools of Yogācāra in their understanding of the Three Natures and the Three Naturelessnesses can be observed in the works of Paramārtha and Xuanzang.⁴¹⁷

⁴¹⁶ 三無性者：一無相性、二無生性、三無真性，此三性攝如來性盡。何以故？以此三性通為體故。(T1610, 794a)

⁴¹⁷ Liangbi (良賁) states in his *Renwang huguo bore boluojing shu* (仁王護國般若波羅蜜多經疏): “真諦三藏依三無性論，具遣三性立三無性：一遣分別立分別無相性；二遣依他立無生性；三遣真實立真實無性性。此所遣者，於一真理遣三性故立三無性，廣如彼故。慈恩三藏依唯識論，即依三性立三無性，如論頌云：即依此三性立彼三無性，一依計執立相無性；二依依他立無自然性；三依圓成立無我法性。初計所執情有理無，依他圓成理有情無，廣如彼說。問此二三性所立何別？答前對遣三立三無性，後但依三立三無性，前空後有是二別也。(T1709, 431). It should be noted that Xuanzang’s interpretation of the relationship between the Three Natures and the Three Naturelessnesses is based on the Dharmapāla lineage, as evidenced in the *Cheng weishi lun*, as Francis Cook remarks: “When Hsüan-tsang presents the interpretations, he usually gives those of Sthiramati, Nanda, and Dharmapāla, occasionally including that of Citrabhānu. The interpretation given last, that of Dharmapāla, is invariably considered the correct one. Consequently, for all practical purposes, the text consists of the translation of the ‘Thirty Verses,’ generally referred to as the Treatise, plus the interpretation of Dharmapāla as the correct view, with the supplementation of two or three divergent interpretations.” (*Three Texts on Consciousness Only*, p. 2) In fact, Xuanzang’s translation of the *Trīṃśikā* also shows the interpretation of the Dharmapāla lineage

The *FXL* also warns us of the danger of taking the three natures as substantial, and hence taking the *pariṇiṣpanna-svabhāva* to be an ultimately existing entity. Furthermore, the *pariṇiṣpanna-svabhāva* is also said to be attained through the elimination of *both* the *parikalpita-svabhāva* and the *paratantra-svabhāva*.⁴¹⁸ This is characteristic of the classical Yogācāra teaching. In the later Dharmapāla lineage of the new school of teachings transmitted into China by Xuanzang, the attainment of the *pariṇiṣpanna-svabhāva* relies on the *paratantra-svabhāva* which acts as a pivot between the *parikalpita* and the *pariṇiṣpanna*, and therefore can be either pure or impure and is not to be eliminated.⁴¹⁹ Although the *FXL* also talks about the pure *paratantra* and the impure *paratantra*, it does not maintain that the *paratantra* should not be eliminated. On the contrary, it is explained in the *FXL* that, among the Three Natures, the *paratantra* should be eliminated, as the *parikalpita* cannot be eliminated because it does not exist in the first place, and the *pariṇiṣpanna* should not be eliminated because it is the reality.⁴²⁰

(cf. Yoshifumi Ueda, “Two Main Streams of Thought in Yogācāra Philosophy,”). The “*Weishi lun*” mentioned in Liangbi’s work no doubt refers to the *Cheng weishi lun*. The original Sanskrit of *Trīṃśikā* 23 (*trividhasya svabhāvasya trividhām niḥsvabhāvatām sandhāya sarvadharmāṇām deśitā niḥsvabhāvatā ||*) cited in the passage does not say that it is *on the basis* (*yi* 依) of the Three Natures that the Three Naturelessnesses are *established* (*li* 立), unlike Xuanzang’s translation of this verse.

⁴¹⁸ A passage in the *FXL* explains the Three Natures as follows: “問曰：分別性緣何因故而得顯現？答曰：由緣相名相應故得顯現。問曰：依他性緣何因故得成耶？答曰：緣執分別性故得顯現。問曰：真實性緣何因得成？答曰：由分別依他二性極無所有故得顯現，故名緣成。” (T1610:794b)

⁴¹⁹ Wonch’uk in his *Renwang jing shu* (仁王經疏) states: “由斯真諦慈恩三藏各依一宗。真諦三藏，如其次第，具遣三性立三無性：一遣分別性，立分別無相性；二遣依他，立依他無生性；三遣真實性，立真實無性性。於一真如，遣三性故，立三無性，具如三無性論。……慈恩三藏，但遣所執，不遣二性。……問護法宗：如成唯識不遣依他，如何此中說依他起非空非有？解云：護法正言，如成唯識，不遣依他。” (T1708, 359-360).

⁴²⁰ 問曰：三性中，幾性不可滅，幾性可滅耶？答曰：二性不可滅，一性可得滅。何以故？分別性本來是無，故不可滅；真實性本來是真，故不可滅；依他性雖有不真實，是故可滅。(T1610, 795a)

Therefore, it does not matter whether this text is correctly attributed to Vasubandhu, or is a composition by Paramārtha, or even a Chinese composition. There is no doubt that the author of this text has a close affinity with the classical Yogācāra tradition. The *FXL* quotes from the *SMD* a number of times, but only implicitly cites ideas from the *AAN*. It is noteworthy that the *AAN* has not been regarded with any degree of seriousness by the new school of Yogācāra.

The *FXL* also provides us with a link between the aspects of “empty” and “non-empty” and the notions of “no increase” and “no decrease”. It is stated in the *FXL*:

Therefore, what is known as *tathatā* is both empty and non-empty. Why is it so? Because the two extremes of “increase” and “decrease” are freed [from the perception the practitioner]. As there is nothing which can be eliminated, therefore it is empty; as there is nothing which can be added to it, therefore it is non-empty. Such a contemplation is known as contemplation of reality.⁴²¹

The extremes of “increase” and “decrease” discussed here are reminiscent of *RGV* 1.154 and 1.155. Note that the notions of “increase” and “decrease” here are not concerned with the teaching of the *AAN* that there is no increase or decrease in the *sattvadhātu* or the *nirvāṇadhātu*, but are the mistaken views that there is something (virtuous qualities, *guṇa*) added to reality and something else (defilements, *saṃkleśa*) taken away from it. What is discussed here is a conclusion to the earlier discussion of the two kinds of misunderstanding about the *tathāgatagarbha*, which can lead to a misunderstanding of

⁴²¹故言真如，亦空不空。何以故？以離增減二邊故，無一法可損故是空，無一法可增故非空。若作是觀名真實觀。(T1610, 812a-b)

what is empty and what is non-empty. On the misunderstanding of the *tathāgatagarbha*, it is stated:

There are two kinds of people who are deluded in [their understanding of] the *tathāgatagarbha*. First, there are those who only believe in the elimination of all phenomena and call such [elimination] emptiness; [further, they claim that] all phenomena before analysis are all said to be existing, and after analysis they are known as empty. Second, there are those who claim that there is a real entity which is named emptiness, which is to be attained through meditation. Those two [kinds of] people are deluded [in their understanding of] the *tathāgatagarbha*. The former are deluded because of their attachment to nothingness; the latter are deluded because of their attachment to existence...The nature of the Tathāgatas (*tathāgatagotra*) is naturally pure. The adventitious defilements are empty of own-nature. Therefore it is said that nothing can be eliminated. The *tathatā* is not separated from the cause of purity; it is always connected with the qualities of the Buddhas which are not discrete from wisdom, inconceivable, and are more numerous than the sands of the Ganges. Therefore there is nothing that can be added to it.⁴²²

The connection with the *SMD* and the *AAN* can be seen here. Although the notions of the “empty” and “non-empty” aspects of the *tathāgatagarbha* are hinted at in the *AAN*, where defilement is explained as adventitious and the Buddha *guṇas* is said to be “nondiscrete, inseparable, inconceivable, and more numerous than the sands of the Ganges,” the detailed discussion of these two aspects as the “‘wisdom of emptiness’ of the *tathāgatagarbha*” is only found in the *SMD* but not in the *AAN*. It is explained in the *SMD* that this wisdom of the *tathāgatagarbha* refers to the kind of wisdom that knows

⁴²²迷如來藏有二種人：一者唯信，滅除諸法，名之為空，一切諸法，未分析時，是名為有，若分析竟，乃名為空；二者謂有實法，名之為空。我今應修應得。此二人者迷如來藏。前則執無故迷；後人執有故迷。…如來性者，自清淨故。能染客塵者，自性空故。故言無一法可損。真如者，與清淨因不相離，過恒沙數等不捨智不可思惟，諸佛功德恒相應故，故言無一法可增。(T1610, 812a)

that the adventitious defilements of the *tathāgatagarbha* are all empty, but the Buddha *dharmas*, i.e., the natural qualities of the Buddhas, are not empty.⁴²³ Such “wisdom of emptiness” is said in the *SMD* and the *AAN* (and reiterated in the *FXL*) to be the domain of the Tathāgatas and is not the domain of the Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas. The discussion of the progress of completely realizing this wisdom is also discussed through the nine similes of the *tathāgatagarbha* which are the most prominent features of the *TGS*. Furthermore, in the discussion of the “six kinds of middle way”, the *FXL* also emphasizes that the two extremes of “mental construction” and “without mental construction” are what lead to the perception of the extreme views of “increase” and “decrease.” Here, the notion of “no increase” is explained as “wisdom does not tend deliberately to cease mental construction,” and that of “no decrease” is explained as seeing that wisdom itself is not a static, nihilistic state which cannot give rise to anything, but rather it is active and dynamic, and owing to it the elimination of ignorance is possible.⁴²⁴ The notions of “increase” and “decrease” explained here seem to be different from what the *AAN* defines. However, it is interesting to see that these two extreme views arise as a result of the misunderstanding of the inconceivable wisdom (*jñāna*) of the Tathāgatas. Such a misunderstanding, of course, results from what the *AAN* characterizes as “not being able to see the one *dharmadhātu* as it truly is.” And therefore, being attached to the dualistic

⁴²³ Cf. D. Seyfort Rugg, *La théorie*, pp. 319f.

⁴²⁴ 五有作無作二邊者：有作者，有人執言，欲修智慧，必先作意，然後事成。無作者：有人執言，智慧無事無能。何以故？由解惑相對由解生故，惑自然滅，非解能除故，說智慧無事無能，為離此二，是故立於油燈為譬。如經：迦葉，譬如燃燈，燈光既起，黑暗即滅，而彼燈光雖不作意，言能滅暗，暗由我滅，而必因於光起，暗方得滅。是故燈光雖不作意，不無事能。智慧亦爾，不作是意我能滅惑，而亦非不由智慧生，惑便除滅，故知智慧不無事能。若說作意，我能滅惑，是名增益，即有作邊；若說智慧起時，無明自滅，不由智慧，是名損滅，即無作邊。為離此二邊故，說智慧生不作意、作不作意，非作故不增、非不作故不滅，是名中道。(T1610, 809c)

conception, one is not able to use the defiled consciousness to imagine and understand the inconceivable, nondual state of wisdom. Consequently all kinds of extreme dualistic views of “increase” and “decrease” arise. Seen in this light, the huge gap between the definitions of the views of “increase” and “decrease” in the *AAN* and the *FXL* can indeed be reconciled and harmonized, and the two kinds of definition complement rather than contradict each other.

In conclusion, the *FXL* treats the *TGS*, the *AAN*, and the *SMD* as related and complementary works. In addition, teachings such as “emptiness” and the “transformation of basis” and the three bodies (*kāya*) of the Buddhas from the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra traditions, as well as the detailed explanation of the ten stages of the Bodhisattvahood, are also merged seamlessly into the *FXL*. These writings, along with other *tathāgatagarbha* texts, are all seen to have different emphases on the interpretation of the *tathāgatagarbha*, rather than the linear development of ideas about *tathāgatagarbha* favoured by modern scholars. What is also worth noticing is the way the *FXL* leads us to understand “no increase and no decrease” not as a philosophical idea about reality, but as a state of meditative achievement in connection with the Bodhisattva path.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I have studied *tathāgatagarbha* teaching as it is presented in Buddhist texts. The *AAN*, in particular, has been examined both internally by analyzing its structure and teachings, and externally through investigating its doctrinal relationship to other Buddhist texts. The decision not to speculate on the dating of the composition of the *AAN* has been taken because of the existence of a long history of the oral tradition in Buddhism. Not only is there a possibility of a prototype of the teachings of the *AAN* in an oral format, but it is also possible that the compilation of the *AAN* was not an isolated, one-time process without influence from other teachings whether compiled or not. The assumption that the current version of the *AAN* is what it was when the teaching was first compiled and that it has not been amended or changed is most probably incorrect. It is therefore very difficult, if not impossible, to determine a date for the composition of the *AAN* on the basis of an analysis of its contents in comparison with other *tathāgatagarbha* texts. What this thesis has endeavoured to do is to ignore this trend in Buddhist studies altogether, and to focus on how these texts are interpreted and how closely they are related to one another. The approach has been based on scriptural study, with the simple but probable assumption that these teachings all evolved from the same pool of oral teachings.

There is an oversimplified view among some modern academics to assume that the “evolution” of Buddhist texts was through one composition leading to a further one, or one philosophy leading to another. What we are studying was, and still is, a live and dynamic system of meditative practice that has a rich doctrinal component serving as guidance and basis for these practices. The transmission of, for example, the

tathāgatagarbha doctrine throughout the centuries in India is a complex and dynamic exchange among many practices and interpretations of other Buddhist doctrines in synergy. It is this that is seen simplistically as a teaching whose prototype was first conceived through a series of nine similes in the *TGS*, followed by a development of the philosophical meaning for these similes through the *AAN* and the *SMD* in a way that linked the *tathāgatagarbha* with the “older” notion of the *dharmakāya* and with the idea of the One Vehicle, which is also seen simplistically as belonging exclusively to the *Lotus Sūtra*; the teaching is further seen as having developed towards constructing an idea ever closer to the notion of *ātman* in the Vedāntic tradition, as observed in the *MPN*; and finally as being merged with the Yogācāra teaching of the *ālayavijñāna* in the *Laṅkāvatāra*.

In the case of the study of the *tathāgatagarbha*, the monumental studies by Takasaki Jikidō and David Seyfort Ruegg have in many ways shaped the approach of studies undertaken later. With all due respect to their insightful contributions to this area of study, there are still areas that one should question with regard to their approach and assumptions, such as the simplistic view of the chronological development of the *tathāgatagarbha* texts.

It is safe to assume that most of the teachings of Buddhism are aimed at showing a path for the realization of Buddhahood. Its literature, therefore, should not be studied only from a Western philosophical point of view; rather, Buddhism should also be read as it was intended, to give meditative instruction and guidance for Buddhists aiming for perfect enlightenment. Indeed, one can say that all Buddhist *sūtras*, *tantras*, and

commentarial works are oriented toward a soteriological reading. According to the framework of the meditative practice of the Yogācāra tradition, a fivefold process is needed for ordinary beings to attain perfect enlightenment. This process is: 1) the learning of Mahāyāna Buddhist teaching and the appropriate apprehension of the mind through the arousal of the *bodhicitta* and the practice of the six *pāramitās* – this is the “path of accumulation” (*saṃbhāramārga*); 2) the de-construction of the unreal imagination of dualistic attachments – this is the “path of preparation” (*prayogamārga*); 3) the entering into the *dharmatā* – this is the “path of direct seeing” (*darśanamārga*); 4) the continual purification of the obscuration of the perfect realization of the *dharmatā* through the alternation between the nonconceptual wisdom achieved during meditation and the subsequent wisdom after the meditation session, in nine stages – this is the “path of meditation” (*bhāvanāmārga*); and 5) the perfect union of the two kinds of wisdom, the complete realization of the nonduality of *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*, the embodiment of the perfect union of the three *kāyas*, and the direct, personal realization of the two aspects of the wisdom of the *tathāgatagarbha* – this is the “path of no-more learning” (*aśaikṣamārga*). Accordingly, the teaching of the *tathāgatagarbha* is really epistemological and soteriological by nature, rather than a system of ontological or philosophical reflection. The *tathāgatagarbha* is not an ultimately existing entity, as discussed earlier, but the concealed enlightening experience of the mind as it truly is.

Sometimes, however, the concepts of *tathāgatagarbha*, *tathatā*, *dharmadhātu*, and *ekadhātu* do sound like various ways of postulating a substratum in the Buddhist *sūtras*. For example, it is said that all conventional truths are grounded in the reality-principle of nonduality or the “one realm” (*ekadhātu*). However, on closer examination this is really not as it may seem. One needs to understand what these terms “*ekadhātu*” and “*dharmadhātu*” refer to before drawing a hasty conclusion that it is a teaching which advocates that all the many *dharmas* are produced from a single substratum. In the Yogācāra literature, for example, “*tathatā*” and “*dharmatā*” only describe the state free from subject-object dualities. In the *Dharmadharmatāvibhaṅga*, it is said:

Dharmas constitute *samsāra*,

Dharmatā constitutes the *nirvāṇa* of the three vehicles.

The defining characteristic of *dharmas* is unreal conceptualization which constitutes dualistic appearances and manifestations....

Thusness without the discriminations of object and subject, or that of the manifested and the manifesting, is the defining characteristic of *dharmatā*....

The two are neither the same nor different, since there is a distinction and there is no distinction, with respect to the being existent or nonexistent of each.⁴²⁵

A further example is from the *FXL*, a text on which Sallie King based her argument that the teaching of the *tathāgatagarbha* is “impeccably Buddhist.”⁴²⁶ The ascription of this text to Vasubandhu is disputable, but there is no doubt that this text was composed by

⁴²⁵ From the Tibetan translation of the *Dharmadharmatāvibhaṅgavṛtti*: *chos kyi rab tu phye ba ni 'khor ba 'o / chos nyid kyi rab tu phye ba ni theg pa gsum gyi mya ngan las 'das pa 'o / gnyis dang ji ltar mngon par brjod par snang ba ni yang dag pa ma yin pa 'i kun tu rtog pa ste chos kyi mtshan nyid do / ... / gzung ba dang / 'dzin pa dang / brjod par bya ba dang / rjod par byed pa khyad par med pa 'i de bzhin nyid de ni chos nyid kyi mtshan nyid do / ... / gnyis po dag ni gcig nyid ma yin zhing so so nyid ma yin te / yod pa dang med pa dag khyad par dang khyad par med pa 'i phyir ro //*

⁴²⁶ Sallie B. King, “The Doctrine of Buddha-Nature is Impeccably Buddhist,” in *Pruning the Bodhi Tree*, pp. 174-192.

someone in the Yogācāra circle. The *FXL* establishes the terms “Thusness” (*tathatā*), “Buddha-nature” (*buddhadhātu*), “perfected nature” (*pariniṣpanna-svabhāva*), “*tathāgatagarbha*,” and “*dharmadhātu*” as being more or less synonymous. These are all regarded as the nondiscriminating object of wisdom (*zhijing* 智境). In the *Lankāvatāra*, too, “*tathāgatagarbha*” is treated as a synonym for “Thusness of the mind” (*cittasya dharmatā*).⁴²⁷ According to King:

I take thusness to be a kind of ecstatic experiential apprehension of reality as-it-is....This has nothing to do with reducing these dharmas to something more primary, more real. ... This is not an ontological theory; this is experience. And if there is an ontological theory implicit in this experience, it is certainly not monism.⁴²⁸

“Thusness” can therefore be understood, conventionally, as a designation for a pure realm of the mind, or a principle of reality, which always remains whether Tathāgatas arise or not, but it is definitely not a truly existing substratum. It is now evident that this conventionally-designated *dharmatā* functions more as a principle, like emptiness (*śūnyatā*), which allows the manifestation of all kinds of phenomena, rather than according to the idea that it is a single substratum and the origin from which all things are created. Whatever appears is of the same nature as this *dharmatā*; in other words, all things that appear as “empty” by nature are a reflection of the nature of this *dharmatā*. Hence, the terms “*dharmatā-pratilabdha*” (derived from *dharmatā*) and “*dharmatā-niṣyanda*” (flowing from *dharmatā*), which are quite commonly found in Yogācāra and

⁴²⁷ See, for example, verse 252 of the *Sagāthakam*.

⁴²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 187.

tathāgatagarbha literature, do not necessarily refer to a permanent, truly existing, substratum-entity.⁴²⁹ John Keenan also shows us an important passage in the *Mahāyānābhīdharmasūtra*⁴³⁰ that speaks of a “*anādikāliko dhātuḥ*”:

The beginningless realm is the common support of all *dharmas*.

Because of this, there exist all the destinies and the access to *nirvāṇa*.⁴³¹

The *RGV* takes this “*anādikāliko dhātuḥ*” to be the *tathāgatagarbha*. The term can therefore indicate that the *tathāgatagarbha*, as the “*anādikāliko dhātuḥ*,” is originally pure, though it can also be concealed by adventitious defilements, and hence there “exist all the destinies (of the sixfold samsaric realms) and the access to *nirvāṇa* (if the defilements are nonoriginated)”. Accordingly, the “*anādikāliko dhātuḥ*” is to be conceived as essentially the dynamic principle of reality; the realization of it leads to *nirvāṇa* and delusion concerning it to *samsāra*.

In our study of the *AAN*, it is important not to understand the *tathāgatagarbha* and the *dharmadhātu* as a static monistic substratum, a misconception that is easily made. Hirakawa Akira also points out that the *dhātu* or *tathāgatagarbha* is not a substantial

⁴²⁹ Furthermore (according to the *Dharmadharmatāvibhaṅga*) from the soteriological perspective, without the designation of Thusness (*tathatā*) or Reality-itself (*dharmatā*) as the “basis” of all phenomena, there would be no foundation for the non-establishment of delusion-affliction (*samskleśa*). If there were no foundation for the antidote and its use, there would also be no foundation for delusion-affliction and the path free from untrue pervasive conceptualization. This designation of a foundation, however, is only a representation; even the foundation does not ontologically exist as a kind of real, non-empty substance. The expanse of reality (*dharmadhātu*), Thusness, *tathāgatagarbha* and so forth likewise do not exist substantially.

⁴³⁰ The *Mahāyānābhīdharmasūtra* is no longer extant. We can only find fragments of it in Yogācāra works such as the *Mahāyānasamgraha*.

⁴³¹ Citation from John Keenan, “Original Purity and the Focus of Early Yogācāra,” pp.11-2. This verse is quoted in the *RGV-vyākha* on 1.152.

foundation as Matsumoto claims, but rather is non-static, dynamic and ever changing.⁴³² Yamabe Nobuyoshi is also correct to point out Matsumoto's mistake in stipulating the model of generative monism as characteristic of Yogācāra Buddhism and *tathāgatagarbha* thought.⁴³³ Support for this non-static, dynamic view of the *dharmadhātu* can also be found in Chinese scholarship. In recent years, Tam Shek-wing (談錫永) has written a number of books and articles that introduce the “definitive Great Madhyamaka” (*nges don la dbu ma chen po*) view of the rDzogs chen tradition of the rNying ma school of Tibetan Buddhism.⁴³⁴ This is essentially the approach adopted in this thesis. Unlike the *gzhan stong* position, which regards the *dharmakāya* as a non-empty absolute entity itself, the rNying ma tradition sees the *dharmakāya* as originally pure, nonconceptual, and empty. Nonetheless there is also the spontaneous presence of luminosity and qualities of enlightenment, which are refracted conventionally in the realm of conceptuality and appear to sentient beings as the *rūpakāya*. Hence in the rNying ma tradition, the state of Buddhahood is often discussed through the three statements (corresponding to the Three Bodies) that the essence (*ngo bo*) is said to be the primordial purity (*ka dag*) and emptiness; the natural attributes (*rang bzhin*) are said to be spontaneous (*lhun grub*) and luminous (*'od gsal*); and the manifestation is said to be all-

⁴³² See Hirakawa Akira, ed., *Nyoraizō to daijō kishinron*. Tokyo: Shunjūsha, 1990.

⁴³³ See Yamabe Nobuyoshi, “The Idea of *Dhātu-vāda* in Yogācāra and *Tathāgata-garbha* Texts”.

⁴³⁴ Among which the most prominent ones are Master Tam's new Chinese translations and studies of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* and the *Laṅkāvatāra*, the *Four Levels of Profound Meaning of Dependent-Origination and Prajñāpāramitā*, and the *Anthology of the Studies in Great Madhyamaka*. See the bibliography for complete details.

pervading (*kun khyab*) and compassionate (*thugs rje*). I find this interpretation of the *dharmakāya* and the *tathāgatagarbha*, from the same point of view, in the *AAN*:

Śāriputra, it is like the impossibility of separating the brilliance, the colour, and the appearance of a wish-fulfilling jewel. Śāriputra, the Dharmakāya of the Tathāgata is also like that, being nondiscrete and not distinct from the inconceivable qualities of wisdom; [such qualities] are more numerous than the sands of the Ganges.⁴³⁵

In the Yogācāra literature, the analogy of the heavenly gongs, which emit sound without being struck, is often used to illustrate the spontaneous, natural, and non-intentional compassionate activities that arise simultaneously with the nonconceptual gnosis. Mi pham rgya mtsho, on the other hand, has also discussed the rNying ma view on the *tathāgatagarbha* in detail in his *bDe gshegs snying po'i stong thun chen mo senge nga ro*, where he notes that the essence (*ngo bo*) of the *tathāgatagarbha* is empty, yet is where the qualities of enlightenment (*yon tan*) and Buddha wisdom (*ye shes*) are naturally present (*ye ldan du yod pa*).

In addition, my attention was also brought to an early article by Mou Zongsan (牟宗三), entitled the “Re-examination of the Usage of *Ti* and *Yong* in Buddhism” (“Fojia tiyong yi zhi hengding” 佛家體用義之衡定), through a SSHRC project on Chinese Philosophy launched by the late Professor Julia Ching and Professor Chan Wing-cheuk.⁴³⁶ This article has been frequently overlooked by Eastern and Western scholars alike. Mou, in his detailed study of the Chinese Buddhist traditions and scriptures, makes

⁴³⁵ T668, 467a.

⁴³⁶ The project results partly in the translation of Mou Zongsan’s article into English, entitled “Critique of Pure Reason.”

it clear that the relationship between the dependently originated phenomena and emptiness, between the imagined and dependent natures and the perfected nature, between the mind of *tathatā* and worldly phenomena, and between the *dharmadhātu* and the myriad phenomena, should not be understood according to the common Chinese interpretation of “essence” and “function” or “*ti*” (體) and “*yong*” (用). Mou emphasizes that, in the discussion of the *tathāgatagarbha* in the Tiantai and Huayan traditions, the use of the terms *li* (理), *xing* (性), and *ti* (體), are of “nominal usage” only (*xushuo* 虛說). Even in the *Dasheng qixin lun*, the terms should not be taken literally to mean a real essence.⁴³⁷

As the *dharmakāya* pervades everything and every sentient being, and is therefore an intrinsic part of the minds of all, it then follows naturally that all beings possess the *dharmakāya* whether or not they have the realization of it --- and this is the theory of *tathāgatagarbha*, that all sentient beings possess the “embryo of Tathāgatas.” This central message of the *AAN*, along with the identification of the *sattvadhātu* with the *dharmakāya*, is demonstrated in the present thesis as being compatible with other Mahāyāna teachings such as *bodhicitta*, non-abiding *nirvāṇa* (*apratiṣṭhita nirvāṇa*), and the three *kāyas* and the two kinds of wisdom of the Buddhas.

⁴³⁷ Mou Zongsan, “Fojia tiyong yi zhi hengding” (佛家體用義之衡定), p. 618.

Appendix I: English translation of the Foshuo buzeng bujian jing

This English translation of Bodhiruci's Chinese translation of the *AAN*, the *Foshuo buzeng bujian jing* (佛說不增不減經), is aimed at a literal rendering that follows the Chinese syntax as closely as possible. The passages of the *AAN* quoted in the Sanskrit, Tibetan, and Chinese versions of the *Ratnagoṭravibhāgavyākhyā* are cited, following the translation, so as to allow readers to draw comparisons. Certain Sanskrit words are used instead of English equivalents, such as “*nirvāṇa*,” “*Tathāgata*,” and so forth. This translation is based on the *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* edition of the Chinese Tripiṭaka. I have made a word-for-word comparison with the Korean edition of the Chinese Tripiṭaka and have found the two editions are the same.

The No Increase No Decrease Sūtra (佛說不增不減經)

[466a] Thus have I heard. At one time, the Lord (*bhagavat*) was dwelling on Mount Gṛdhrakūṭa at Rājagṛha, together with one thousand two hundred and fifty monks (*bhikṣu*) and an incalculable number of Bodhisattva-Mahāsattvas.

(Bodhiruci: 如是我聞，一時婆伽婆住王舍城耆闍崛山中，與大比丘眾千二百五十人俱，諸菩薩摩訶薩無量無邊不可稱計。)

At that time, venerable (*āyusmat*) Śāriputra arose from his seat among the assembly and, having approached the front of the Buddha, prostrated [himself] before the Buddha, withdrew and sat on one side and addressed the Buddha with his palms joined. “Lord, all sentient beings have been, since the beginningless past, wandering within the six destinies⁴³⁸, to and fro across the three realms⁴³⁹, suffering endlessly through life-and-death in the *saṃsāra* of the four kinds of births⁴⁴⁰. Lord, such an assembly of sentient beings, such an ocean of sentient beings, does it have increase and decrease, or does it not have increase and decrease? This matter is profound and hidden; I cannot understand it. If someone asks me [this question], how should I reply?”

(Bodhiruci: 爾時慧命舍利弗，於大眾中即從坐起，前至佛所到已頂禮佛足。退坐一面合掌白佛言：世尊，一切眾生從無始世來，周旋六道往來三界，於四生中輪迴生死受苦無窮。世尊，此眾生聚眾生海，為有增減、為無增減？此義深隱我未能解。若人問我，當云何答？)

⁴³⁸ The six realms are gods, asuras, humans, animals, hungry ghosts, and hell beings.

⁴³⁹ The three realms are the realm of desire (*kāmadhātu*), the realm of form (*rūpadhātu*), and the realm of formlessness (*ārūpyadhātu*).

⁴⁴⁰ “The four kinds of birth” refers to those born from eggs, those born from wombs, those born from moisture, and those born by transformation.

At that time, the Lord told Śāriputra, “Excellent! Excellent! Śāriputra, it is for the sake of calming all sentient beings, comforting all sentient beings, sympathizing with all sentient beings, benefiting all sentient beings, enriching and comforting all sentient beings and gods that you ask me about this profound matter. Śāriputra, you would be much at fault if a question about such a matter were not posed to the Tathāgata-Arhat-Samyaksambuddha. Why is it so? [It is so because] at the present time and in the future time, all sentient beings such as the gods and so on are all constantly subjected to vexation and harm, forever losing all benefits and comforts.

(Bodhiruci: 爾時世尊告舍利弗：善哉，善哉，舍利弗。汝為安隱一切眾生，安樂一切眾生，憐愍一切眾生，利益一切眾生，饒益安樂一切眾生、諸天人故，乃能問我是甚深義。舍利弗，汝若不問如來應供正遍知如是義者，有多過咎。所以者何？於現在世及未來世，諸天人等一切眾生，長受衰惱損害之事，永失一切利益安樂。)

“Śāriputra, what is known as the great perverted view is the view that the *sattvadhātu* increases or the [466b] *sattvadhātu* decreases. Śāriputra, beings with this great perverted view, because of such a view, are [like] the born-blind; therefore they, deluded, tread all night long on perverted paths. For this reason, they fall to undesired realms in this present life.

(Bodhiruci: 舍利弗，大邪見者，所謂見眾生界增、見眾生界減。舍利弗，此大邪見諸眾生等，以是見故生盲無目，是故長夜妄行邪道，以是因緣，於現在世墮諸惡趣。)

“Śāriputra, the great peril lies in the delusory, firm attachment to [the views that] the *sattvadhātu* increases or that the *sattvadhātu* decreases. Śāriputra, because of the delusory, firm attachment of these sentient beings, therefore they, deluded, tread all night long on perverted paths. For this reason, they fall to undesired realms in the future life.

(Bodhiruci: 舍利弗，大險難者，所謂取眾生界增堅著妄執、取眾生界減堅著妄執。舍利弗，此諸眾生堅著妄執，是故長夜妄行邪道，以是因緣，於未來世墮諸惡趣。)

“Śāriputra, all ignorant, ordinary sentient beings, because they do not know the one *dharmadhātu* just as it is, because they do not see the one *dharmadhātu* just as it is, give rise to the mind of perverted views, saying that the *sattvadhātu* increases or the *sattvadhātu* decreases.

(Bodhiruci: 舍利弗，一切愚癡凡夫不如實知一法界故、不如實見一法界故，起邪見心，謂眾生界增、眾生界減。)

“Śāriputra, when the Tathāgata is still alive, my disciples will not be acceptive of such views. Five hundred years after my passing away, there will be many sentient beings who are ignorant, without wisdom concerning the Buddha’s Dharma; even though they remove their hair and beard, dressing with three robes⁴⁴¹ and appearing like a *śramaṇa*, inside they contain no virtues of being a *śramaṇa*. Beings of this kind are indeed not *śramaṇas* though they claim to be *śramaṇas*; they are not the disciples of the Buddha though they claim to be the

⁴⁴¹ The “three robes” comprise an inner robe (*antaravāsaka*) which is worn at all times, an upper garment (*uttarāsaṅga*) which is worn except when working inside the monastery in the hottest days, and an outer robe (*saṃghāṭi*) which is worn when collecting alms, performing rituals, or meeting someone who is respected.

disciples of the Buddha, saying of themselves, ‘I am a *śramaṇa*, a true disciple of the Buddha.’ Such people give rise to the views of increase and decrease.

(Bodhiruci: 舍利弗，如來在世，我諸弟子不起此見。若我滅後過五百歲，多有眾生愚無智慧，於佛法中雖除鬚髮，服三法衣現沙門像，然其內無沙門德行。如是等輩，實非沙門自謂沙門，非佛弟子謂佛弟子，而自說言：我是沙門真佛弟子。如是等人起增減見。)

“Why is it so? Because these sentient beings rely on the Tathāgata’s *sūtras* of provisional meaning, without the eye of wisdom because they are far away from the true view of emptiness, because they do not truly know the Tathāgata’s realization of the initial *cittopāda*, because they do not truly know the acts of accumulating infinite *bodhi* and virtues, because they do not truly know the infinite Dharma attained by the Tathāgata, because they do not truly know the infinite power of the Tathāgata, because they do not truly know the infinite domain (*viśaya*) of the Tathāgata, because they do not have faith in the infinite sphere of action (*gocara*) of the Tathāgata, because they do not truly know the inconceivable, infinite freedom of the Tathāgata in the Dharma, because they do not truly know the inconceivable, infinite skilful means of the Tathāgata, because they cannot truly differentiate the Tathāgata’s infinite realms of differentiation, because they cannot skillfully enter the inconceivable compassion of the Tathāgata, because they do not truly know the *mahā-parinirvāṇa* of the Tathāgata, Śāriputra, because these ignorant, ordinary beings are without the wisdom from hearing [the teachings of the Buddha], when they hear about the *nirvāṇa* of the Tathāgata, they give rise to the view of

annihilation and the view of cessation. Because they give rise to the idea of annihilation and the idea of cessation, they claim that the *sattvadhātu* decreases, resulting in a great perverted view and an extremely unwholesome *karma*.

(Bodhiruci: 何以故？此諸眾生，以依如來不了義經，無慧眼故，遠離如實空見故，不如實知如來所證初發心故，不如實知修集無量菩提功德行故，不如實知如來所得無量法故，不如實知如來無量力故，不如實知如來無量境界故，不信如來無量行處故，不如實知如來不思議無量法自在故，不如實知如來不思議無量方便故，不能如實分別如來無量差別境界故，不能善入如來不可思議大悲故，不如實知如來大涅槃故。舍利弗，愚癡凡夫無聞慧故，聞如來涅槃起斷見滅見。以起斷想及滅想故，謂眾生界滅，成大邪見極重惡業。)

“Furthermore, Śāriputra, these sentient beings, having relied on the view of decrease, further give rise to three [other] views. These three views and the view of decrease are inseparable, just like a net. [466c] What are these three views? First, it is the view of annihilation, claiming that [the sentient being] is ultimately exhausted; second, it is the view of cessation, claiming that [external cessation] is precisely [the state of] *nirvāṇa*⁴⁴²; third, it is the view of no *nirvāṇa*, claiming that *nirvāṇa* is ultimately void and quiescent. Śāriputra, these three views thus entangle, hold, and touch [the minds of ignorant beings].

(Bodhiruci: 復次舍利弗，此諸眾生依於滅見復起三見，此三種見與彼滅見，不相捨離猶如羅網。何謂三見？一者斷見，謂畢竟盡；二者滅見，謂即涅槃；三者無涅槃見，謂此涅槃畢竟空寂。舍利弗，此三種見如是縛、如是執、如是觸。)

⁴⁴² See p. 91, n. 153 of the present thesis. Nancy McCagney points out: “It is conventionally true (*saṃvṛtisatya*) that there is arising (*utpāda*) and cessation (*nirodha, nirvāṇa*). But higher truth [*paramārthasatya*] is that both are open (*śūnya*), like space, and thus there is no arising and no ceasing.” (*Nāgārjuna and the Philosophy of Openness*, pp. 94-95.)

“Because reason of the power of these three views, they further give rise to two [other] perverted views. These two views and those three views are inseparable, just like a net. What are the two views? First, it is the view of no desire⁴⁴³; second, it is the view of *nirvāṇa* as ultimate non-existence.

(Bodhiruci: 以是三見力因緣故，展轉復生二種邪見。此二種見與彼三見，不相捨離猶如羅網。何謂二見？一者無欲見，二者畢竟無涅槃見。)

Śāriputra, from a basis of the view of no desire, there arise two further views. These two views and the view of no desire are inseparable, just like a net. What are these two views? First, it is the view of attachment to monastic codes (*śīlavrataparāmarśa*)⁴⁴⁴; second, it is the erroneous view that purity can be produced in the impure.⁴⁴⁵

(Bodhiruci: 舍利弗，依無欲見復起二見。此二種見與無欲見，不相捨離猶如羅網。何謂二見？一者戒取見，二者於不淨中起淨顛倒見。)

Śāriputra, the view of *nirvāṇa* as ultimate non-existence further gives rise to six [other] views. These six views and the view of *nirvāṇa* as ultimate non-existence are inseparable, just like a net. What are these six views? First, is the view that there is a beginning of the world; second, is the view that there is an ending of the world; third, is the view that sentient beings are created by illusion; fourth, is the view that there is neither suffering nor bliss; fifth, is the view that there is no

⁴⁴³ See n. 154 on page 91 above.

⁴⁴⁴ This might refer to the whole range of ascetic practices fitting for the monks. Cf. The *Cūḷaassapurasutta* in the *Majjhima-Nikāya* (English translation in I.B. Horner, *The Collection of the Middle Length Sayings*, vol. 1, pp. 334-339).

⁴⁴⁵ Leonard Priestley points out to me that this view is actually one of the four *viparyāsas*, seeking the pure in the impure. This might either be the Brahmanical belief in the efficacy of blood sacrifices, or the belief that there is no need for ascetic practice.

natural disposition of the sentient being⁴⁴⁶; and sixth, is the view that there are no Noble Truths of the Buddha.

(Bodhiruci: 舍利弗，依畢竟無涅槃見復起六種見。此六種見與無涅槃見，不相捨離猶如羅網。何謂六見？一者世間有始見；二者世間有終見；三者眾生幻化所作見；四者無苦無樂見；五者無眾生事見；六者無聖諦見。)

“Furthermore, Śāriputra, from those sentient beings who are attached to the view of increase further arise to two views. These two views and the view of increase are inseparable just like a net. What are these two views? First, is the view that there is a beginning of *nirvāṇa*; and second, is the view that phenomena arise fortuitously without relying on causes or conditions.

(Bodhiruci: 復次舍利弗，此諸眾生依於增見復起二見。此二種見與彼增見，不相捨離猶如羅網。何謂二見？一者涅槃始生見，二者無因無緣忽然而有見。)

“Śāriputra, these two views can lead all sentient beings to have no resolution or diligence with regard to the wholesome *dharma*s. Śāriputra, because these beings give rise to two views such as these, it is impossible, even [if] the seven Buddha-Tathāgata-Arhat-Samyaksambuddhas were born one by one and taught them the Dharma, that they would generate resolution or diligence with regard to the wholesome *dharma*s.

(Bodhiruci: 舍利弗，此二種見，令諸眾生於善法中，無願欲心、勤精進心。舍利弗，是諸眾生以起如是二種見故，正使七佛如來應正遍知次第出世為其說法，於善法中若生欲心、勤精進心，無有是處。)

⁴⁴⁶ I take the “*shī*” in “*wu zhongsheng shī*” (無眾生事) to represent the Sanskrit word “*vastu*,” meaning “any really existing or abiding substance or essence, thing, object, article, ... natural disposition, essential property, ... the pith or substance of anything,” etc. (M. Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit English Dictionary*, p. 932.) It is not entirely clear what “*wu zhongsheng shī*” means in the Chinese translation. I interpret it as referring to the “natural disposition” or capability of sentient beings to attain enlightenment.

“Śāriputra, these two views, known as the view that there is a beginning of *nirvāṇa* and the view that phenomena arise fortuitously without relying on causes and conditions, are the root of ignorance and all delusions.

(Bodhiruci: 舍利弗，此二種見乃是無明諸惑根本：所謂涅槃始生見；無因無緣忽然而有見。)

“Śāriputra, these two views are the root of grave unwholesomeness and are of great peril. Śāriputra, from these two views all views are generated. All these views and those two views are inseparable, just like a net. What is known as “all views” are the various views of the outer, the inner, being coarse, being subtle, or in the middle, and the views known as increase and decrease. Śāriputra, these two views are based on the *ekadhātu*; they are of the same [467a] realm, they are gathered in the same realm. All ignorant, ordinary sentient beings, because they do not truly understand that *ekadhātu*, because they do not truly see that *ekadhātu*, therefore they generate the mind of gravely unwholesome, greatly perverted views, claiming that the *sattvadhātu* increases or that the *sattvadhātu* decreases.”

(Bodhiruci: 舍利弗，此二種見乃是極惡根本大患之法。舍利弗，依此二見起一切見。此一切見，與彼二見不相捨離猶如羅網。一切見者，所謂若內若外、若麤若細若中種種諸見，所謂增見減見。舍利弗，此二種見依止一界，同一界、合一界。一切愚癡凡夫，不如實知彼一界故、不如實見彼一界故，起於極惡大邪見心，謂眾生界增、謂眾生界減。)

At that time, venerable Śāriputra asked the Buddha, “Lord, what is the *ekadhātu*, in that all ignorant, ordinary sentient beings, because they do not truly understand that *ekadhātu*, because they do not truly see that *ekadhātu*, therefore generate the mind of gravely unwholesome, greatly perverted views, claiming that

the *sattvadhātu* increases or that the *sattvadhātu* decreases?” Śāriputra [further] said, “Excellent, Lord! This matter is so profound that I cannot understand [it]. I wish the Tathāgata could explain it for me, to make me understand.”

(Bodhiruci: 爾時，慧命舍利弗白佛言：世尊，何者是一界，而言一切愚癡凡夫，不如實知彼一界故、不如實見彼一界故，起於極惡大邪見心，謂眾生界增、謂眾生界減？舍利弗言：善哉世尊，此義甚深我未能解，唯願如來爲我解說令得解了。)

At that time, the Lord told venerable Śāriputra, “This profound matter is the object of the Tathāgata’s wisdom; [it] is also the sphere coursed by the Tathāgata’s mind. Śāriputra, such a profound matter, all the Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas with their wisdom cannot know, cannot see, cannot contemplate it, let alone can the speculations of all ignorant, ordinary beings. Only the Buddhas, with their Tathāgata-wisdom, can comprehend and know [such a profound matter].⁴⁴⁷ Śāriputra, all the Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas with their wisdom concerning such a matter can only have faith [in it] but cannot truly know or comprehend it. Śāriputra, this profound matter is the ultimate truth (*paramārtha-satya*); the ultimate truth is the *sattvadhātu*; the *sattvadhātu* is the *tathāgatagarbha*; the *tathāgatagarbha* is the *dharmakāya*.

(Bodhiruci: 爾時，世尊告慧命舍利弗：此甚深義乃是如來智慧境界，亦是如來心所行處。舍利弗，如是深義一切聲聞緣覺智慧所不能知、所不能見、不能觀察，何況一切愚癡凡夫而能測量？唯有諸佛如來智慧，乃能觀察知見此義。舍利弗，一切聲聞緣覺所有智慧，於此義中唯可仰信，不能如實知見觀察。舍利弗，甚深義者即是第一義諦；第一義諦者即是眾生界；眾生界者即是如來藏；如來藏者即是法身。

Ratnamati: 舍利弗，言眾生者，乃是諸佛如來境界，一切聲聞辟支佛等，以正智慧不能觀察眾生之義，何況能證毛道凡夫？於此義中唯信如來。是故舍利弗，隨如來信此眾生義。

⁴⁴⁷ This sentence is not found in the *RGV-vyākḥā*’s citation of the *AAN*.

舍利弗，言眾生者，即是第一義諦；舍利弗，言第一義諦者，即是眾生界；舍利弗，言眾生界者，即是如來藏；舍利弗，言如來藏者，即是法身故。

Sanskrit: *tathāgataviśayo hi śāriputrāyam arthas tathāgatagocaraḥ /*

sarvaśrāvakaḥ pratyekabuddhair api tāvac chāriputrāyam artho na śakyaḥ samyaksvaprajñāyā

(jñātum vā) draṣṭum vā pratyavekṣitum vā / prāg eva bālaprthagjanair anyatra

tathāgataśraddhāgamanataḥ / śraddhāgamanīyo hi śāriputra paramārthaḥ / paramārtha iti

śāriputra sattvadhātor etad adhivacanam / sattvadhātur iti śāriputra tathāgatagarbhasyaitad

adhivacanam / tathāgatagarbha iti śāriputra dharmakāyasyaitad adhivacanam //

Tibet: *shva ri'i bu don 'di ni de bzhin gshegs pa'i yul te / de bzhin gshegs pa'i spyod yul lo / shva*

ri'i bu don 'di ni de bzhin nyan thos dang / rang sangs rgyas thams cad kyis kyang rang gi shes

rab kyis yang dag par shes pa'am / ba lta ba'am / brtag par mi nus na / byis pa so so'i skye bo

dag gis lta ci smos te / de bzhin gshegs pa la dad pas rtogs pa ni ma gtogs so / shva ri'i bu don

dam pa ni dad pas rtogs par bya ba yin no / shva ri'i bu don dam pa shes bya ba 'din ni sems can

gyi khams kyi tshig bla dgas so / shva ri'i bu sems can gyi khams 'se bye ba 'di ni de bzhin gshegs

pa'i snying po'i tshig bla dgas so //

“Śāriputra, that which is the *dharmakāya* as I explain it is non-discrete and inseparable from the inconceivable Buddha *dharmas* and the Tathāgata’s qualities (*guṇa*) and wisdom (*jñāna*), which are more numerous than the sands of the Ganges. Śāriputra, [it is] like a lantern in the world, whose luminosity, form, and touch are non-discrete and inseparable. Furthermore, it is like a wish-fulfilling jewel (*cintāmanī*), whose luminosity, shape, and form are non-discrete and inseparable. Śāriputra, the *dharmakāya* is just so, being non-discrete and inseparable from the inconceivable Buddha *dharmas* and the Tathāgata’s qualities and wisdom, which are more numerous than the sands of the Ganges.

(Bodhiruci: 舍利弗，如我所說法身義者，過於恒沙不離不脫不斷不異、不思議佛法如來功德智慧。舍利弗、如世間燈，所有明色及觸不離不脫；又如摩尼寶珠，所有明色形相不離不脫。舍利弗，如來所說法身之義亦復如是，過於恒沙不離不脫不斷不異、不思議佛法如來功德智慧。

Ratnamati: 舍利弗，如來所說法身義者，過於恒沙不離不脫不思議佛法如來智慧功德。舍利弗，如世間燈，明色及觸不離不脫；又如摩尼寶珠，明色形相不離不脫。舍利弗，法身之義亦復如是，過於恒沙不離不脫不思議佛法如來智慧功德故。

Sanskrit: *yo 'yam śāriputra tathāgatanirdiṣṭo dharmakāyaḥ so 'yam avinirbhāgadharmā /*

avinirmuktajñānagūṇo yad uta gaṅganadivālikāvyatikrāntais tathāgatadharmaiḥ / tad yathā

śāriputra pradīpaḥ / avinirbhāgadharmā / avinirmuktaguṇaḥ / yad uta ālokoṣṇavarṇatābhiḥ /

mañir vālokaḥ samasthānaiḥ / evam eva śāriputra tathāgatanirdiṣṭo

*dharmakāyo 'vinirbhāgadharmaṁvinirmuktajñānaḡuṇo yad uta gaṅganadīvālikāvyaativṛttais
tathāgatadharmaiḥ //*

Tibetan: *shva ri'i bu de bzhin gshegs pas bstan pa'i chos kyi sku gang yin pa de ni 'di lta ste /
gang gva'i klung gi bye ma snyed 'das pa'i de bzhin gshegs pa'i chos dga dang / rnam par dbyer
med pa'i chos dang ldan pa ma bral pa'i yin shes kyi yon dan can yin /
shva ri'i bu de bzhin du de bzhin gshegs pas bstan pa'i chos kyi sku ni 'di lta ste/ gang gva'i klung
gi bye ma snyed 'das pa de bzhin gshes pa'i chos rnams kyi rnam par dbye ba med pa'i chos can
ma bral ba'i ye shes kyi yon tan can no //)*

“Śāriputra, this *dharmakāya* neither arises nor vanishes; it is not the past limit, nor is it the future limit, as it is free from the two extremes. Śāriputra, it is not the past limit, because it is free from the time of arising; it is not the future limit, because it is free from the time of vanishing.

(Bodhiruci: 舍利弗，此法身者是不生不滅法，非過去際、非未來際，離二邊故。舍利弗，非過去際者離生時故；非未來際者，離滅時故。)

Śāriputra, [467b] the *dharmakāya* of the Tathāgata is eternal (*nitya*), since it is inalterable and inexhaustible. Śāriputra, the *dharmakāya* of the Tathāgata is permanent (*dhruva*), as it is the everlasting refuge and remains the same until the future limit. Śāriputra, the *dharmakāya* of the Tathāgata is quiescent (*śiva*), as it is nondual and nonconceptual. Śāriputra, the *dharmakāya* of the Tathāgata is unchanging (*śāśvata*), as it is indestructible and is uncreated (*akṛtrima*).

(Bodhiruci: 舍利弗，如來法身常，以不異法故、以不盡法故；舍利弗，如來法身恆，以常可歸依故、以未來際平等故。舍利弗，如來法身清涼，以不二法故、以無分別法故；舍利弗，如來法身不變，以非滅法故、以非作法故。

Ratnamati: 舍利弗，如來法身常，以不異法故、以不盡法故。舍利弗，如來法身恆，以常可歸依故、以未來際平等故；舍利弗，如來法身清涼，以不二法故、以無分別法故；舍利弗，如來法身不變，以非滅法故、以非作法故。

Sanskrit: *nityo 'yaṁ śāriputra dharmakāyo 'nanyatvadharmāksayadharmatayā / dhruvo 'yaṁ śāriputra dharmakāyo dhruvaśaraṇo 'parāntakoṭīsamatayā / śivo 'yaṁ śāriputra dharmakāyo 'dvayadharmāvikalpadharmatayā / śāśvato 'yaṁ śāriputra dharmakāyo 'vināśadharmākṛtrimadharmatayā //*

Tibetan: *shva ri'i bu mi zad pa'i chos nyid kyi na gzhan du mi 'gyur ba'i chos kyi sku 'di ni rtag pa'o// shva ri'i bu phyi ma'i mtha'i mu dang mtshungs pa nyid kyi brtan pa'i skyabs su gyur pa'i chos kyi sku 'di ni brtan pa'o// shva ri'i bu rnam par mi rtog pa nyid kyi gnyis su med pa'i chos*

kyi sku 'di ni zhi ba'ol/ shva ri'i bu ma bcos pa'i chos nyid kyis 'jig pa med pa'i chos kyi sku 'di ni g.yung drung ngoll)

“Śāriputra, this same *dharmakāya*, concealed (*gūḍha*) by limitless defilements more numerous than the sands of the Ganges, following the waves of the world since beginningless time, wandering and floating to and fro in life-and-death (*saṃsāra*), is known as the ordinary sentient being. Śāriputra, this same *dharmakāya*, becoming averse to the sufferings of the worldly [phenomenon of] life-and-death (*saṃsāra*), abandoning all kinds of desires, coursing in the ten *pāramitās* which epitomize the eighty-four thousand categories of Dharma-teachings (*dharmaskandha*), practising the *bodhicarya*, is known as the Bodhisattvas.

“Śāriputra, this same *dharmakāya*, completely free from all concealment by worldly defilements, going beyond all suffering, transcending all pollution by defilements, attaining purity, the perfect purity, abiding on the other shore of pure *dharmatā*, arriving at the place which all sentient beings look toward, perfectly knowing and being unsurpassable in all spheres (*viśaya*), free from all hindrances and all obstructions, attaining strength of freedom in all *dharmas*, is known as Tathāgata-Arhat-samyaksambuddha.

(Bodhiruci: 舍利弗，即此法身，過於恒沙無邊煩惱所纏，從無始世來，隨順世間波浪漂流，往來生死，名為眾生。舍利弗，即此法身，厭離世間生死苦惱，棄捨一切諸有欲求，行十波羅蜜，攝八萬四千法門，修菩提行，名為菩薩。復次舍利弗，即此法身，離一切世間煩惱使纏過一切苦，離一切煩惱垢，得淨得清淨，住於彼岸清淨法中，到一切眾生所願之地，於一切境界中究竟通達更無勝者，離一切障離一切礙，於一切法中得自在力，名為如來應正遍知。

Ratnamati: 舍利弗，即此法身，過於恒沙無量煩惱所纏，從無始來，隨順世間生死濤波，去來生退，名為眾生。舍利弗，即此法身，厭離世間生死苦惱，捨一切欲，行十波羅蜜，

八萬四千法門，修菩提行，名爲菩薩。舍利弗，即此法身得離一切煩惱使纏，過一切苦，離一切煩惱垢得淨得清淨，得住彼岸清淨法中，到一切眾生所觀之地，於一切境界中更無勝者，離一切障離一切礙，於一切法中得自在力，名爲如來應正遍知故。

Sanskrit: *ayam eva śāriputra dharmakāyo 'paryantakleśakośakotiḡuḡhaḡ / samsārasrotasā uhyamāno 'navarāgrasamsāragaticyutyupapattiḡu saṃcāran sattvadhātur ity ucyate / sa eva śāriputra dharmakāyaḡ samsārasrotoduḡkhanirviṇṇo viraktaḡ sarvakāmaḡviḡsayebhyo daśapāramitāntargataiś caturaśītyā dharmaskandhasahasrair bodhāya caryāḡ caran bodhisattva ity ucyate / sa eva punaḡ śāriputra dharmakāyaḡ sarvakleśakośaparimuktaḡ sarvaduḡkkhātīkrāntaḡ sarvopakleśamalāpagataḡ śuddho viśuddhaḡ paramapariśuddhadharmatāyāḡ sthitaḡ sarvasattvālokanīyāḡ bhūmim ārūḡhaḡ sarvasyāḡ jñeyabhūmāv adviītyāḡ pauraḡḡm sthāmaprāpto 'nāvaraṇadharmāpratihatasarva-dharmaīśvaryaḡbalatām adhigataḡ tathāgato 'rhan samyaksambuddha ity ucyate //*

Tibetan: *shva ri'i bu chos kyi sku de nyid nyon mongs pa'i sbubs bye ba mtha' yas pas gtums pas// 'khor ba'i rgyun gyis khyer ba/ thog ma dang tha ma med pa'i 'khor ba'i 'gro bar 'chi ba dang skye ba dag tu 'khor ba ni sems can gyi khams zhes brjod do// shva ri'i bu chos kyi sku de nyid 'khor ba'i rgyun gyi sdug bsngal las skyo bar gyur pa// 'dod pa'i yul thams cad la chags pa dang bral ba pha rol tu phyin pa bcu'i khongs su gtogs pa/ chos kyi phung po brgyad khri bzhi stong gi byang chub kyi don du spyad pa spyod pa ni byang chub sems dpa' zhes brjod do// shva ri'i bu chos kyi sku de nyid nyon mongs pa'i sbubs thams cad las yongs su grol ba/ sdug bsngal ba thams cad las 'das pa/ nye ba'i nyon mongs pa'i dri ma mtha' dag dang bral ba dag pa rnam par dag pa mchog tu yongs su dag pa'i chos nyid la gnas pa/ sems can thams cad kyi blta bar bya ba'i sa la bzhugs pa/ shes bya'i sa thams cad la gnyis su med pa'i skyes bu'i mthu thob pa/ sgrib pa med pa'i chos can chos thams cad kyi dbang phyug gi stobs thogs pa med pa thob pa ni/ de bzhin gshegs pa dgra bcom pa yang dag par rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas zhes brjod do//)*

“Therefore, Śāriputra, the dharmakāya is not apart from the sattvadhātu, and the sattvadhātu is not apart from the dharmakāya. The sattvadhātu is the dharmakāya, and the dharmakāya is the sattvadhātu. These two are the same thing but differ in name.

(Bodhiruci: 是故舍利弗，不離眾生界有法身、不離法身有眾生界；眾生界即法身、法身即眾生界。舍利弗，此二法者義一名異。

Ratnamati: 舍利弗，不離眾生界有法身、不離法身有眾生界；眾生界即法身、法身即眾生界。舍利弗，此二法者義一名異故。

Sanskrit: *tasmāc chāriputra nānyaḡ sattvadhātur nānyo dharmakāyaḡ / sattvadhātur eva dharmakāyaḡ / dharmakāya eva sattvadhātuḡ / advayam etad arthena / vyañjanamātrabhedāḡ //*

Tibetan: *shva ri'i bu de'i phyir na sems can gyi khams kyang gzhan la/ chos kyi sku yang gzhan pa ni ma yin te/ sems can gyi khams nyis chos kyi sku chos kyi sku nyid kyang sems can gyi khams te/ 'di ni don gyis gnyis su med de yi ge tsam dang tha dad pa yin nol/)*

“Furthermore, Śāriputra, as I explained earlier, there are three aspects of the *sattvadhātu*, which are all *tathatā* and are not differentiated or distinct [from one another]. What are the three aspects? First, the *tathāgatagarbha* which, since the beginningless past, is essentially connected with the pure *dharmas* (*śubhadharma*); second, the *tathāgatagarbha* which, since the beginningless past, is essentially unconnected with the impure *dharmas* of the covering of defilements (*kleśakośatā*); third, the *tathāgatagarbha* whose existence as the *dharmatā* is the same and eternal till the ultimate limit (*aparāntakoti*).

(Bodhiruci: 復次舍利弗，如我上說，眾生界中亦三種法，皆真實如，不異不差。何謂三法？一者如來藏本際相應體及清淨法；二者如來藏本際不相應體及煩惱纏不清淨法；三者如來藏未來際平等恒及有法。)

“Śāriputra, you should know that the *tathāgatagarbha* which, since the beginningless past, is essentially connected with the pure *dharmas* (*śubhadharma*) is the reality, not unreal, not distinct or separate from the wisdom of the pure *tathatā-dharmadhātu*, the inconceivable *dharma*; it has existed in essential connection with the pure *dharmas* since the beginningless past. Śāriputra, for the sake of sentient beings, I speak of the inconceivable, innately pure mind, on the basis of this pure *tathatā-dharmadhātu*.

(Bodhiruci: 舍利弗當知，如來藏本際相應體及清淨法者，此法如實不虛妄不離不脫智慧清淨真如法界不思議法，無始本際來，有此清淨相應法體。舍利弗，我依此清淨真如法界，為眾生故，說為不可思議法自性清淨心。)

“Śāriputra, you should know [467c] that the *tathāgatagarbha* which, since the beginningless past, is essentially unconnected with the impure *dharmas* of the covering of defilements is separate and unconnected with the covering of impure defilements, that can only be got rid of through the bodhi-wisdom of the Tathāgata. Śāriputra, for the sake of sentient beings, I speak of the inconceivable, innately pure mind polluted by adventitious defilements, on the basis of this inconceivable *dharmadhātu* which is unconnected with the covering of defilements.

(Bodhiruci: 舍利弗當知，如來藏本際不相應體及煩惱纏不清淨法者，此本際來離脫不相應煩惱所纏不清淨法，唯有如來菩提智之所能斷。舍利弗，我依此煩惱所纏不相應不思議法界，為眾生故，說為客塵煩惱所染自性清淨心不可思議法。)

“Śāriputra, you should know that the *tathāgatagarbha* whose existence as the *dharmatā* is the same and eternal till the ultimate limit is the root of all *dharmas*, endowed with all *dharmas*, replete with all *dharmas*. With regard to the worldly *dharmas*, it is not apart or separate from the reality of all *dharmas*; it supports all *dharmas* and upholds all *dharmas*. Śāriputra, on the basis of this eternal, permanent, cool, and unchanging refuge, which is non-arising and non-vanishing, on the basis of the inconceivable pure *dharmadhātu*, I speak of the *sattva*. Why is it so? “*Sattva*” is another term for the non-arising, non-vanishing, eternal, permanent, cool, unchanging refuge, the inconceivable pure *dharmadhātu*. Because of this, I rely on that teaching and call it the *sattva*. Śāriputra, these three aspects are all real *tathatā*, not differentiated, not distinct. With regard to these non-differentiated and non-distinct states of real *tathatā*, there is ultimately no generation of extremely

unwholesome, dualistic perverted views. Why is it so? Because of the true view, Śāriputra, the view of increase and the view of decrease are utterly far from the Buddhas and they are condemned by the Tathāgata.

(Bodhiruci: 舍利弗當知，如來藏未來際平等恒及有法者，即是一切諸法根本，備一切法具一切法，於世法中不離不脫真實一切法，住持一切法，攝一切法。舍利弗，我依此不生不滅常恒清涼不變歸依、不可思議清淨法界，說名眾生。所以者何？言眾生者，即是不生不滅常恒清涼不變歸依、不可思議清淨法界等異名。以是義故，我依彼法說名眾生。舍利弗，此三種法皆真實如不異不差，於此真實如不異不差法中，畢竟不起極惡不善二種邪見。何以故？以如實見故。所謂減見增見，舍利弗，此二邪見諸佛如來畢竟遠離，諸佛如來之所呵責。)

“Śāriputra, if there are monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen who originate the one view or the other, the Buddhas and Tathāgatas are not their teachers, and these people are not my disciples. Śāriputra, by way of the origination of dualistic views, these people migrate from darkness to darkness, from gloom to gloom. I call these beings the *icchantikās*.

(Bodhiruci: 舍利弗，若有比丘比丘尼優婆塞優婆夷，若起一見、若起二見，諸佛如來非彼世尊，如是等人非我弟子。舍利弗，此人以起二見因緣故，從冥入冥、從闇入闇，我說是等名一闍提。

Ratnamati: 舍利弗。若有比丘比丘尼優婆塞優婆夷，若起一見、若起二見，諸佛如來非彼世尊，如是等人非我弟子。舍利弗，是人以起二見因緣，從闇入闇、從冥入冥，我說是等名一闍提故。

Sanskrit: *nāhaṃ teṣāṃ śāstā na te mama śrāvakāḥ | tān ahaṃ śāriputra tamasas tamo 'ntaram andhakārān mahāndhakāragāminas tamobhūyiṣṭhā iti vadāmi ||*

Tibetan: *nga ni de dag gi ston pa ma yin la/ de dag kyang nga'i nyan thos ma yin no/ shva ri'i bu de dag ni mun pa bas kyang ches mun pa/ mun pa nas mun pa chen por 'gro ba mun pa chen po dang ldan pa'o zhes nga smra'o//)*

Therefore, Śāriputra, you now should learn this Dharma and convert those sentient beings, so that they may be free from the two views and abide in the right path. Śāriputra, you should also learn such Dharmas, be free from the two views, and abide in the Middle Way.”

(Bodhiruci: 是故舍利弗，汝今應學此法，化彼眾生命離二見住正道中。舍利弗，如是等法，汝亦應學，離彼二見住正道中。)

After the Buddha had preached this *sūtra*, the whole assembly of the venerable Śāriputra, the monks (*bhikṣu*), the nuns (*bhikṣunī*), the laymen (*upāsaka*), the laywomen (*upāsikā*), Bodhisattva-Mahāsattvas, and Devas, Nāgas, Yakṣas, Gandharvas, Asuras, Garuḍas, Kinnaras, Mahoragas, and human and non-human beings (*manuṣyāmanuṣya*) [468a] all joyfully believed in and accepted [the teaching].

(Bodhiruci: 佛說此經已，慧命舍利弗、比丘、比丘尼、優婆塞、優婆夷、菩薩摩訶薩，及諸天龍、夜叉、乾闥婆、阿修羅、迦樓羅、緊那羅、摩羅伽、人非人等一切大眾，皆大歡喜，信受奉行。)

[Here ends] the *Foshuo buzeng bujian jing*.
(Bodhiruci: 佛說不增不減經)

Appendix II : Bodhiruci, the Translator of the AAN

The *AAN* was translated into Chinese by Bodhiruci, giving the scripture the Chinese title “*Foshuo buzeng bujian jing*” (佛說不增不減經). He should not to be confused with Bodhiruci of the Tang dynasty who compiled the voluminous *Mahāratnakūṭasūtra*. This translator of the *AAN* was active in the Northern Wei period (386-534 C.E.).

To distinguish the two Bodhirucis, the name of the earlier Bodhiruci, hereafter Bodhiruci (I), was phonetically transcribed into Chinese as 菩提流支 or as 菩提留支, while the later Bodhiruci, hereafter Bodhiruci (II), was unanimously rendered as 菩提流志 only, although all three transcriptions are pronounced as “Puti liuzhi.” Bodhiruci (I) is also sometimes referred to as Daoxi (道希) in the Northern Wei records, while Bodhiruci (II) is on occasion referred to as Jueai (覺愛). While “Jueai” is clearly a Chinese translation of “Bodhiruci,” it is harder to explain the name “Daoxi.”

A short biographical note on Bodhiruci (I) can be found in the *Xu gaoseng zhuan* (續高僧傳).⁴⁴⁸ Half of this biographical note, however, deals with the history and the splendor of the Great Yongning Monastery (永寧大寺) where Bodhiruci (I) subsequently resided and conducted his translation work.⁴⁴⁹ Consequently we do not know a great deal

⁴⁴⁸ See T50:428a.

⁴⁴⁹ The account in the *Xu gaoseng zhuan* simply states that Emperor Xuanwu offered Bodhiruci (I) the best and placed him in residence at the Yongning monastery as the head of the Indian monks (宣武皇帝下敕引勞，供擬殷華，處之永寧大寺，四事將給七百梵僧，敕以留支為譯經之元匠也。-- T2060, 428a); however, it also comments that the Yongning monastery was not built until 516 C.E (其寺本孝明皇帝熙平元年，靈太后胡氏所立。-- T2060, 428a). That would suggest that Bodhiruci (I) was not translating Buddhist texts at Yongning monastery eight years after his arrival in China.

about Bodhiruci (I). What we do know from the biographical note is that Bodhiruci (I) was born in North India (北天竺人), and that he was not only well versed in the Tripiṭaka, but was also able to enter the *dhāraṇī* with mastery.⁴⁵⁰ His ambition was nothing other than the desire to spread Buddhist teachings, and he therefore traveled far to the West of what is now known as the Pamir Plateau⁴⁵¹. It is also said that Bodhiruci (I) was well versed in a form of “sorcery magic” (*zhoushu* 咒術). The story, reported in the *Xu gaoseng zhuan*, has it that on one occasion his disciples had not yet prepared the water for him to bathe; Bodhiruci (I), sitting beside a well, recited a *mantra* a few times and the well miraculously filled up to the top with water so that he could easily scoop out the water to bathe himself. Later when questioned by his amazed disciples, Bodhiruci (I) insisted that they should not offer praise for something not worth praising, and went on to explain that the feat was simply “common practice” in India. Fearing that the practice of “sorcery magic” would distract people from the true aim of practising Buddhism, Bodhiruci (I) refused to teach it to anyone.

Bodhiruci (I) arrived in China in 508 C.E., and immediately began his career of translating Buddhist texts into Chinese. He began his task with the *Daśabhūmika* at the

⁴⁵⁰ 遍通三藏、妙入總持。(T2060, 428)

⁴⁵¹ 遠蒞蔥左。“蔥” here refers to Cong Ling (蔥嶺), which is known today as the Pamir Plateau. According to Xuanzang’s *Datang xiyu ji*: Cong Ling (Onion Range) is situated at the centre of Jambudvīpa. It connects with the huge snow mountains on the South, extends to the Hot Sea and the Thousand Springs to the North, stretches to the kingdom Huo in the West, and reaches the kingdom of Wusha in the East. There are hundreds of cliffs (?) extending thousands of *li* to the East, West, South, and North. Its deep valleys and dangerous cliffs are always covered with an accumulation of ice and snow, while the cold wind is strong and piercing. Since many different kinds of onions are grown on the mountains, it is called the Onion Range; or, perhaps, because the cliffs are always onion-green in colour, it has been given that name.. (蔥嶺者據瞻部洲中，南接大雪山，北至熱海千泉，西至活國，東至烏鐵國。東西南北各數千里。崖嶺數百重，幽谷險峻恒積冰雪，寒風勁烈多出蔥，故謂蔥嶺；又以山崖蔥翠，遂以名焉。) (T2087, 940a)

request of emperor Xuanwu (宣武), who also participated in noting down Bodhiruci (I)'s oral translation (*bishou* 筆授) on the first day.⁴⁵² It is clear that Bodhiruci (I) was greatly respected by the emperor as well as the monks of his time.

Bodhiruci (I) was a prolific translator of Buddhist texts. Thirty-nine works are listed in the *Lidai sanbao ji* (歷代三寶記) as translated by Bodhiruci (I).⁴⁵³ However, not all of them are listed according to the year of translation and the works are not listed chronologically either. The earliest date given in this list is 509 C.E.⁴⁵⁴, when Bodhiruci (I) produced the second Chinese translation of the *Jingang bore boluomi jing* (金剛般若波羅蜜多經, *Vajracchedikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*)⁴⁵⁵, together with its commentary, the *Jingang bore boluomi jing lun* (金剛般若波羅蜜多經論, **Vajracchedikā-prajñāpāramitā-śāstra*), which is attributed to Vasubandhu. Like other Buddhist monks coming from India, Bodhiruci (I) was aided in his Chinese translation by a bureau of Chinese scholars who edited and polished the translation. The team of assistants included Senglang (僧朗), Daozhan (道湛), Sengbian (僧辯), Jueyi (覺意), and Tanlin (曇林). Following this we find that Bodhiruci (I) re-translated another scripture that had already been translated into Chinese, the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* (入楞伽經) in ten fascicles, in 513 C.E.⁴⁵⁶ The following year, two chapters of the *Samḍhinirmocana* (he translated the title as *Shenmi jietuo jing* 深密解脫經) were rendered into Chinese. In 515, Bodhiruci (I)

⁴⁵² 先時流支奉敕，創翻十地，宣武皇帝命章一日親對筆受。(T2060, 428c)

⁴⁵³ 右三十八部合一百二十七卷，梁武帝世，北天竺國三藏法師菩提流支，魏云道希，從魏永平二年至天平年，其間凡歷二十餘載，在洛及鄴譯。(T2034, 86b)

⁴⁵⁴ The year given in the *Lidai sanbao ji* is 永平二年。(T2034, 86a)

⁴⁵⁵ The first Chinese translation of the *Diamond Sūtra* was produced under the guidance of Kumārajīva, and edited and compiled by Sengrui.

⁴⁵⁶ The date reads 延昌二年 in the *Lidai sanbao ji*.

translated the *Faji jing* (法集經, **Dharmasaṅgīti-sūtra*), and in 518⁴⁵⁷, the *Shengsiwei fantian suowenjing* (勝思惟梵天所問經, **Viśeṣacintibrahmaparipricchā-sūtra*). The year 520⁴⁵⁸ seems to have been especially productive for Bodhiruci (I) since, in that year, he translated the *Dasazhe niqianzi shouji jing* (大薩遮尼乾子受記經, **Mahāsatyā-nirgranthaputra-vyākaraṇa-sūtra*)⁴⁵⁹, the *Foming jing* (佛名經, **Buddhanāma-sūtra*), the *Chamopodi shouji jing* (差摩波帝受記經, **Kṣamāvātī-vyākaraṇa-sūtra*), and the *BBJ*. These endeavours all took place at Luoyang. The list does not include any information about which texts Bodhiruci (I) translated in the following ten years. We then learn from the list that in 531 C.E.⁴⁶⁰ he translated the *Shengsiwei fantian suowen jing lun* (勝思惟梵天所問經論, **Viśeṣacintibrahmaparipricchā-sūtra-tīkā*), a commentary, attributed to Vasubandhu, on the *Shengsiwei fantian suowen jing* which he had translated thirteen years earlier. In the same year, the *Wuliangshoujing youbotishe* (無量壽經優波提舍, **Amitāyus-sūtrapadeśa*), also attributed to Vasubandhu, was translated. Then, in 534,⁴⁶¹ he translated the *Qieyeding jinglun* (伽耶頂經論, **Gayāśīrṣa-sāstra*)⁴⁶².

⁴⁵⁷ 神龜元年.

⁴⁵⁸ 正光元年.

⁴⁵⁹ Also entitled *Dasazhe niqianzi suoshuo jing* (大薩遮尼乾子所說經) and *Pusa jingjie fenxun famen jing* (菩薩境界奮迅法門經), this scripture is similar in content to the *Pusaxing fangbian jingjie shentong bianhua jing* (菩薩行方便境界神通變化經, **Bodhisattva-caritopāyaviśaya-ṛddhivikriyā-sūtra*), translated by Guṇabhadra.

⁴⁶⁰ 普泰元年.

⁴⁶¹ 天平二年.

⁴⁶² Also named the *Wenshushili pusa wenputi jing lun* (文殊師利問菩提經論, **Mañjuśrī-bodhisattva-paripricchā-bodhi-sūtra-sāstra*), this is another work attributed to Vasubandhu. It is a commentary on the *Wenshushili wen putijing* (the *Gayāśīrṣa*), translated into Chinese four times by Kumārajīva, Bodhiruci (I), Bodhiruci (II), and Vinītaruci.

Other translated works whose dates are uncertain are listed in the *Lidai sanbao ji* as follows (listed here in the order given):

- *Fenxunwang wen jing* (奮迅王問經, **Īsvararāja-paripṛicchā*)
- *Foyu famen jing* (佛語法門經, **Buddhavacana-dharmaparyāya-sūtra*)
- *Wuzi baoqie jing* (無字寶篋經, **Anakṣara-ratnakaraṇḍaka-sūtra*)⁴⁶³
- *Bubiding ruding jing* (不必定入印經, **Niyatāniyatāvatāramudrā-sūtra*)⁴⁶⁴
- *Dafangdeng xiuduoluo jing* (大方等修多羅經, **Mahāvaiṣṭya-sūtra*)⁴⁶⁵
- *Mile pusa suowen jing* (彌勒菩薩所問經, **Maitreya-paripṛicchā*)
- *Diyiyi fasheng jing* (第一義法勝經, **Paramārtha-dharmavijaya-sūtra*)
- *Qieyeding jing* (伽耶頂經, **Gayāśīrṣa*)⁴⁶⁶
- *Wenshushili xunxing jing* (文殊師利巡行經 = *Mañjuśrī-vihāra-sūtra*)⁴⁶⁷
- *Yiqiefa gaowang jing* (一切法高王經, **Sarvadharmoccarāja-sūtra*)
- *Huzhu tongzi tuoluoni jing* (護諸童子陀羅尼咒經, **Sarvabālapāla-dhāraṇī*)
- *Baoji jing lun* (寶積經論, **Ratnakūṭa-sūtra-śāstra*)⁴⁶⁸

⁴⁶³ This translation is similar in content to two other works translated by Divākara in the Tang dynasty: the *Liwenzi puguangmingzang jing* (**Anakṣara-samantarocanagarbha-sūtra*) and the *Bianzhao guangming wuzi famen jing* (**Vairocana-garbhānakṣara-dharmaparyāya-sūtra*).

⁴⁶⁴ The full title of this work should be “*Bubiding ruding ruyin jing*” (不必定入定入印經). (T645)

⁴⁶⁵ The full title of this work should be “*Dafangdeng xiuduoluo wang jing*” (大方等修多羅王經, **Mahāvaiṣṭya-sūtrarāja-sūtra*). (T515)

⁴⁶⁶ The *Qieyeding jing*, the *Wenshushili wen puti jing* (translated by Kumārajīva), the *Xiangtuo jingshe jing* (translated by Vinītaruci in 582CE), and the *Dasheng qieye shanding jing* (translated by Bodhiruci II), are different translations of the same scripture.

⁴⁶⁷ Another variant of the Chinese version of this scripture under the same title was translated by Jñānagupta of the Sui dynasty.

- *Bangfo jing* (謗佛經)⁴⁶⁹
- *Shidi jing lun* (十地經論, **Daśabhūmika-sūtra-śāstra*)
- *Mile pusa suowen jing lun* (彌勒菩薩所問經論, **Maitreya-bodhisattva-paripṛcchā-sūtra-śāstra*)⁴⁷⁰
- *Baoxing lun* (寶性論, *Ratnagotravibhāga*, in collaboration with Ratnamati)
- *Shunzhong lun* (順中論, **Madhyamakānugama-śāstra*)
- *Miaofa lianhua jing youbotishe* (妙法蓮華經優波提舍, **Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtrapadeśa*)
- *Sanjuzu jing youbotishe* (三具足經優波提舍, **Tripurṇa-sūtrapadeśa*)
- *Baoji pusa sifa youbotishe* (寶髻菩薩四法優波提舍, **Ratnacūda-bodhisattva-caturdharmopadeśa*)
- *Zhuanfalun jing youbotishe* (轉法輪經優波提舍, **Dharmacakra pravartana-sūtrapadeśa*)
- *Shier yinyuan lun* (十二因緣論, **Dvādaśa-nidāna-śāstra*)⁴⁷¹
- *Baizi lun* (百字論, **Śatākṣara-śāstra*)⁴⁷²
- *Powaidao sizong lun* (破外道四宗論)⁴⁷³

⁴⁶⁸ Its title in the *Taishō* edition is given as *Da baoji jing lun*. What it comments on, however, is not the *Mahāratnakūṭa-sūtra*, the voluminous collection of *sūtras*, but only on the 43th chapter, which is the *Ratnakūṭa* itself. It is not known who the commentator is.

⁴⁶⁹ This is a later translation of the *Jueding zongchi jing* (**Vinirṇāta-dhāraṇī-sūtra*), translated by Dharmarakṣa of the Western Jin dynasty (265-316 CE).

⁴⁷⁰ The author of this treatise is unknown. This is a commentary on the 41st chapter of the *Mahāratnakūṭa*.

⁴⁷¹ This work is attributed to Śuddhamati.

⁴⁷² This work is attributed to Āryadeva.

⁴⁷³ The full title given in the *Taishō* edition is: *Tipo pusa po lengqiejing zhong waidao xiaosheng sizong lun* (提婆菩薩破楞伽經中外道小乘四宗論). The work is attributed to Āryadeva; it focuses on the refutation of the four heretical Hīnayāna schools mentioned in the *Laṅkāvatāra*. (T1639)

• *Powaidao niepan lun* (破外道涅槃論)⁴⁷⁴

Some corrections need to be made to this list. First of all, the *Lidai sanbao ji* confuses the translations by Bodhiruci (I) with those by Prajñāruci. The latter was a South Indian who went to China in the year 516 C.E. His name is transcribed into Chinese in a number of ways: as Jutan Bore Liuzhi (瞿曇般若留支, *Gautama-Prajñāruci), Jutan Liuzhi (瞿曇留支, *Gautama-ruci), Bore Liuzhi (般若留支, Prajñāruci), or translated as Zhixi (智希). That he is confused with Bodhiruci (I) is not due to the fact that the scriptures they chose to translate were of a similar nature; indeed, they had quite different doctrinal interests. Rather, it is because both Bodhiruci (I) and Prajñāruci were sometimes referred to, in brief, simply as “Liuzhi” (留支, *ruci*), and furthermore they were contemporaries. In the *Kaiyuan shijiao lu* (開元釋教錄), ten titles were deleted from the list of works translated by Bodhiruci (I) as given in the *Lidai sanbao ji*. Among these ten works, five should be listed under Prajñāruci instead. These five are: the *Fenxunwang wen jing* (奮迅王問經), the *Yiqiefu gaowang jing* (一切法高王經), the *Bubiding ruding ruyin jing* (不必定入印經)⁴⁷⁵, the *Diyiyi fasheng jing* (第一義法勝經)⁴⁷⁶, and the *Shunzhong lun* (順中論). As for the remaining five, the *Baoji pusa sifa*

⁴⁷⁴ Also attributed to Āryadeva, the full title of this text is: *Tipo pusa shi lengqiejing zhong waidao xiaosheng niepan lun* (提婆菩薩釋楞伽經中外道小乘涅槃論). It explains the interpretation of the state of *nirvāṇa* by the twenty heretical Hīnayana teachings in the *Laṅkāvatāra*. (T1640)

⁴⁷⁵ This scripture was later re-translated by Yijing (義淨) in 700 C.E., as *Ruding buding yinjing* (**Niyatāniyatagati-mudrāvātāra-sūtra*).

⁴⁷⁶ This scripture is similar in content to the *Daweidengguang xianren wenyijing*, translated by

youbotishe (寶髻菩薩四法優波提舍), the *Sanjuzu jing youbotishe* (三具足經優波提舍), and the *Zhuanfalun jing youbotishe* (轉法輪經優波提舍)⁴⁷⁷ were translated by Rṣi-Vimokṣaprajñā; the *Pusa jingjie fexun famen jing* (菩薩境界奮迅法門經) is in fact simply another title for the *Dasazhe niqianzi shouji jing* (大薩遮尼乾子受記經) that Bodhiruci (I) translated. The remaining *Zhongjing mulu* (眾經目錄), however, is not even a translated work but a Chinese Buddhist bibliographical catalogue compiled by Likuo (李廓).⁴⁷⁸ It should also be noted that the *Mile pusa suowen jing* (彌勒菩薩所問經) listed should not be confused with the one translated by Bodhiruci (II), which bears exactly the same title; the full title of the *sūtra* translated by Bodhiruci (I) should be the *Mile pusa wen bafa hui* (彌勒菩薩問八法會, **Maitreya-bodhisattva-paripricchā-dharmāṣṭa*).⁴⁷⁹

On the other hand, there are two additional works that are said to be translated by Bodhiruci (I) but are not listed in the *Lidai sanbao ji*: the *Jingangxian lun* (金剛仙論, **Vajraṛṣi-sāstra*) and the *Lengqie jing weishi lun* (楞伽經唯識論, **Laṅkāvatārasūtra-vijñaptimātratā-sāstra*). However, of these two works, according to the *Kaiyuan shijiao*

Jñānagupta of the Sui dynasty (581-618 CE).

⁴⁷⁷ The *Sanjuzujing youbotishe* and the *Zhuanfalunjing youbotishe* were both attributed to Vasubandhu.

⁴⁷⁸ There are various bibliographical catalogues, from the Liang dynasty to the Tang dynasty, all named *Zhongjing mulu*. Baochang (寶唱) of the Liang dynasty composed the first *Zhongjing mulu*, followed by Likuo (李廓) of the Northern Wei, and Fashang (法上) of the Northern Qi. These three catalogues are all lost now. But it is most likely that the *Zhongjing mulu* that was incorrectly attributed to Bodhiruci (I) in the *Lidai sanbao ji* is the one by Likuo. Three other *Zhongjing mulu* are now extant, which are the two composed by Fajing (法經) and other Buddhist scholars of the Sui dynasty, in seven fascicles and five fascicles respectively, and the one composed by Jingtai (靜泰) of the Tang dynasty. The Tang catalogue is also named *Datang dongjing dajingaisi yiqiejinglun mu* (大唐東京大敬愛寺一切經論目) or *Jing tai lu* (靜泰目).

⁴⁷⁹ A later version of a work previously translated by An Shigao.

lu, the *Jingangxian lun* is said to have been a composition of Bodhiruci (I) himself, rather than a translated work of Vasubandhu.⁴⁸⁰ The *Lengqie jing weishi lun*, on the other hand, is mentioned in the Old Song edition of the Tripiṭaka, where it is said to have been translated by Bodhiruci (I). In the *Taishō* edition this has been corrected, and it is described as a translated work of Prajñārucci instead. As a result, taking into consideration these incorrect ascriptions and unlisted works, the total number of translated texts by Bodhiruci (I) should number twenty-nine.

Regarding the *Jingangxian lun*, if we examine its contents closely, it is apparent that it is indeed a written record of Bodhiruci (I)'s oral commentary on the *Diamond Sūtra*. This commentary has indeed provided us with further information about Bodhiruci (I) himself: that he regarded himself as a disciple of Vasubandhu, and hence should be contemporaneous with Dignāga. But while Dignāga developed the Yogācāra teachings, followed by the efforts of Dharmapāla, which eventually resulted in a somewhat "idealistic" type of Yogācāra teaching, it is clear from the scriptures Bodhiruci (I) chose to translate, together with his comments on the *Diamond Sūtra*, that he was adhering closely to the classical tradition of Yogācāra.

⁴⁸⁰ See T2154, 607b, where it is said: 又有金剛仙論十卷，尋閱文理，乃是元魏三藏菩提留支所撰，釋天親論，既非梵本翻傳，所以此中不載。But the *Dongyu zhuandeng mulu* (東域傳燈目錄) has another saying, where it is stated that the work was composed by a disciple of Vasubandhu named Vajrasī: 金剛仙論十卷 (菩提留支譯金剛仙造天親弟子云云) (T2183, 1147c)

Bodhiruci (I) and other translators of tathāgatagarbha texts

It should be noted that Bodhiruci (I) is one of the four translators in the early period of translation of *tathāgatagarbha* scriptures into Chinese. The other three are Dharmakṣema, Buddhabhadra, and Bodhiruci (II). Indeed, many of their translations overlap considerably. What is significant is that these translators all reveal an interest not only in the scriptures relating to the notion of *tathāgatagarbha*, but also in works that they claimed to be stemming from the Yogācāra tradition. Interestingly enough, many of the works that were attributed to Vasubandhu are now considered to be Chinese apocryphal works. Paramārtha, who arrived in China at a much later date, was also interested in interpreting Yogācāra Buddhism along the lines of *tathāgatagarbha* thought. It may not be a coincidence that none of these translators came from South India, but were all from Central Asia or North India. It is reasonable to assume that Central Asia was a region where the *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine was especially successful, at least around the centuries when these texts were transmitted to China. The discovery of the Sanskrit fragments of the *RGV* in this area might be a further implication that this is really so. In addition, Central Asian countries were also a major source for the various Sanskrit recensions of the *MPN*. The region is also said to have been an important source for China's appropriation of the *TGS*, the *BBJ*, the *SMD*, and to be where the *Mahāratnakūṭa* was collated.⁴⁸¹ This finding, however, is contrary to Alex Wayman's

⁴⁸¹ Diana Paul, *The Buddhist Feminine Ideal*, p. 17.

theory that places the *SMD* in third-century Andhra, a region in South India where the Mahāsāṅghika school was said to prevail.⁴⁸²

We have no detailed information as to which Buddhist traditions these translators were practising in India. We also are not sure if the works they selected for translation reflect a special affinity of these works to the traditions they valued. However, it is clear that the works that Bodhiruci (I) translated show that he was equally interested in texts from the Yogācāra tradition and the *tathāgatagarbha sūtras*. This may be another clue that *tathāgatagarbha* is not a separate Mahāyāna tradition in India, but a doctrine that belongs to the classical Yogācāra school. Guṇabhadra's translations also reflect a close affinity with the *tathāgatagarbha* scriptures. Like Bodhiruci (I), Guṇabhadra also translated the *Laṅkāvatāra* and the *Samdhinirmocana* (though the latter was not translated completely)⁴⁸³. In addition, he also produced the only Chinese version of the *Da fagu jing* (大法鼓經 *Mahābherihāraka*) and the *SMD*. That both Bodhiruci (I) and Guṇabhadra were approximately contemporaries and that they both came from Central Asia might indicate to us that these works, at that time, were of major importance in that area in Buddhist practice. This might also suggest that these translators translated works that reflected what they had learnt in India. It is highly likely that it was these translators who brought whatever they thought to be important, including those *tathāgatagarbha*

⁴⁸² Wayman & Wayman, *The Lion's Roar of Queen Śrīmālā*, pp. 1-4.

⁴⁸³ Guṇabhadra only translated material corresponding to chapters four and five of Xuanzang's version of the *Samdhinirmocana-sūtra*. His translation is entitled *Xiangxu jietuodi boluomi liaoyi jing* (*The Sūtra of the Definitive Teachings on the Perfection of the Stage of Continuum Liberation*).

sūtras, into China, rather than that the Chinese Buddhists “ordered” scriptures to be shipped to China to quench the thirst of the Chinese Buddhist readers who were anxious to learn more about this teaching. If that were the case, then Guṇabhadra’s translation of the *Samyuktāgama* might be something of a surprise, in the sense that Guṇabhadra did not see a doctrinal conflict between the teachings of the *tathāgatagarbha* scriptures and what we now call the “original teachings” of Buddhism. The same can also be said for Fali (法立) and Faju (法炬) of the Western Jin dynasty (256-316 C.E.), who, according to the *Kaiyuan shijiao lu*, collaborated on a translation of the *Ekottarikāgama*, that is now lost. According to the same source they also translated two *tathāgatagarbha* texts, the earliest translation of the *TGS* and the Mahāyāna version of the *Aṅgulimālyasūtra*.

Conflicts with Ratnamati

The conflict between Bodhiruci (I) and Ratnamati is well known, and many scholars have paid attention to that.⁴⁸⁴ However, what exactly it is that caused the conflict between the two is not known. What we do know, according to the *Changfang lu* (長房錄) and the *Xu gaoseng zhuan*, is that their conflict originated when Bodhiruci (I) arrived in China and began the collaborative translation of the *Daśabhūmika* with Ratnamati, because of the different interpretations they held of the *sūtra*. But again, we are not told how, and in what ways, their interpretations differed.⁴⁸⁵

⁴⁸⁴ See, for example, Takasaki Jikidō, *A Study on the Ratnagotravibhāga*, pp. 7-8.

⁴⁸⁵ The story reported in the *Xu gaoseng zhuan* is greatly exaggerated, that not only conflicts in interpretations arose during the translation, but Bodhiruci (I) and Ratnamati even went on to translate the *Daśabhūmika* separately, without letting each other’s translating team know the progress of their work, and

Both Bodhiruci (I) and Ratnamati were regarded as first-rate Buddhist scholars.

According to the *Lidai sanbao ji*:

The Indian scriptures inside the room of Tripiṭaka-master [Bodhiruci (I)] number ten thousand, and the Chinese versions [of Buddhist scriptures] under his oral translation fill a whole house. His wisdom and insight is on a par with Ratnamati's, and he is also smart and intelligent, fluent in many dialects and good at various mundane skills.⁴⁸⁶

Ratnamati also went to China in 508 C.E., but he arrived slightly earlier than Bodhiruci (I). With the fame of Ratnamati, and his well-known disputes with Bodhiruci (I), it is rather surprising to find that Ratnamati did not produce much translation work after his parting from Bodhiruci (I). Among the six titles of translated works listed in the *Lidai sanbao ji*⁴⁸⁷, the *Baoji jing lun* (寶積經論) and the *Shidi jing lun* (十地經論) are said to be translations undertaken with Bodhiruci (I). Furthermore the *Miaofa lianhua jing lun youbotishe* (妙法蓮花經論優波提舍, **Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra-śāstropadeśa*) is almost exactly the same, in its translated wordings, as the *Miaofa lianhua jing youbotishe* that Bodhiruci (I) translated, so this can indeed be seen as yet another collaboration

when the two completed their translations, it is said that only one single word differed between the two translations: 天竺梵僧菩提留支初翻十地在紫極殿，勒那摩提在大極殿，各有禁衛不許通言。校其所譯恐有浮濫，始於永平元年至四年方訖，及勘讎之，惟云：有不二不盡；那云：定不二不盡。一字為異，通共驚美若奉聖心。(T2060, 482c)

⁴⁸⁶三藏法師房內婆羅門經論，本可有萬甲，所翻經論筆受草本滿一間屋，然其慧解與勒那相亞而神聰敏，洞善方言兼工雜術。(T2034, 86b)

⁴⁸⁷毘耶娑問經二卷 龍樹菩薩和香方一卷(凡五十法) 十地經論十二卷(初譯論時未善魏言，名器世間為蓋子世間，後因入殿齋見諸宿德，從弟子索器乃總授鉢襪，因悟器是總名，遂改為器世間) 寶積經論四卷(已上二論菩提流支並譯，且二德爭名不相詢訪其間隱沒互有不同，致綴文言亦有異處，後人始合。見寶唱錄載) 究竟一乘寶性論四卷(亦云寶性分別七乘增上論，或三卷，於趙欣宅出。見寶唱錄) 法華經論一卷(侍中崔光筆受) 右六部合二十四卷，梁武帝世，中天竺國三藏法師勒那摩提，或云婆提，魏言寶意，正始五年來在洛陽殿內譯。初菩提流支助傳，後以相爭因各別譯。沙門僧朗覺意侍中崔光等筆受。(T2034, 86c)

between the two masters. As for the remaining three, the *Jiujing yisheng baoxinglun* (究竟一乘寶性論, *Ratnagotravibhāga*) may be yet another work that Ratnamati translated with Bodhiruci (I); the *Piyuesuo wen jing* (毘耶娑問經, *Vyāsa-paripricchā*) is actually a translation by Prajñāruci; leaving us with the *Longshu pusa hexiang fang* (龍樹菩薩和香方) for which Ratnamati claimed full credit as translator. However, the *Longshu pusa hexiang fang* is not a Buddhist scriptural text, but a formulation of herbal medicine; the work is not extant anymore, but in fascicle thirty-four of the *Book of Sui* (隋書), compiled by Weizheng (魏徵) during the Tang dynasty, this work is mentioned together with other herbal prescriptions that were attributed to Nāgārjuna.

If the works that a translator chooses to translate are any indication of his doctrinal view, which is most probable, then the common assertion that Bodhiruci (I) upheld the reality of the *ālayavijñāna* while Ratnamati perceived the *tathāgatagarbha* to be the final support for all phenomena can hardly be convincing at all; for, if that were so, Bodhiruci (I) would not have been interested in translating scriptures such as the *BBJ* or the *Lankāvatāra*, which emphasize the purity of the mind and the notions of nonduality and the one *dharmadhātu*. While we generally acknowledge that Xuanzang brought teachings from the new school of Yogācāra into China that stemmed from Dignāga and were developed by Dharmapāla, and that Kumārajīva was responsible for introducing the Madhyamaka writings to China, we have often overlooked the texts that were chosen to be translated by other translators and that would also have reflected their respective doctrinal interests and backgrounds. In the case of Bodhiruci (I), it is arguable that he

came from a region and a system of Buddhist training that strongly emphasized a correct understanding of the *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine as the ultimate, most definitive teaching of the Mahāyāna.

Bodhiruci (I) and the Northern Dilun School

The conflict between Bodhiruci (I) and Ratnamati also led to the formation of two Dilun (地論) schools in China, the Northern Dilun and the Southern Dilun, based on the differences in their interpretation of the *Daśabhūmika*. Bodhiruci (I)'s branch is known as the Northern Dilun, which is said to be closer to Paramārtha's hermeneutical thought and eventually merged with the Shelun school. The Southern Dilun school that Ratnamati established enjoyed a longer existence, but it also eventually evolved into another Chinese Buddhist tradition, namely the Huayan school.

It is very difficult to re-construct the doctrinal schema of the Northern Dilun school, as the original writings of this school have been completely lost. We have only a few writings by the followers of the Southern branch, specifically those by Fashang (法上, 495-580) and Huiyuan (慧遠, 523-592), where we find criticism of the Northern school briefly stated. It is clear that the criticism Huiyuan levelled at Bodhiruci (I)'s *panjiao* system is polemical and originates from the perspective of his Southern Dilun antagonism. Since detailed studies of the two Dilun schools are available elsewhere, and this is not the focus of the present thesis, I am not going into any detailed discussion

regarding the differences and controversies between them.⁴⁸⁸ However, it is worth noting that Zhanran remarked in his *Fahua xuanyi shiqian* (法華玄義釋籤):

The Northern [Dilun] school of Xiangzhou considers the *ālaya* to be the foundation [of *samsāra*], while the Southern [Dilun] school of Xiangzhou considers *tathatā* to be the foundation. The masters in both branches [claim to have] derived their theories from Vasubandhu, but the differences are like fire and water. Furthermore, the rise of the *Shedasheng* [of the Shelun school] helps [establish the authenticity of] the Northern [Dilun] school's interpretation of the *ālaya*.⁴⁸⁹

The passage, however, can be interpreted in such a way that it demonstrates that the Northern Dilun school considered the *ālayavijñāna* only as a “conventional” foundation of the samsaric phenomena, since it does not mention at all that the Northern Dilun school took the *ālayavijñāna* as an ultimately existing entity. This interpretation is not far-fetched if we consider that such a view was supported by Paramārtha's Shelun school. This would also explain Bodhiruci (I)'s interest in translating the *tathāgatagarbha* texts. In other words, the arguments between Bodhiruci (I) and Ratnamati should not be considered to be about the reality of the *ālayavijñāna*, as some modern scholars have suggested.

Zhiyi (538-597) mentions in his *Miaofa lianhua jing xuanyi* (妙法蓮華經玄義) that Bodhiruci (I) established another *panjiao* system, one that is built upon the idea that Buddhist teachings can be categorized either as “half-teaching” or as “full-teaching.”⁴⁹⁰

⁴⁸⁸ Cf. Fukaura Shōbun, *Yuishikigaku kenkyū* (2 vol. Kyoto: 1977 [2nd edition]), pp. 180-208, and Sakaino Kōyō, *Shina bukkyō seishi* (Tokyo: 1972 [2nd edition]), pp. 655-97.

⁴⁸⁹ 相州北道計阿黎耶以為依持，相州南道計於真如以為依持。此二論師，俱稟天親而所計各異同於水火，加復攝大乘興，亦計黎耶以助北道。(T1717, 942c).

⁴⁹⁰ T1716, 801b.

Jizang (吉藏, 549-623) further explains Bodhiruci (I)'s system in his *Renwang bore jing shu* (仁王般若經疏), namely that “half-teaching” is intended for “Hīnayāna” practitioners only, while “full-teaching” is for the Bodhisattvas in the Mahāyāna tradition. The latter places emphasis on equanimity (*sama*), non-attainment (*aprāpti*), right concentration (*samyaksamādhi*), and nonduality (*advaya*) as its tenets.⁴⁹¹ Such a definition of “full-teaching” forcibly reminds one of the teachings in the *AAN*, and can without doubt be related to the central ideas that the *tathāgatagarbha* texts advocate.

Bodhiruci (I)'s “one voice” panjiao system

It is not surprising to see that Bodhiruci (I) upheld the idea that the Buddha taught in “one voice,” and that various kinds of sentient beings understand the teachings differently. It seems plausible that the attribution of such a *panjiao* system to Bodhiruci (I) is credible, since the idea conforms with the notion of *tathāgatagarbha* and, especially, the teachings in the *AAN*: the “reality” or the *dharmadhātu* is immanent and “one” (nondual), and it is only owing to the different degrees of ignorance of sentient beings that various views (*dr̥ṣṭi*) are established as true. Similarly, we can extrapolate from the teachings in the *AAN* the idea that the teachings of the Buddha always direct us towards the realization of the “one *dharmadhātu*.” However, because of the varying levels of the

⁴⁹¹ 又十地論師四宗五宗分佛教，今不復繁文闡說。今依菩提流支直作半滿分教：若小乘教名半字名聲聞藏，大乘名滿字名菩薩藏，今尋諸經論斯言當矣。所言小乘半教者若明其至理，但人法二空語，其因果但說有作四諦，斯乃教不盡宗語不極義，說稱小根進成小行有所缺德，名之為半故云小乘名聲聞藏。大乘滿字教者若明其理至極，平等無得正觀不二為宗，語其因果即說無作四諦，斯乃教稱大乘宗語極圓旨，說稱大根進成大行具足無缺，名之為滿故云大乘名菩薩藏也。(T1707, 315c)

minds of sentient beings, being sharp or dull, that same “one voice” teaching is interpreted in different ways.

Later scandals ascribed to Bodhiruci (I)

A study of Bodhiruci (I) would not be complete without mentioning his alleged attempts to poison Bodhidharma.

It is rather surprising to see that Bodhiruci (I) was involved in the scandal, hundreds of years after his death, of an attempt to murder Bodhidharma (菩提達摩), the founder of the Lankā school (楞伽宗) which was later known as the Chan tradition (禪宗).

By the end of the Tang dynasty, the rumours that Bodhidharma was poisoned by Bodhiruci (I) and the *vinaya* master Guangtong (光統) began to be bruited about. What is puzzling is that this scandal circulated only within the later Chan tradition; however, as far as we can determine, Bodhiruci (I) had no connection whatever with the Lankā or the Chan traditions. The only remote relationship between Bodhiruci (I) and Bodhidharma is that Bodhiruci (I) translated the ten-fascicle *Lankāvatāra* in 513 C.E., but by the time Bodhidharma arrived at Yongning monastery, where Bodhiruci (I) resided between 516 and 534 C.E., he did not use Bodhiruci (I)'s translation for his teaching but instead used the earlier four-fascicle version translated by Guṇabhadra during the Liu-Song period.

It is possible, however, that the two had met at the Yongning monastery. The *Luoyang qielan ji* (洛陽伽藍記), the earliest text that refers to the life of Bodhidharma (written by Yang Xuanzhi (楊銜之) around 547 C.E.), does not mention the meeting

between Bodhiruci (I) and Bodhidharma, let alone the conflict between the two and the attempted murder of Bodhidharma. It does, however, mention that Bodhidharma was a Persian, praised the splendour of the Yongning monastery, and also claimed himself to be 150 years of age. The next historical record we find referring to Bodhidharma is Daoxuan's *Xu gaoseng zhuan*, where there is no mention of anything in relation to Bodhiruci (I). What it does mention is the teachings of Bodhidharma, and, like the *Luoyang qielan ji*, it states that Bodhidharma claimed to be 150 years old. It also adds that he aimed at converting people to be calmed by Buddhist teachings wherever he travelled, and that no one knew where he finally went in the end. Even in the *Lengqie shizi ji* (楞伽師資記), composed in the mid-eighth century, we still do not find the contrived story about the poisoning of Bodhidharma.

It was not until the late eighth-century work, *Lidai fabao ji* (歷代法寶記), that we find the story about Bodhiruci (I) and Guangtong attempting to poison Bodhidharma six times,⁴⁹² but we may query the reference to “six times”? It has been explained that Bodhidharma was finally poisoned fatally on the sixth attempt, and that before his death he made the prediction according to his own “fate” that his true teachings would almost perish and be accessible to only a few people by the sixth generation.⁴⁹³ This story was

⁴⁹² The *Lidai fabao ji* states: 時魏有菩提流支三藏光統律師，於食中著毒餉大師。大師食訖，索盤吐蛇一升，又食著毒再餉。大師取食訖，於大槃石上坐，毒出石裂，前後六度毒。(T2075, 180c)

⁴⁹³ The *Beishan lu*, which quotes the promulgators of this scandal, says: 異說曰：達磨六過，被菩提流支光統密毒其食，五過吐出，至第六過，不吐而卒。又謂其徒曰：吾宗至第六世，命若懸絲，是知崇山至峻朽壤崩之，喬木至堅蝸蟲蠹之，故使吾祖不遐有害終恤我後也。(T2113, 612a)

then repeated and further embroidered in the *Jingde zhuandeng lu* (景德傳燈錄), compiled during the Northern Song dynasty (960-1127 C.E.) by Daoyuan.⁴⁹⁴

As we know that the *Lidai fabao ji* was composed by the Wuzhu Baotang (無住保唐) tradition of Chan Buddhism, it is reasonable to assume that this story was created to discredit the teachings of Huineng. But for what reason would Bodhiruci (I) and Guangtong be implicated in this story? At this stage of my research, I have not been able to find any answer.

It is well known that the Baotang school had a close relation with the rDzogs chen tradition in Tibet. It is therefore not surprising that the story of Bodhidharma being poisoned by Bodhiruci (I) and Guangtong can also be found in the famous ninth-century Tibetan work, *bSam gtan mig sgron*, which is an important work in the rNying ma tradition and is attributed to gNub chen sang rgyas ye shes, a disciple of Padmasambhava.

We should also note, however, that the validity of the story was also doubted by many during the Tang and Song periods. In the *Neizheng fofa xiangcheng xuemai pu* (內證佛法相承血脈譜), composed by the Japanese monk Saichō (最澄) in 804 C.E., although the contrived story, developed in late Sui through early Tang dynasty, about the meeting between Bodhidharma and Emperor Wu of the Liang dynasty is reported, the text does not mention Bodhiruci (I)'s attempted murder or that Bodhidharma was poisoned by anyone. The late Tang work, *Beishan lu* (北山錄), devotes long passages to

⁴⁹⁴ The *Jingde zhuandeng lu* explains that the attempted murder was due to the conflicts and quarrels between Bodhiruci (I) and Bodhidharma, a story that is unseen in earlier records including the *Lidai fabao ji*: 光統律師流支三藏者乃僧中之鸞鳳也，睹師演道斥相指心，每與師論議是非鋒起。師選振玄風普施法雨而偏局之量自不堪任，競起害心數加毒藥；至第六度，以化緣已畢傳法得人，遂不復救之端居而逝。(T2076, 220a)

rectifying the unfounded allegations.⁴⁹⁵ As late as the *Fozu lidai tongzai* (佛祖歷代通載), compiled in the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368 C.E.) by Nianchang (念常), there is still an assertion that the allegation was ill-natured, and should not be trusted.⁴⁹⁶

Another rumour from the Pure Land sect

While the Chan tradition imposed a negative image on Bodhiruci (I), the Pure Land tradition has preserved a much more positive image of him; and he is said to have influenced Tanluan (曇鸞, 476-542), the Pure Land patriarch.

The supposed meeting between the two is first reported in the *Xu gaoseng zhuan*. Given that the two were contemporary, and that Bodhiruci (I) translated a treatise that is related to the practice of Amitābha Buddha, while Tanluan composed his own commentary on it, this circumstantial evidence does offer some support for the reality of the story, which essentially tells how Tanluan was introduced to the Amitābha practice by Bodhiruci (I). According to the story, Tanluan became a Buddhist monk when he was very young, but he was deeply interested in alchemy and the longevity practices in the religious form of Daoism. When he met Bodhiruci (I) at Luoyang, Tanluan informed him about his Daoist practice, which Bodhiruci (I) despised, saying that, in traditional Buddhist wisdom, even the attainment of longevity is still subject to *samsāra*, whereas

⁴⁹⁵The *Beishen lu* comments: 菩提流支，此云覺希，北印度人，遍通三藏，妙入總持；志在弘演，廣流視聽。以魏宣武帝永平元年己丑歲至洛陽，譯經論三十九部一百二十七卷，筆授草本滿一間舍。兼攻雜術，嘗坐井口，澡灌置空，或咒井令涌，酌而為用。光統律師乃一代之英傑，況主僧柄，豈能爾耶？寶林傳者，乖誤極多，後之學者，宜更審之也。…彼流支光統，皆德化敷弘，人天極望，獎賢輔善，共揚風教，如光之門，德行十人（慧光門下名揚不一），今此倭人。(T2113, 612a)

⁴⁹⁶後魏末有僧達磨，航海而來，既卒，其年魏使宋雲於蔥嶺回見之。門徒發其墓但有隻履而已，此乃實錄也。又謂光統律師菩提流支數下毒害師，師遂不救。嗚呼甚哉！光統流支法門龍象，詎能爾乎！是皆立言者誤也。(T2036, 549a)

Buddhist meditation can lead one to liberation from life and death.⁴⁹⁷ Similar versions of the story are detailed in the *Longshu zengguang jingtu wen* (龍舒增廣淨土文) and the *Fozu tongji* (佛祖統記), composed during the Song dynasty (960-1279 C.E.) by Wang Rixiu (王日休) and Zhipan (志磐) respectively, and later reiterated in the *Wangsheng ji* (往生集), compiled in the Ming dynasty (1368-1644 C.E.) by Zhuhong (株宏). Developments from the original account in the *Xu gaoseng zhuan* can easily be identified, where it is added that Tanluan followed a certain Master Tao (陶隱君) to learn the Daoist longevity practice. Bodhiruci (I), instead of showing his contempt for such a practice, used his skilful means to lead Tanluan to explore Buddhist practices by saying that Buddhism offers a kind of “longevity” practice with which Daoism cannot compare. The story goes on to add that through practising the meditation Bodhiruci (I) showed him, Tanluan was visited by Nāgārjuna in his room.⁴⁹⁸

While there are superficial and extraneous elements in the later versions of Tanluan’s story, the earlier account of him receiving the guidance and the Amitābha text from Bodhiruci (I) seems to be credible. Tanluan’s Pure Land practice emphasizes the “other power” from Amitābha, and stresses that even the most evil person can gain

⁴⁹⁷ According to the *Xu gaoseng zhuan*: [曇鸞] 行至洛下，逢中國三藏菩提留支。鸞往啟曰：佛法中頗有長生不死法勝此土仙經者乎？留支唾地曰：是何言歟，非相比也。此方何處有長生法？縱得長年少時不死，終更輪迴三有耳。即以觀經授之曰：此大仙方，依之修行當得解脫生死。(T2060, 470c)

⁴⁹⁸ The version told in the *Wangshang ji* runs as follows: 後魏曇鸞，少遊五臺，感靈異出家，而性嗜長生。受陶隱君仙經十卷。後遇菩提流支，乃問曰：佛有長生不死術乎。支笑曰：長生不死，吾佛道也。乃授十六觀經曰：學此則三界無復生，六道無復往，其為壽也。河沙劫石，莫能比焉。此吾金仙氏之長生也。鸞大喜，遂焚仙經而修淨業，寒暑疾痛曾無少懈。魏主號為神鸞，一夕室中見梵僧，謂曰：吾龍樹也，久居淨土，以汝同志故來相見。鸞自知時至，集眾教誡曰：勞生役役，其止無日；地獄諸苦，不可以不懼；九品淨業，不可以不修。因令弟子高聲念佛，西向稽顙而終。眾聞天樂自西而來，良久乃已。(T2072, 129b)

rebirth into the western Pure Land through Amitābha's compassionate power. His teachings were passed on through Daochuo (道綽, 562-645) and Shandao (善導, 613-681), and were later developed into the Shandao tradition (named after the Pure Land master), which did not survive the 845 C.E. persecution of Buddhism in China. However, the tradition was further developed in Japan as the Jōdo-shū tradition, founded by Hōnen (1133-1212). In conclusion, Bodhiruci (I) has had an indirect but enormous influence on the development of the Pure Land school in both China and Japan. His translation of the *Wuliangshoujing youbotishe* (無量壽經優波提舍) is also considered to be one of the four fundamental texts in the Pure Land tradition.⁴⁹⁹

Besides the Pure Land tradition, Bodhiruci (I)'s translations have also been influential in the formation of Tiantai and Huayan thought. His translations of the *Miaofa lianhua jing youbotishe* (妙法蓮華經論), the commentary on the *Lotus Sūtra* attributed to Vasubandhu, along with the *Lotus Sūtra*, the *Wuliangyi jing* (無量義經, **Amitārtha-sūtra*), and the *Guan puxian pusa xingfa jing* (觀普賢菩薩行法經, **Samantabhadra-bodhisattva-dhyāna-caryādharmasūtra*), are central to the Tiantai tradition.⁵⁰⁰ On the other hand, Bodhiruci (I)'s translation of the *AAN* receives attention mostly from the Huayan tradition. The *BBJ* is quoted many times in Fazang (法藏)'s

⁴⁹⁹ The Pure Land tradition regards the so-called “three *sūtras* and one *śāstra*” (*sanjing yilun*) to be the tradition's most fundamental and important texts. The “three *sūtras*” are the *Wuliangshoujing* (無量壽經, translated by Saṅghavarman (康僧鎧) during the Cao Wei (曹魏) dynasty, 220-265 C.E.), the *Guanwuliangshou jing* (觀無量壽經, translated by Kālayaśas (菴良耶舍) during the Liu Song (劉宋) dynasty, 420-479 C.E.), and the *Amituo jing* (阿彌陀經, translated by Kumārajīva (鳩摩羅什) during the Yao Qin (姚秦) dynasty, 384-417 C.E.); the “one *śāstra*” is Bodhiruci (I)'s translation of the *Wuliangshoujing youbotishe*, attributed to Vasubandhu.

⁵⁰⁰ Jizang also composed a sub-commentary on the *Miaofa lianhua jing youbotishe*, entitled the *Fahua lun shu* (法華論疏), which is very influential in the history of Chinese Buddhism.

Dasheng fajie wuchabie lunshu (大乘法界無差別論疏), the *Dasheng qixinlun yiji* (大乘起信論義記), and the *Huayan yishengjiaoyi fenqizhang* (華嚴一乘教義分齊章). It is also cited in Dushun (杜順)'s *Huayan yisheng shixuanmen* (華嚴一乘十玄門), Chengguan (澄觀)'s *Dafangguangfo Huayanjing shu* (大方廣佛華嚴經疏) and the *Dafangguangfo Huayanjing suishu yanyi chao* (大方廣佛華嚴經隨疏演義鈔), Huiyuan (慧遠)'s *Dasheng yizhang* (大乘義章), Huizhao (慧沼)'s *Nengxian zhongbian huiji lun* (能顯中邊慧日論), and Taixian (太賢)'s *Dasheng qixinlun neiyi luetanji* (大乘起信論內義略探記), to mention only a few texts. The popularity of the *BBJ* among the Huayan masters is apparently owing to the scripture's formulation of the "one *dharmadhātu*" teaching, which is a seminal idea in Huayan Buddhism.⁵⁰¹

⁵⁰¹ In recent decades, there is also a suspicion, suggested by Lücheng (呂澂), that the composition of the *DSQXL* was actually based on Bodhiruci (I)'s translation of the *Laṅkāvatāra*. Since I am not convinced by this claim of Lücheng, and since I find elements in the *DSQXL* which might give us hints that it could well be an Indian composition (see chapter fourteen of the present thesis), therefore I leave this issue aside in the study of the life and works of Bodhiruci (I).

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