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CONTENTS

I. ARTICLES

1. The *Heart Sūtra*: A Chinese Apocryphal Text?
by Jan Nattier 153
2. Indian Altruism: A Study of the Terms *bodhicitta* and *bodhicittotpāda*,
by Gareth Sparham 224

II. TRANSLATION

1. A Twelfth-century Tibetan Classic of Māhāmudrā: *The Path of Ultimate Profundity: The Great Seal Instructions of Zhang*,
by Dan Martin 243

III. BOOK REVIEWS

1. *Mind Only: A Philosophical and Doctrinal Analysis of the Vijñānavāda*, by Thomas E. Wood (Paul J. Griffiths) 320
2. *Yuktiṣaṣṭikā-vṛtti: Commentaire à la soixante sur le raisonnement ou Du vrai enseignement de la causalité par le Maître indien Candrakīrti*,
by Cristina Anna Scherer-Schaub (José Ignacio Cabezón) 325

- IV. I.A.B.S. MEMBERSHIP LIST 328

III. REVIEWS

Mind Only: A Philosophical and Doctrinal Analysis of the Vijñānavāda, by Thomas E. Wood. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1991. Monographs of the Society for Asian and Comparative Philosophy, vol. 9. xiv + 290 pages, notes, appendices, bibliography, index.

The goal of this book is well expressed in its title. Wood wants to engage in a properly philosophical analysis of the texts of the classical Indian Vijñānavāda, and in so doing to show that they contain unresolved conceptual tensions, and even at times outright contradictions. Briefly, Wood sees the Vijñānavāda as defending the following claims: (1) that only individual minds exist—a kind of pluralistic idealism; (2) that the illusion of a shared experience of publicly available extramental things is explicable causally by the fact of immediate telepathic contact among these minds—a kind of collective hallucinationism; and (3) that Buddha is omniscient, and that all Buddha's awareness is nondual—or, more generally, that there is a single universal nondual consciousness. He then argues that these three claims cannot coherently be held together, and that the Vijñānavāda thinkers uneasily realized this and hovered between two resolutions, neither of which was fully acceptable to them because of other doctrinal commitments. The first was solipsism, which involves the denial of the existence of other minds, and so also the rejection of both (1) and (2). And the second was monistic idealism, the doctrine that there is an "infinite and omniscient mind of one sort or another" (p. 190), and that this is all there is. This second resolution also entails the denial of (1) and (2), although it strongly affirms (3) — and indeed may be said to grow out of it.

These are strong and controversial claims. One might take issue with them exegetically, by arguing that the texts of the classical Indian Vijñānavāda do not express the views attributed to them by Wood. Or one might question them historically, by arguing that Wood, as a result of choosing an artificially delimited range of texts upon which to base his exegesis, does not consider a broader intellectual context that will make sense of the conceptual tensions he finds. Or, finally, one might argue with them philosophically, by trying to show that Wood's

claims as to the incoherence of (1), (2), and (3) are not defensible. Doing any one of these would require a long essay; in this review I shall attempt only a brief summary of Wood's historical, exegetical, and philosophical positions, together with even briefer suggestions as to how they might be improved. I disagree profoundly with a great deal of what Wood says: I think he is exegetically often wrong, that he has artificially limited the range of textual materials he draws upon in such a way as to call his conclusions into question, and that even philosophically he is only sometimes right; but I applaud his attempt to take these texts with philosophical seriousness and to promote philosophical discussion of them, and I judge that if his work gets the response it deserves we will all learn something of philosophical interest about Vijñānavāda. Those who are stimulatingly wrong often, in the end, produce more knowledge than those who are safely but boringly right.

After a brief introduction (pp. ix-xiv) in which the central themes of the book are foreshadowed, the first three chapters (pp. 1-60) deal with the *trīsvabhāva* doctrine. Here Wood uses the *Madhyāntavibhāga* (MV), the *Trīsvabhāvanirdeśa* (TSN), and the *Triṃśikā* (Triṃś), as the basis for his discussion, providing a transliterated Sanskrit text and translation of MV i.1-22, as well as a complete text and translation of TSN and Triṃś. In the fourth chapter (pp. 63-89) he discusses the question of Nirvana and Buddhahood, once again basing most of what he says upon Triṃś and TSN. In chapters 5-8 (pp. 93-159) he analyzes what is for him the central philosophical question: that of holding together claims about the existence of other minds with claims about Buddha's omniscience. Here he draws upon the *Viṃśatikā* (Viṃś), providing a complete text and translation, as well as the *Santānāntarasiddhi* (SS), the *Tattvasaṅgraha* (Ts) and its *pañjikā* (Tsp), and the *Santānāntaradūṣaṇa* (SD). And in the two concluding chapters (pp. 163-190) he provides an analysis and critique of the doctrine of collective hallucination, drawing mainly upon Viṃś and upon the French and English renderings (by La Vallée Poussin and Wei Tat) of the Chinese versions of some of its commentaries. Four appendices provide information of a historical kind about the texts used; a "free rendering" of SS (pp. 207-218) based only upon a comparison of the two extant English versions (by H. C. Gupta, via Th. Stcherbatsky's free Russian rendering of the Tibetan version, and by Hidenori Kitagawa); an argument to the effect that Ts-p should be classified as a Vijñānavāda text (pp. 219-221); and a free rendering of SD, based upon the sole edition of the Sanskrit text and upon Yuichi Kajiyama's free rendering into English.

Many points of detail, historical, exegetical, and philosophical, arise in the course of Wood's discussion of all this material. I cannot discuss them all here. Instead, I shall try to follow the main lines of the argument, and to suggest other possibilities as I do so. I shall say most about Wood's analysis of the *trīsvabhāva* doctrine, since his discussion of this provides the best illustration of his method and its limitations.

Wood offers a detailed critique of the *prima facie* contradictions in the

definitions of the three *svabhāva*-s as these are given in MV, TSN, and Trīmś; he thinks that, in these texts at least, there is a confusion of predicates among the three *svābhāva*-s which cannot be resolved. So, for example, Wood claims that it is incoherent to suggest that *pariniṣpanna*, which is described as pure (*śuddha* and approximate synonyms), can also be identical (*abhinnalakṣaṇa*) with *paratantra*, since this is (sometimes) said to be impure, and nothing can be both pure and impure. The logical point is, of course, correct, but Wood's exegesis is insufficiently sensitive to the broader intellectual context in which such claims are made. Briefly, Wood assumes that the three *svabhāva*-s are things that possess properties, and that the predications of them made in the texts can be considered as if they all operated on the same logical level. This is a little like someone claiming that the fact that there are prima facie contradictions among the predications made of the three persons of the trinity demonstrates that the theory is incoherent; matters are more subtle and complicated than that.

In the case of the *trīsvabhāva* the proper position (or at least a possible position) is that *parikalpita* is *paratantra* understood wrongly, while *pariniṣpanna* is *paratantra* understood properly. The absence of duality (*dvayābhāva*, etc.) is just a state of affairs which, since it is the true state of affairs, can properly be said to apply to all three *svabhāva*-s understood properly, even though it remains entirely proper to say that to the deluded *paratantra* appears as *parikalpita*, and is thus different from *pariniṣpanna*. So to say that *parikalpita*, here understood as the duality that is imagined to exist, is really nondual (that it is characterised as *advayatvasvabhāva*, as in TSN 19), is thus only like saying that the five falsely imagined to be the sum of two-plus-two is really not different from the four that is really the sum of two-plus-two: rhetorically arresting, certainly, but not, as Wood suggests, simply incoherent.

Also, it is perfectly possible, pace Wood (p. 42), to say what *pariniṣpanna* is without lapsing into incoherence. TSN 3 says it in much the same terms that I've already used: "The eternal nonexistence of what appears [i.e., *paratantra*] as it appears [i.e., *parikalpita*] should be understood as *pariniṣpannasvabhāva*; this is because it doesn't change" (*tasya khyātur yathākhyānaṃ yā sadāvidyamānatā/jñeyāḥ sa pariniṣpannaḥ svabhāvo "nanyathātvataḥ//*). That *pariniṣpanna* and *parikalpita* are past passive participles while *paratantra* is a simple nominal item isn't accidental: *paratantra* is what there is, while *parikalpita* denotes both what is (wrongly) imagined by the mind to exist (and, sometimes, the activity of so imagining), and *pariniṣpanna* denotes the result of having removed such imaginative activity from the mental life.

Having this interpretive perspective in mind will help in dealing with the prima facie contradictions that Wood points out. I don't claim that the *trīsvabhāva* theory as stated in the texts Wood uses is free from conceptual problems, nor that they can all be resolved. But it is clear that the simple prima facie confusions of predication that Wood indicates can be dealt with relatively easily, and that analysis must go deeper if more decisive arguments are to be offered.

Another example of Wood's procedure may be of use. He suggests (p. 57) that there is a *prima facie* contradiction to be derived from *Triṃś* 21, 24, and 25, since these verses seem to indicate both that mind is impermanent—it arises and perishes—and that it is identical with suchness (*tathatā*), which does not change. Leaving aside purely technical problems with Wood's exegesis here, the problem can easily be resolved: the unchangeability of *tathatā* just is the fact that all things change, and mind is identified with *tathatā* only in so far as everything is really representation (*vijñaptimātra*, a kind of mental event). These representations change, but the fact of their changing is itself changeless, and so there is a sense in which mind—if understood as the totality of transient mental events—does not change.

Wood's arguments about *Nirvāṇa* and Buddhahood are more convincing. He correctly points out that conceptual problems were posed for Buddhist theorists by their attempts to hold together assertions about Buddha's radical purity with Buddha's continued involvement in the world, just as there are problems involved in their attempt to give an account of Buddha's omniscience which does not end in monism. Wood also rightly recognizes that the developed *kāya*-theories of scholastic buddhalogy (my term for systematic theorising about the nature of Buddha) are the place to look for attempted resolutions of these problems, but makes no attempt to say anything about such theories. Like Wood, I am skeptical that these theories succeed; but they deserve a fair and full hearing, and since they were developed as part of the same intellectual program evidenced by the texts that Wood does criticize, it is odd that he ignores them. This is a case, then, in which it would have been useful to consult a broader intellectual context. I cannot see that it is possible to criticize the theoretical presentations of the *trisvabhāva* found in *Triṃś* and *MV* without also considering the buddhalogy found in such texts as the *Mahāyānasāṅgraha*-corpus and the *Mahāyānasūtrāṅkāra*-corpus.

Perhaps the strongest arguments in the book are those centering around *SS* and *SD*. Here Wood suggests that the epistemological framework developed by *Dignāga* and *Dharmakīrti* (and presupposed and deployed by *Ratnakīrti*) issues in the conclusion that other minds are real. This is so because inferential arguments to the existence of other minds are deployed in these texts, and such inferences give us, by definition, access to real things. And yet these same texts want to claim that Buddha's awareness (*jñāna*) is universal and nondual, (*agrāhyagrāhaka*). That is, as Wood puts it, these texts propound both epistemic monism and idealistic pluralism — and you can't have both. This is a suggestive argument, and Wood backs it up in chapter 8 with an analysis of what is said in *Ts-p* about Buddha's *sarvajñatva* in which he attempts to show that this account too is given its best chance of coherence if interpreted as a kind of monistic idealism.

In sum, the argument in these final chapters is that the kind of idealism propounded by the classical Indian *Vijñānavāda* is incompatible with the principle that there are many finite minds; that these theorists should have been monistic idealists; and that it was only their doctrinal commitments to the pluralism of the

earlier intellectual tradition that prevented them from being so. It might be added (though Wood does not) that at least some Buddhist intellectuals of the period that he considers did take this step: it might be possible, for instance, to interpret the *Ratnagoṭravibhāga* in this way, and to explain early *tathāgatagarbha* theory in terms of such arguments. But this is a task for the future.

In conclusion, it should be pointed out that there are many specific technical points on which Wood is in error. They are too numerous to list. Many of them result from his apparent lack of familiarity with basic tools for those working in Buddhist Studies. For instance, he claims (p. 200) that the *Abhidharmakośa* was the only *abhidharma* text to be translated in its entirety into Tibetan. Even if, as is apparently the case, he cannot read Tibetan, a glance at the Tōhoku catalogue's list of texts found in the Mngon-pa (*abhidharma*) section of the Bstan-'gyur would have shown him that this claim is dramatically false. Errors of this kind, though of concern to buddhologists, usually don't call Wood's philosophical arguments into question. But the same can't always be said of his translations. These are almost always wooden to the point of being incomprehensible, and are often straightforwardly in error. The errors (and a good deal of the incomprehensibility) often result from his apparent desire to understand and translate cryptic verse texts like *Triṃś* or *Viṃś* without proper consultation of the commentaries that provide their proper context of meaning. One example will have to suffice to illustrate Wood's method and its problems.

Wood translates *Triṃś* 3ab (*asaṃviditakopādīsthānavijñaptikaṃ ca ta*) as: "[The store consciousness] is the perception, abiding in, and grasping of what is unperceived," so apparently understanding *upādīsthānavijñaptikaṃ* as a *dvandva*, and *asaṃviditaka-* as the object of these three things. This completely ignores both common sense and the gloss in the *bhāṣya* by Sthiramati (of which Wood makes almost no use), which reads: *asaṃviditaka upādir yasmin asaṃviditakā ca sthānavijñaptir yasmin tad ālayavijñānam asaṃviditakopādīsthānavijñaptikaṃ*. The verse is thus better translated "That [store consciousness] comprises representations of place and acts of appropriation which are not brought to awareness." The general lesson is that mnemonic aids such as the verses of *Viṃś*, *Triṃś*, *MV*, etc., were not meant to be read alone; and that even for those whose interests are mainly philosophical rather than philological, consultation of the commentaries is always essential and often illuminating.

Paul J. Griffiths