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The Meaning of *Vijñapti* in Vasubandhu's Concept of Mind

by Bruce Cameron Hall

For the Mahāyāna it is determined that the whole of the three realms is *vijñapti*-only (*vijñapti-mātra*), according to the sūtra: "It is thought-only (*citta-mātra*), You Sons of the Conqueror, that is the whole of the three realms." Thought (*citta*), mind (*manas*), awareness (*vijñāna*), and *vijñapti* are synonyms. Here "thought" (*citta*) implies "[thought itself] along with its concomitants." The [word] "only" serves to rule out [external] referents (*artha*).

So begins the *Vimśatikā-vṛtti* (VV),¹ Vasubandhu's auto-commentary on the *Vimśatikā-kārikā* (VK). The first stanza of VK reads:²

This [universe] is certainly *vijñapti*-only, since there are appearances of non-existent [external] referents, as when someone with an eye disease sees a non-existent "knot of hair" and so on. /VK 1/

VK (with VV) and the *Trimśikā-kārikā* (TK) together make up the *Vijñaptimātratā-siddhi*, or "Establishing That There is *Vijñapti*-Only."³ Clearly, *vijñapti-mātra* is being equated here with *citta-mātra* ("mind-only" or "thought-only"), which is an alternate title for Vasubandhu's *Vijñānavāda* philosophy. While the *Trimśikā* presents Vasubandhu's own doctrine in some detail, the *Vimśatikā* (VK and VV) is a polemical work in the form of a dialogue between Vasubandhu and an imaginary opponent. This opponent is a fellow Buddhist, but a realist or, one might say, a literalist.

The *vijñapti-mātra* of the *Vijñaptimātratā-siddhi* has been variously translated as "representation-only,"⁴ "ideation-only,"⁵

“perception-only,”⁶ and so on. Although none of these glosses is completely satisfactory, the purpose of the present essay is not to suggest another English equivalent, but rather to analyze the term *viññapti*, its usage, and the concept it designates. Such analysis may help clarify the general conception of mind in the so-called “Yogācāra idealism” as presented by Vasubandhu. This analysis amounts to a commentary on the first paragraph of VV. The elements to be explicated in this commentary are: (1) the term *viññapti* itself, (2) its equation with other terms for mind, (3) the significance of the “only” in “mind-only,” and (4) how it is that the “whole of the three realms” can be identified as “mind-only.” In addition to the *Vijñaptimātratā-siddhi* itself, reference will be made to four other works ascribed to Vasubandhu: *Abhidharmakośa-kārikā* (AKK), *Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya* (AKB), *Karmasiddhi-prakaraṇa* (KSP), and *Pañcaskandha-prakaraṇa* (PSP).⁷ The controversy over whether these works were written by one or more Vasubandhus is here ignored: the author of the *Vijñaptimātratā-siddhi* is evidently fluent in the Sarvāstivādin Abhidharma, which is outlined in AKK and treated critically in AKB, KSP, and PSP.

I. The Term Itself

Vijñapti is a technical term of the Sarvāstivādin Abhidharma, which Vasubandhu has here appropriated and used in a special sense. An investigation of this term can illustrate in miniature the widespread appropriation and redefinition of the Abhidharma in Vijñānavāda philosophy. An interpretation of such a technical term should consider its ordinary use, its etymology, and its technical use (both in specific contexts and also in relation to a cluster of other technical terms). This ought to reveal Vasubandhu’s precise intention in reapplying the term.

In ordinary parlance *viññapti* (Pāli *viññatti*) means “information” or the act of informing someone, that is “report” or “proclamation,” especially a report to a superior, and hence, “request” or “entreaty.” *Vijñapti* is a noun of action derived from the causative stem (*jñāpaya-* or *jñāpaya-*) of the verb root *jñā* (“know”) with the prefix *vi-*.⁸ Etymologically the term *viññapti* would mean the act of causing [someone] to know [something] distinctly, or

in a concrete sense, that which causes [one] to know distinctly. Another important term derived from the causative of *jñā* (with the prefix *pra-*) is *prajñapti* (Pāli *paññatti*), which means “declaration” or manifestation in words, and hence, “verbal or conventional designation,” or perhaps even “concept.”⁹ Another parallel formation which would be well known to a Buddhist monk is the unprefix form *jñapti* or *jñāpti* (Pāli *ñatti*), the technical term for a formal “motion” or “proposal” in a meeting of the monastic community, for example: the motion to ordain a new monk.¹⁰ These three terms share the sense of a public act of “making known.”

In the Sarvāstivādin Abhidharma both *vijñapti* and its opposite, *avijñapti*, appear as technical terms, particularly in the discussion of karma. Here karma specifically means ethically significant action: acts or deeds.¹¹ In chapter 4 of the *Abhidharmaśāstra* Vasubandhu defines karma as: “volition and that derived from it,”¹² quoting a sūtra: “there are two [kinds of] karmas: volition and the act subsequent to volition.”¹³ This two-fold karma is expanded into three types: mental (corresponding to “volition”), and vocal or bodily (corresponding to “post-volitional” action). Vocal and bodily karma is further classified as including both *vijñapti-* and *avijñapti-karma*, “manifest” and “unmanifest” acts, that is, karma manifest or not manifest to some consciousness.

One should note that, from an Abhidharmic perspective, the common-sense notion of “an act” is analyzed into a succession of momentary dharmas. In the case of vocal and bodily acts the dharmas would be moments of sound or color-shape. These audible or visible forms are understood to be dharmas included in the “aggregate of material forms” (*rūpa-skandha*), since, given the momentariness of phenomena, the Abhidharma allows no real distinction between “acts” and “things.” So far the Abhidharmic analysis is clear. Difficulty arises in that the “unmanifest” act is also included as one of the 75 dharmas accepted by the Sarvāstivādins, and this dharma, *avijñapti-rūpa*, is also included in the aggregate of material forms.¹⁴

Contrary to what one might assume at first glance, this “unmanifest” karma is not some kind of private act not observed by others, since an act is *vijñapti* (for the Sarvāstivādins) if it could be “manifest” to another consciousness. [For the Vi-

jñānavādins *viññapti* means “manifest to any consciousness,” including that of the agent, and in this sense mental karma would be entirely *viññapti*, since consciousness is, by definition, self-manifesting.] Instead, *aviññapti-rūpa* is used to explain karmic continuity in certain contexts. A “manifest” vocal or bodily act is karmic, in the sense of ethically significant, because of its dependence on volition. But, since it is also “dharmic,” that is, a momentary event, how can one account for the connection between this momentary act and its future consequence? The explanation of karmic continuity is a general problem for the Sarvāstivādins, and it is in this context that *aviññapti-rūpa* is added to the list of dharmas. The following sequence is postulated: (1) [manifest, mental] volition, (2) [manifest, material] vocal or bodily act, (3) [unmanifest, material] *aviññapti-rūpa*, (4) [manifest, material] consequence [that is, a later, consequent manifestation of *rūpa*]. Since both the preceding (*viññapti*) act and the succeeding (*viññapti*) consequence are “material,” it follows that the intervening (*aviññapti*) dharmas, although imperceptible, are also “material”—that is, they belong to the *rūpa-skandha*.

This notion of *aviññapti-rūpa* is filled with difficulties, and Vasubandhu presents it with considerable qualms in the *Abhidharmakośa*. In the *Karmasiddhi-prakarāṇa*, the whole concept of *viññapti- / aviññapti-rūpa* is rigorously criticized and finally rejected, and all karma is reduced to volition.¹⁵ Given this, it is tempting to see the title *Vijñaptimātratā-siddhi* as Vasubandhu’s proclamation that he has solved this problem by eliminating the category of *aviññapti*. In any case, the *Vijñaptimātratā* system refers the problem of karmic continuity to the concept of *ālaya-vijñāna*, the “store-consciousness” which contains the “residue” (*vāsanā*) of past acts and the “seeds” (*bīja*) of future ones. The new meaning assigned to *viññapti* can best be explained by considering next the other three terms equated with it in the opening passage of VV.

II. The Other Terms for “Mind”

The translation of *citta*, *manas*, and *vijñāna* above as “thought,” “mind,” and “awareness” should be understood as merely tentative. In fact, much argument has been devoted to

the problem of translating these terms. Brian Galloway, for example, has argued that the "correct translation" is "mind" (*citta*), "consciousness" (*manas*), and "perception" (*vijñāna*), and that the "formerly prevailing" translations are wrong.¹⁶ Unfortunately, "the correct translation" is not so easy to come by. Not only do the Sanskrit terms have several meanings and various uses, but the suggested equivalents are all imprecise terms in English. Any translation will thus mean something different depending on what a vague word such as "consciousness" suggests to each translator or reader. Once again, what is needed is not simply another English equivalent, but an explanation of the actual usage of the Sanskrit term. Furthermore, one should not forget that, in any case, these three terms are here stated to be synonyms.

VV presupposes that: "*citta*, *manas*, and *vijñāna* have a single meaning."¹⁷ All three are terms for mind, not as a substantial entity, but as a stream of momentary mental dharmas. All three signify the same dharma or dharmas. Why, then, does Vasubandhu use three different terms for the same reality? One might answer that, as a member of the Buddhist scholastic tradition that employs these three terms, Vasubandhu is obliged to explain them. One might also suggest that using three words, and thus pointing at the same reality from several perspectives, provides a depth of description that a single word could not. The Abhidharma literature consists largely of intersecting and cross-referenced lists of terms. The three main terms for mind appear traditionally in different lists, with a different connotation and context.

Citta is perhaps the most basic term for "mind" or "thought." It is the term that signifies a single thought, or better, a single thought-moment. *Citta* is also used to designate a particular mind as opposed to other minds, though in this sense the proper technical term is *citta-samūtāna*, "thought-series," a synonym for *vijñāna-srotas*, "stream of consciousness." *Citta* is the mental as contrasted with the material (*rūpa*), and bare consciousness as contrasted with mental states (*caitasika*, *caitta*, or *citta-samprayukta-samskāra*). [In the present passage, however, it is stated that *citta* here means consciousness along with its "concomitants," the mental states; it is "mind" or "consciousness" in the most general sense to which the equation of *citta*, *manas*, *vijñāna*,

and *viññapti* refers.] In the Sarvāstivādin Abhidharma, the older classification of the five “aggregates” (*skandhas*) is replaced (schematically at least) by the tabulation of the 75 dharmas under the five headings of “material form” (*rūpa*), “consciousness” (*citta*), “dispositions conjoined with consciousness” (*citta-samprayukta-saṃskāra*), “dispositions disjoined from consciousness” (*citta-viprayukta-saṃskāra*), and the “unconditioned” (*asaṃskṛta*). In this context, the single dharma, *citta*, takes the place of the “aggregate of awareness” (*viññāna-skandha*).

Manas, on the other hand, is the term for “mind” as the sixth of the six organs or faculties of perception (sensory or mental) in the list of twelve “sense-fields” (*āyatana*): the six “sense organs” (*indriya*) and six “sense objects” (*viṣaya*). Here, “mental” is contrasted not with “material” but rather with “sensory.” Perception can also be analyzed into three aspects: the object of cognition (*ālambana*), the organ of cognition (*āśraya*), and the corresponding act of awareness (*viññāna*). In this way, the twelve sense-fields become the eighteen *dhātus* (elements of perception), with the addition of visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, tactile, and mental *viññāna* (perception or awareness). “Mental perceptions” are strictly-mental perceptions—that is, perceptions of ideas, concepts, or mental objects, whether derived from previous sensory perception or not. Vasubandhu (in AKK-AKB 1.16–17) finds no “dharmic” distinction between “mind” (*manas* as an “organ”) and “mental perception” (*mano-viññāna*). Although the logic of the scheme requires a corresponding “organ” (*āśraya* or *indriya*) for each object and perception, the “organ” for mental perception is simply previous moments of awareness, which serve as a causal basis for the arising of the present mental perception. Once again, mind is not a substantial or quasi-material entity, but a stream of causally related thought-moments.

Viññāna may be translated as “awareness,” “consciousness,” “cognition,” “perception,” and so on. Vasubandhu gives the following definition (AKK 1.16): “*Viññāna* is ‘respective’ *viññapti*.” (AKB:) “The apprehension that is the *viññapti* with respect to the various sense objects is called the *viññāna-skandha*.”¹⁸ *Viññāna* occurs as a term in a great number of Abhidharmic lists; for example, the fifth of the five *skandhas* and six of the eighteen *dhātus* are called *viññāna*. The *viññāna-skandha* has already been equated with *citta* above. In AKB on AKK 1.16, it is also equated

with *manas* and with the last six of the eighteen *dhātus*. In this last case, *viññāna* quite clearly means “perception.” To translate *caḅsur-viññāna* and *śrotra-viññāna*, for example, as “eye-consciousness” and “ear-consciousness” (with the plural “consciousnesses”)—rather than “visual perception” and “auditory perception”—is not simply peculiar English; it might even suggest a strangely animistic notion of consciousness.

However, “perception” or even “cognition” does not quite fit some of the other uses of *viññāna*. Such, for example, is *viññāna* as the sixth of the six *dhātus*—a different set of *dhātus*—the other five being earth, air, water, fire, and *ākāśa* (here meaning “ether” rather than “space,” as it usually does in Buddhism). There is also the third of the twelve links in the chain of dependent arising (*pratītya-samutpāda*): a *viññāna* that arises in dependence on *saṃskāras*, and in dependence on which there arises “name and form” (*nāma-rūpa*). This is related to the use of *viññāna* as a term for that which “passes over” in rebirth. The specifically Yogācāra term *ālaya-viññāna* (“store-consciousness”) has also been mentioned above. In these instances, where *viññāna* suggests something prior to or more general than perception or cognition, “awareness” or “consciousness” would seem to be a better translation.

These terms, *citta*, *manas*, and *viññāna*, all illuminate a concept of mind as a stream of causally related thought-moments, each of which is a specific act of bare awareness. What is it that *viññāpti*, which Vasubandhu here gives as the fourth synonym, adds to the picture? *Viññāpti* here signifies more than *viññāpti-karma*, but retains a sense of activity or function. *Viññāpti* designates the basic phenomenon of conscious experience, without requiring its separation into object, subject, and act of cognition. What then is “*viññāpti*-only”?

III. The Significance of “Only”

The word *mātra* means “measure” or “extent.” It is frequently added as the second member of compounds (which may be understood as *bahuvrīhis* based on appositional *karmadhārayas*) in the form of “X-*mātra*” meaning “having X as its full extent,” hence “only X.” Often the sense is pejorative: “mere X.” It is

clear, however, that in the present context no pejorative sense is required. “Mind-only” means “consisting only of mind,” “nothing but mind,” “bare mind,” “sheer mind,” and so on.¹⁹ A *mātra* compound, then, affirms one factor while denying all others that might apply. The passage itself makes clear what is denied here: objects as external substantial entities. Yet *citta-mātra*, the term used in the sūtra passage cited, would suffice to deny external objects. What is the point of specifically affirming *vijñapti* by using the compound *vijñapti-mātra*?

The term *vijñapti* signifies a “phenomenon” of consciousness,²⁰ a “manifestation” to consciousness, or a “percept”²¹—so long as one bears in mind that these terms should not be taken in a naively realistic or a naively idealistic sense. The translation “perception” is not bad, especially considering the ambiguity of the English word. “Perception” can denote a quality, a faculty, a process, or the apparently objective aspect of that process: its contents. However, it might be better to retain “perception” for translating *pratyakṣa* or *vijñāna* (at least in some of its senses). To translate *vijñapti* here by “representation” conveys its “public” aspect, but seems to imply representation of something, presumably of an external object or referent, which suggests a “representational” theory of knowledge. On the contrary, the purpose of the argument throughout the *Vimśatikā* is to show that the concept of *vijñapti* suffices to make sense of perception, and that the concept of an external referent (*artha*) is logically superfluous. It is specifically stated in the initial quotation that “the [word] ‘only’ serves to rule out [external] referents.” Clearly, then, when *vijñapti* is qualified as “*vijñapti*-only,” it cannot be meant as a representation of anything else, especially not of an external object.

This would seem to imply that the theory of knowledge involved here, if not representational, is some sort of subjective or absolute idealism.²² This has, in fact, been the most common “outside” interpretation of Vijñānavāda, not only by modern writers, but by its ancient opponents, both Hindu and Buddhist. Any statement to the effect that the world is “mind-only” seems to imply that, given a set of material and mental factors, the former are denied and the latter are affirmed, or the former are reduced to the latter. Even the translation “ideation-only” for *vijñapti-mātra* seems to suggest that matter is unreal while

consciousness alone is real.

It is one thing to accuse the Vijñānavādins of falling into a reification of mind, and quite another to assume that such is their intention. The former position is certainly arguable, and was strongly argued by their Mādhyamika rivals. If anything, it is the concept of *ālaya-vijñāna*, rather than that of *viññapti-mātra*, which most exposes the Vijñānavādins to the charge of turning consciousness into some kind of substance or self. Here I would argue that, as is so often the case in Buddhist philosophy, Vasubandhu is consciously navigating between two extremes, which in this case may be called realism and idealism.

In negative terms, *viññapti-mātra* rules out the realist extreme: substantial external objects of cognition are denied. However, *viññapti-mātra* has also a positive connotation, and the fact that Vasubandhu here affirms precisely *viññapti*—rather than *viññāna* or *citta*, which might more easily be misunderstood—seems to indicate an intent to avoid the idealist extreme as well. What is exclusively affirmed is not consciousness as an abiding entity, but the content of momentary acts of consciousness. When this *viññapti* is equated with *citta*, *manas*, and *viññāna*, it follows that mind itself is *viññapti-mātra*: it consists of nothing else than the contents of momentary mental acts. The intention here is not to reduce the material to the mental, but to deny the dichotomy, while affirming that the basic reality is more usefully discussed in the terms belonging to a correct understanding of the mental.

IV. The Whole of the Three Realms

The compound *viññapti-mātra* involves a denial and an affirmation. The extent of this denial/affirmation is truly universal. The term used in the passage is *traidhātukam*, which may be understood, grammatically and contextually, as meaning *idam traidhātukam*: “this [universe] consisting of three *dhātus*.”²³ Here we meet a third, cosmological, sense of the term *dhātu* in the Abhidharma lexicon. There are three cosmological “realms.”

The “realm of desires” (*kāma-dhātu*) is the world of “ordinary” experience, that is to say the world experienced by beings in hell, ghosts, animals, most humans, and the lower orders

among the divinities. The two higher “realms” may be entered through either meditation or apparitional birth. The “realm of forms” (*rūpa-dhātu*) corresponds to the refined experiences of those in the first four levels of meditation (the four dhyānas) and the analogous experiences of certain classes of gods. The “realm of formlessness” (*ārūpya-dhātu*) consists of the experiences of those meditators and divinities abiding in the formless meditations. These are given as four: infinite space, infinite awareness (*viññāna*), nothingness, and neither conception nor non-conception (with sometimes a fifth added: the cessation of conception and feeling).

Taken together, these three “realms” comprise the whole cosmos. “The whole of the three realms” is synonymous with *saṃsāra* and with “all conditioned (*saṃskṛta*) dharmas.” If Vasubandhu’s statement that the whole of the three realms is nothing but *viññapti* is taken in the “idealist” sense, then this implies that there is really nothing “out there”—the whole universe is in the mind. Among other consequences, this interpretation inevitably raises the problem of solipsism: “the whole universe is in my mind.” On the contrary, taking the interpretation argued in this paper, Vasubandhu’s statement means that the whole universe is nothing but the contents of consciousness (that is, all the contents of everyone’s consciousness). Does this amount to the truism that we cannot conceive of anything that we cannot conceive of? I would argue, instead, that the intention of the *viññapti-mātra* doctrine is not to draw boundaries around reality but rather to point at the nature of specific experiences.

Vasubandhu himself states the purpose of this doctrine in VK-VV 7–10. His imaginary opponent poses the scriptural objection that, if consciousness alone exists, why does the Buddha speak of all twelve sense-fields (objects and organs of perception)? Vasubandhu replies that the Buddha taught with “a special intention,” depending on the needs of a specific audience. Both the teaching of the twelve *āyatana*s and the teaching of *viññapti-mātra* involve such a special intention, being two stages in the teaching of “no-self.”

The purpose of the *āyatana* doctrine (and, by implication, of the whole Abhidharma analysis into dharmas) is to introduce *puṅgala-nairātmya* (“the fact that there is no self in persons”).²⁴ Analysis into dharmas can dissolve the substantiality of “things”

and “beings,” yet dharmas too can be reified. The purpose of the *viññapti-mātra* doctrine is to introduce the second stage in understanding “no-self”: *dharma-nairātmya* (“the fact that there is no self in dharmas”). The opponent objects that this seems to deny the existence of dharmas altogether, which would mean that *viññapti-mātra* too is non-existent. Vasubandhu replies that what is denied is not the existence of dharmas as moments of experience, but rather “that mentally constructed self that is the intrinsic nature of dharmas imagined by naive people as object, subject, and so on.”²⁵ This does not deny that the dharmas themselves, as perceived by the Buddha, exist. However, the dharmas as perceived by the Buddha are inexpressible (*anabhilāpya*) by philosophy. Furthermore, Vasubandhu points out that this teaching of *dharma-nairātmya* works only when *viññapti-mātra* itself is understood to be *viññapti*-only. Clearly, no reification of consciousness is intended here.

One further passage may clarify Vasubandhu’s intention. To the repeated assertion that dreams prove the possibility of perception without external referents, the opponent objects: “Someone not yet awakened does not understand the non-existence of a sense object seen in a dream.”²⁶ Vasubandhu replies that, on the contrary, we are all asleep:²⁷

In this way, the world—asleep with a sleep that is the residue of the imposition of false conceptualizing—is seeing, as in a dream, a non-existent [external] referent. Not having been awakened, it does not understand, as it is, the non-existence of that [referent]. But, when one has been awakened through obtaining the transcendental non-conceptual cognition that is the antidote to that [sleep], then—through the direct realization of the purified mundane cognition that is obtained after that—one understands, as it is, the non-existence of the [sense] object.

V. Conclusion

I find it misleading to call Vasubandhu’s approach “absolute idealism.” Instead, I would see Vasubandhu’s argument in the *Vimśatikā* as one more attempt to find the Buddhist “middle way” between positive and negative extremes, in this case the

extremes of reification and reductionism. “Common sense” takes the objects of perception to be substantial external entities, that is, “things.” Analytical concepts such as atoms or dharmas are powerful tools that can demolish such “things,” but atoms or dharmas can themselves be reified. Vasubandhu’s argument denies the necessity to posit any entities external to perception itself, and rejects, successively, the reification of things, atoms, dharmas, and even *viññapti* itself. In Vasubandhu’s *Vijñānavāda*, *viññaptis*, in effect, take the place of dharmas in the *Abhidharma*: as conceptual devices to prevent the reification of objects. The doctrine of *viññapti-mātra* is not the metaphysical assertion of a transcendental reality consisting of “mind-only.” It is a practical injunction to suspend judgment: “Stop at the bare percept; no need to posit any entity behind it.”

Rather than asserting “mind-only” as the true nature of unconditioned reality, Vasubandhu presents “mind-only” as a description of our delusion: the dreams of this sleep from which the Buddha has awakened. It is, after all, *saṃsāra* that is declared to be *viññapti-mātra*. Yet if “mind-only” is merely skepticism about reified external entities, how does it avoid the opposite extreme of reductionism? The world is neither completely real, nor completely unreal, but like a dream. A dream has its own presence and continuity, but its objects lack the substantiality of external objects. Whether common-sense things or *Abhidharmic* dharmas, dream-objects are bare percepts. If the dream-world *saṃsāra* is “mind-only” then freedom and the Buddhist path are possible—we can “change our minds.” If the realms of meditation are “mind-only” then one can create a counter-dream within the dream of the world’s delusion. Most important, one can awaken from a dream.

Is it then correct to call the *Yogācāra*, as presented by Vasubandhu, “Buddhist idealism”? The term “idealism” designates a number of different philosophies. At the least one should be aware that the “idealism” that Vasubandhu attempts to assert and the “idealism” for which his opponents criticize him may be different “idealisms.” The argument over whether *Vijñānavāda* is idealistic or realistic bears a marked resemblance to the controversy as to whether *Madhyamaka* is nihilism or transcendental absolutism.

Mistaking taxonomy for understanding is a fault not limited

to modern writers on Buddhism. A similar excessive concern for and trust in doctrinal labels can be seen in ancient Indian philosophers and Tibetan scholastics, and even in the Abhidharma itself. Instead of seeking the correct label for Vasubandhu's philosophy, we would do better to try to understand it in its own terms. The identification of one school with another (such as that of Vijñānavāda with some Western form of idealism) is not only likely to be misleading; it is all too often the point at which the argument stops. A more fruitful approach to comparative philosophy would begin by tentatively accepting several comparable philosophies as coherent systems in their own terms, and would proceed to apply their several viewpoints to specific problems of philosophy.

NOTES

1. All translations are my own unless otherwise noted. For the sources of Sanskrit texts here translated see below, notes 3 and 7. The passage from VV translated here is missing from the Sanskrit MS, and was reconstructed by Sylvain Lévi as follows (1925, p.3):

*Mahāyāne traidhātukam vyavasthāpyate / cūttamātram bho jinaṅgatrā yad uta
traidhātukam iti sūtrāt / cūttam mano vijñānam vijñaptis ceti paryāyāḥ / cūttam atra
sasamprayogam abhipretam / mātram ity arthapratishedhārtham / .*

2. The first *kārikā* of VK is still quoted or translated by some writers as it was first reconstructed and printed in Lévi 1925. As emended in Lévi 1932 (on the basis of new MSS of VK) the stanza reads:

*vijñaptimātram evedam asadāthāvabhāsanāt /
yadvat taimirikasyāsalkesōṅḍrakādīdarśanam //.*

3. Sources used here for the *Vijñaptimātratā-siddhi* are:

Louis de La Vallée Poussin, "Vasubandhu, Viṃśakakārikāprakaraṇa: Traité des vingt śloka, avec le commentaire de l'auteur," *Muséon* (New Series) 13 (1912): 53–90. [Romanized Tibetan text of VV, with French translation.]

Sylvain Lévi, *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi: Deux traités de Vasubandhu, Viṃśatikā et Trīṃśatikā*, Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études (sciences historiques et philologiques) fascicule 245 (Paris: Librairie Ancienne Honoré Champion, 1925). [Sanskrit text of VK, VV, TK, and TB (Sthiramati's commentary on TK).]

Sylvain Lévi, *Matériaux pour l'étude du système Vijñaptimātra*, Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études (sciences historiques et philologiques) fascicule 260 (Paris: Librairie Ancienne Honoré Champion, 1932). [Includes Sanskrit emendations and French translation for Lévi 1925.]

Clarence H. Hamilton, *Wei Shih Er Shih Lun: The Treatise in Twenty Stanzas*

on Representation-only, by Vasubandhu (Translated from the Chinese Version of Hsüan Tsang, *Tripitaka Master of the Tang Dynasty*), American Oriental Series, 13 (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1938). [Hsüan-tsang's Chinese text of VV with English translation.]

Sitamsu Sekhar Bagchi, "Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi," *Nava-Nalanda-Mahavihara Research Publication 1* (1957): 367–389 (+ Sanskrit pages 1–12). [Sanskrit text of VK-VV (Lévi 1925 without emendations), with English translation of VK-VV embedded in Bagchi's interpretation.]

Wing-tsit Chan, "The Thirty Verses on the Mind-Only Doctrine," in Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan and Charles A. Moore editors, *A Source Book in Indian Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), pp. 333–337. [English translation of TK from Hsüan-tsang's Chinese version, along with (pp. 328–333) a partial reprint of Hamilton 1938.]

Thomas A. Kochumuttom, *A Buddhist Doctrine of Experience: A New Translation and Interpretation of the Works of Vasubandhu the Yogācārin* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1982). [Includes English translations of VK-VV and TK. Kochumuttom seems to have depended entirely for the Sanskrit text of VK, VV, TK, and TB on an extremely unreliable edition: Svāmi Maheśvarānanda, *Ācārya vasubandhu praṇīta / vijñapti mātratāsiddhiḥ / pañcāśatikā / savṛttikā trīmśatikā kārikā / ācārya śhīramati praṇītaṃ trīmśikā bhāṣyaṅca* [sic!] (Vārāṇasi: Gītādharma Kāryālaya, 1962). Some of the new departures in Kochumuttom's translation seem to be based on Maheśvarānanda's misprints. The misprint on Maheśvarānanda's title page has apparently misled Kochumuttom into consistently calling TK the "Trīmśatikā."]

Stefan Anacker, *Seven Works of Vasubandhu: The Buddhist Psychological Doctor*, Religion of Asia Series, 4 (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1984). [Includes English translations of *Vādaśāstrī*, *Pañcaskandhāprakaraṇa* (PSP), *Karmasiddhiprakaraṇa* (KSP), VK-VV, TK, *Madhyāntavibhāgabhāṣya* (MVB), and *Trisvabhāvanirdeśa* (TSN), and reprints Sanskrit editions of VV, TK, MVB, and TSN.]

4. E.g., Hamilton (1938).

5. E.g., Chan (1957).

6. E.g., Anacker (1984).

7. For AKK-AKB I have used the Sanskrit edition of Prahlad Pradhan, *Abhidharmakośabhāṣyam of Vasubandhu*, Tibetan Sanskrit Works Series, 8 (Patna: K.P. Jayaswal Research Institute, 1967; reprinted 1975). I have also consulted the French translation of Louis de LaVallée Poussin, *L'Abhidharmakośa de Vasubandhu*, 6 volumes, *Mélanges chinois et bouddhiques*, 16 (Bruxelles: Institut Belge des Hautes Études Chinoises, 1971 reprint; 1st ed. Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1923–31).

KSP is lost in Sanskrit, but survives in one Tibetan translation (Tōhoku 4062 = Ōtani 5563) and two Chinese translations (Taishō 1608, 1609). There is an English translation (from Tibetan) in Anacker (1984), and a French translation (with the Chinese and Tibetan texts) in Étienne Lamotte, "Le Traité de l'acte de Vasubandhu, Karmasiddhiprakaraṇa," *Mélanges chinois et bouddhiques* 4 (1935–36) (Bruxelles: Institut Belge des Hautes Études

PSP is also lost in Sanskrit, surviving in one Tibetan translation (Tōhoku 4059 = Ōtani 5560) and one Chinese translation (Taishō 1612). There is an English translation (from Tibetan) in Anacker (1984), and a French translation (with Chinese and Tibetan texts) in Jean Dantinne, *Le Traité des cinq aggregates (Pañcaskandhaprakaraṇa de Vasubandhu)*, Publications de l'Institut Belge des Hautes Études Bouddhiques, Série "Études et Texts," 7 (Bruxelles: Institut Belge des Hautes Études Bouddhiques, 1980). PSP is discussed in V.V. Gokhale, "The Pañcaskandhaka by Vasubandhu and its Commentary by Sīhramatī," *Annals of the Bhandarkar Research Institute* (Poona) 18.3 (1937): 276–286. There is a discussion and a Sanskrit retranslation of PSP in Shanti Bhikshu Shastri, "Pañcaskandhaprakaraṇa of Vasubandhu," *Indian Historical Quarterly* 32 (1956): 368–385. Another work by Shanti Bhikshu Shastri, which I have seen cited but have not been able to find, is *Pañcaskandhaprakaraṇa of Vasubandhu: A Restitution into Sanskrit from the Tibetan Version together with an Introduction, English translation, Notes, a Tibetan-Sanskrit vocabulary and an Index of important Sanskrit Words* (Kelaniya, 1969).

8. Compare Franklin Edgerton, *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Grammar and Dictionary*, Volume II: Dictionary (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953; reprints Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1970, etc.), s.v. *viññāpti*.

9. Compare Edgerton (1953), s.v. *prajñāpti*.

10. Compare Edgerton (1953), s.v. *jñāpti*, and the documents dealing with *upasampadā* ("ordination") in the collection of official acts of a Sangha known as the *Karmavācānā* (Pāli *Kammavācā*).

11. The classic sources for the discussion of karma are AKK-AKB chapter 4, and KSP.

12. AKK 4.1b: *cetanā talkṛtam ca tat*.

13. AKB on AKK 4.1b: *dve karmanī cetanā karma cetaiyivā ca*.

14. *Aviññāpti-rūpa* is discussed in detail at AKK-AKB 1.11 and 4.1–22, and in KSP. See also Thomas Lee Dowling, *Vasubandhu on the "Aviññāpti-rūpa": A Study in Fifth-Century Abhidharma Buddhism* (Ph.D. Dissertation, Columbia University: 1976).

15. AKB on AKK 4.4 presents the controversy between the Sautrāntika position that *aviññāpti* does not exist as a substantial entity (*dravya*) and the Sarvāstivādin or Vaibhāṣika position that it does. For KSP see especially Anacker's (1984) translation and notes.

16. See two articles by Brian Galloway, "Vijñāna, Saṃjñā, and Manas," *The Middle Way* vol. 53, no. 2 (1978): 72–75, and "A Yogācāra Analysis of the Mind, Based on the *Vijñāna* Section of Vasubandhu's *Pañcaskandhaprakaraṇa* with Guṇamati's Commentary," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* vol. 3, no. 2 (1980): 7–20. Galloway's very interesting argument is unfortunately weakened by the stridency of his tone, which is not justified by the limited scope of his evidence. The ambiguity of the Sanskrit and English terms involved is not exhausted by considering the *Pañcaskandhaprakaraṇa* and the *Oxford English Dictionary*. For example, Galloway's argument for translating *viññāna* as "perception" rather than "consciousness" relies very heavily on the PSP and other contexts in which *viññāna* clearly does mean "perception," but rather ignores other uses of the term *viññāna* (discussed in the present

essay) for which "consciousness" is at least an arguable translation.

Particularly helpful discussions of these terms are given by Th. Stcherbatsky in *The Central Conception of Buddhism and the Meaning of the Word "Dharma"* (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1923; reprints Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1970, etc.), and by Shwe Zan Aung in his introduction to the translation of Anuruddha's *Abhidhammatthasangaha* in S.Z. Aung and C.A.F. Rhys Davids, *The Compendium of Philosophy*, Pāli Text Society, Translation Series, 2 (London: Luzac & Co., 1910; reprints by Pāli Text Society, London).

17. AKK 2.34a-b1: *cittam mano 'tha vijñānam ekārtham*. Compare AKB and PSP. The equating of these three terms for mind is at least as early as *Samyutta-nikāya* II: 95 (*Kindred Sayings* II: 66).

18. AKK 1.16c: *vijñānam prativijñaptiḥ*. AKB: *viṣayam viṣayam prati vijñaptir upalabdhir vijñānaskandha ity ucyate*. Compare the definition in PSP, which Shanti Bhikshu Shastri (1956: 381), Galloway (1980: 10), and Anacker (1984: 71) all take as: [*vijñānam*] *ālambanavijñaptiḥ*.

19. I am indebted to Professor M. David Eckel, Harvard University, for stressing to me the non-negative connotation of *-mātra* in such contexts.

20. I have in mind here the first definition of "phenomenon" given in the *American Heritage Dictionary*: "an occurrence or fact that can be perceived by the senses"—remembering that for Buddhists "mind" (*manas*) is, of course, one of the senses.

21. I am following the excellent definition of "percept" given in J.P. Chaplin, *Dictionary of Psychology* (new revised edition, New York: Dell Publishing, 1975), p. 376; "*percept*: 1. that which is perceived. 2. a perceptual act. The use of the term *percept* refers to the conscious experience and not to the physical object. Physical objects of perception are referred to as *stimuli*."

22. This is the view of Vijñānavāda held by such writers as Stcherbatsky and Dasgupta, and presented in A.K. Chatterjee, *The Yogācāra Idealism* (2nd ed., Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1975). One classical source for this interpretation is the hostile and wildly inaccurate chapter on Buddhism in the late Vedāntin work, *Sarvadarśana-saṃgraha*. However, those modern writers who interpret Vijñānavāda in this way usually consider it very similar to Vedānta. Kochumuttom (1982) strongly criticizes this idealistic interpretation, especially in chapter 6.

23. Kochumuttom (1982: 165–166) objects strenuously to the translation of *traidhātukam* here as "the three worlds." He declares that: "This translation ignores the fact that the term '*traidhātuka*' is an adjective meaning 'belonging to the three worlds', and that it is not a substantive meaning 'the three worlds.'" He goes on to say that such an adjective must modify an understood noun, supplying "*citta* and *caittas*" as the understood noun. Accordingly (p. 260), he translates the passage: "those belonging to the three worlds are mere representations of consciousness," and the sūtra quotation: "those belonging to the three worlds are mere mind"—"those" being *cittas* and *caittas*. As evidence for calling Vasubandhu's philosophy "pluralistic realism" this fails to convince. Kochumuttom confuses etymology with meaning and forgets the grammar of the sentence. It is true that *traidhātuka-* is etymologically an adjective. It is a secondary derivative in *-ka* from the compound word *tri-dhātu*, and means

“pertaining to the three realms.” In the passage, however, we have *traidhātukam*, which seems in context to be a nominative singular neuter form. Theoretically it could modify *cittam*, and theoretically the passage could mean that the *citta* that pertains to the triple world is mere-*citta* or mere-*vijñāpti*, but this is mere-tautology. In Sanskrit, secondary derivatives are often used as substantives. A good example is the very term *caitta*, “pertaining to *citta*.” The interpretation that best fits this passage is [*idam*] or [*sarvam*] *traidhātukam*—“all this [universe] that pertains to the three realms.”

24. *Nairātmya* is often translated “selflessness.” Although the translation is etymologically correct, the English word “selflessness” connotes unselfish behaviour, which may in fact be encouraged by the philosophical idea of *nairātmya*, but is not identical with it. [I am indebted to Professor Luis O. Gómez, University of Michigan, for pointing out to me the ambiguity of “selflessness.”]

25. VV on VK 10d2: *yo bālair dharmāṇām svabhāvo grāhyagrāhakādīḥ parikalpitas. . .*

26. VK 17cd: *svapnadṛgviṣayābhāvam nāprabuddho 'vagacchati.*

27. VV on VK 17cd: *evam vitathavikalpābhyāsavāsanānidrayā prasupto lokāḥ svapna ivābhūtam artham paśyan na prabuddhas tadabhāvam yathāvan nāvagacchati / yadā tu tatpratipakṣalokottaranirvikalpajñānalābhāt prabuddho bhavati tadā tatprṣṭhalabdhaśuddhalaukikajñānasam mukhībhāvād viṣayābhāvam yathāvad avagacchatīti samānam etat / .*