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Controversy over *Dharmakāya* in India and Tibet: A Reappraisal of its Basis, *Abhisamayālaṅkāra* Chapter 8

by John J. Makransky

I. Introduction

Approximately 1200 years ago a disagreement developed in India over the description of complete enlightenment in Mahāyāna Buddhism. The disagreement focused on the *Abhisamayālaṅkāra* (AA, c. 4th-5th century C.E.), a commentary on the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras* ascribed by late Indian scholars to Maitreya.¹ The AA's eighth and last chapter explained the final result of the Mahāyāna path, complete enlightenment (referred to as "*phaladharmakāya*"), in terms of multiple *buddha kāyas* (*buddha* "bodies").² But its verses, dense with possible meaning, were very ambiguous. Ārya Vimuktisena (c. early 6th century) understood it to be teaching three *kāyas*, while Haribhadra (late 8th century) thought it taught four. Ratnākaraśānti (c. 1000) believed that their disagreement concerned not just the wording of the AA, but the nature of *dharmakāya* in non-Tantric Mahāyāna Buddhism as a whole. He sided with Ārya Vimuktisena, as did Abhayākaragupta (early 12th century). Later in Tibet, the Sa-skye scholar Go-ram-pa bsod-nams seng-ge supported Ārya Vimuktisena in asserting three *kāyas*, while dGe-lugs-pa scholars backed Haribhadra's assertion of four. Thus, if we take Haribhadra as its initiator, the debate over the number of *kāyas* has continued from the late 8th century to the present day, having progressed from the Indian to the Tibetan branch of the Indo-Tibetan Buddhist tradition. Yet most modern scholars, basing themselves on Haribhadra and his Tibetan followers, have reported simply that the AA teaches four *kāyas*, as if they were unaware of the controversy.³

Any attempt to analyze the debate is complicated by the fact that it has been a diachronic discussion rather than a synchronic one. It is not a discussion between two contemporaneous scholars. Rather it has been an ongoing interchange conducted over centuries, in which scholars of each period, attempting to address the philosophical and religious problems of their own time and place, have written responses to scholars of earlier periods. Developments in religious thought since the last response forced reconsideration of old questions in the light of new viewpoints. What was important to say about enlightenment, and what methods were used to analyze or describe it, changed somewhat from age to age and culture to culture.

If the historical perspective is lost, it becomes impossible to sort out what the whole debate has been about. One complicating factor is the abhorrence of orthodox scholiasts to give the appearance of personal innovation. From the perspective of Buddhist traditionalists, the truths of Buddhism were realized by *buddhas* and saints (such as Maitreya) and then revealed by them in sacred scriptures. The commentator's job in explaining those scriptures was not to innovate, but to explain the meanings intended by their authors, since those meanings were truths realized by those authors. At some stage within the Buddhist tradition the *AA* was taken to be such a sacred scripture (hence its ascription, by Haribhadra, to Maitreya). Each commentator obeyed the unwritten rules of orthodoxy according to which the only way to reformulate the tradition they received was to read their reformulation into the texts they inherited. Scholars, like other people, do not work in a vacuum. They are conditioned by their historical and cultural context. Although commentators made interpretations of the *AA* appropriate to their own times and places, they always did so within the context of explicating the original intentions of its author. Because of this, the debate over the number of *kāyas* took on the appearance of a trivial disagreement over the meaning of a few verses of one abstruse text. Although Haribhadra's reinterpretation of *AA* 8 was innovative, it was within the rules of orthodoxy, because he read his meaning into the received text.⁴

Therefore, the debate over the number of *kāyas*, examined diachronically, resolves into a number of different stages of discussion in which the issues at stake partially changed over

time. Broadly speaking, I would describe those stages as follows: the AA's 8th chapter represents an attempt, for the first time, to homologize two semi-autonomous Mahāyāna descriptions of enlightenment: a *Prajñāpāramitā* (PP) *sūtra* description and a three-*kāya* Yogācāra *śāstra* description (this will be the subject matter proper of this paper). Ārya Vimuktisena's task was to explicate the very dense verses of AA 8 in a form which exposed its author's intention, while reiterating the Yogācāra understanding of enlightenment as, in essence (*svābhāvikaḥ*), an experience of the highest yogic realization, inconceivable to those who have not realized it, beyond discursiveness, unconditioned, and supramundane. Haribhadra, writing several centuries later, felt compelled in his reading of AA 8 to conduct an analysis of the *kāyas* along clear Madhyamaka lines, in a way which addressed the conceptions of enlightenment which had developed since Nāgārjuna's time, clarifying the new categories of multiple *kāyas* in a way consistent with the earlier Madhyamaka dialectic. Viewing enlightenment not only as an inconceivable yogic realization but also as an object of logical analysis like any other object, he used his interpretation of the AA to separate out contradictory elements and assign them to their appropriate domains, resulting in four *buddha kāyas*. Later in Tibet, Sa-skya and dGe-lugs scholars chose either Ārya Vimuktisena's or Haribhadra's view, depending on what implications for buddhology they saw in their project of developing an all-inclusive systematic philosophy out of the thousands of *sūtras* and *śāstras* they had received from India. Within that systematic project, the Tibetans perceived a number of problems as inter-related: problems concerning the two truths, the perfect knowledge of them (which is enlightenment), and the description of that knowledge as "embodied" in *buddha kāyas*. To analyze this 1200-year-old controversy, then, requires that we study it in each of its historical stages.⁵

It is logical to begin such a study by analyzing the received text upon which the debate explicitly centered at every stage, i.e. the AA. This will require a fresh look at AA's 8's place in the history of Mahāyāna thought. But even apart from the debate, it is well worth a fresh reexamination, because at the time that it was written, there was a tremendous diversity in the descriptions of buddhahood in Mahāyāna *sūtras* and *śāstras*, reflecting a diverse set of views which had developed in different milieus

and textual traditions. When the AA's eighth chapter is examined in relation to its textual antecedents and historical context, it can shed light on the hermeneutic strategies used by early Mahāyāna masters to homologize these diverse views. I believe that the reason AA 8 has always been so difficult to interpret is that its presentation of buddhahood is neither an independent creation, nor a restatement of what was said in other treatises of its time. Rather, it represents a synthesis of two different ways to describe buddhahood: a Yogācāra *śāstra* way and a *PP sūtra* way. It functions like a grid to map a Yogācāra model of enlightenment onto the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras*.⁶

II. *The Heart of the Controversy: Abhisamayālamkāra Chapter 8, vs. 1–6*

The controversy over the number of *kāyas* centers on the first six verses of AA, chapter 8. Verse one describes a *buddha*'s *svābhāvīkākāya*, Intrinsic Body:

*sarvākārāṃ viśuddhiṃ ye dharmāḥ prāptā nirāsravāḥ/
svābhāvīko muneḥ kāyas teṣāṃ prakṛti-lakṣaṇaḥ// AA 8.1*

The undefiled *dharmas* which have obtained purity in all respects,
The Intrinsic Body of the Muni has their innate nature as its characteristic.

Whatever this first verse means, all commentators agreed that it teaches the first *kāya* of a *buddha*, the *svābhāvīkākāya*, understood in some sense to be the innate nature of the “undefiled *dharmas*.” The undefiled *dharmas* (*nirāsrava-* or *anāsrava-dharmāḥ*) are a *buddha*'s pure mental qualities, his gnoses (*jñāna*), obtained through the complete realization of the Mahāyāna path. Verses two through six list these undefiled *dharmas*, divided into twenty-one types, and then relate them to the word “*dharmakāya*”:

*bodhipakṣāpramāṇāni vimokṣā anupūrvāsaḥ/
navātmikā samāpattiḥ kṛtsnaṃ daśavidhātmakam// 8.2
abhibhāvāyatanāny aṣṭa prakārāṇi prabhedaṭaḥ/*

araṇā praṇidhijñānam abhijñāḥ pratisamvidah// 8.3
sarvākārās catasro 'tha śuddhayo vaśitā daśa/
balāni daśa catvāri vaiśāradyaṇy arakṣaṇam// 8.4
trividhaṃ smṛtyupasthānaṃ tridhāsaṃmoṣa-dharmatā/
vasanāyāḥ samudghāto mahatī karuṇā jane// 8.5
āveṇikā muner eva dharmā ye 'ṣṭadaśeritāḥ/
sarvākārajñatā ceti dharmakāyo 'bhidhīyate// 8.6

“The factors which foster enlightenment, the measureless thoughts, the liberations, the nine meditative attainments, the ten meditative totalities, the bases of overpowering divided into eight kinds, the meditative power blocking others’ passions, the knowledge resulting from resolve, the supernatural knowledges, the analytical knowledges, the four total purities, the ten sovereignties, the ten powers, the four forms of fearlessness, the three ways in which [a *buddha*] has nothing to hide, the threefold mindful equanimity, the nature of never forgetting, the complete destruction of [negative] propensities, the great compassion for living beings, the eighteen qualities unique to the Muni, and omniscient wisdom”: thus is the *dharmakāya* denominated.

Ārya Vimuktisena, author of the earliest commentary extant, understood all six verses to be teaching one *kāya* of the *buddha*, which is first called “*svābhāvikakāya*,” and later “*dharmakāya*.” He read “*dharmakāya*” of verse 6 as a synonym for “*svābhāvikakāya*” of verse 1.⁷ Over two centuries later, Haribhadra reinterpreted the verses, arguing that Ārya Vimuktisena had been mistaken in his understanding of these two key terms. “*svābhāvikakāya*” of verse 1 and “*dharmakāya*” of verse 6 were not synonyms, he said. They referred to two different aspects of buddhahood: the first being the emptiness of the undefiled *dharmas*, and the latter being the collection of those *dharmas* themselves.⁸

All commentators agreed that after the sixth verse, AA 8 taught two more *kāyas*: *sāmbhogikakāya* (Enjoyment Body) and *nāirmāṇīkakāya* (Emanation Body). Therefore, the debate over whether it teaches three or four *kāyas*, actually resolves into a debate over whether its first six verses teach one *kāya* or two. Three concepts found in these verses are at the very heart of the controversy: 1. *svābhāvikakāya*, 2. *dharmakāya*, and 3. the undefiled *buddha dharmas* (*anāsravadharmas*). Any attempt to

resolve this controversy requires us to go back into the history of Buddhist thought and examine these concepts within textual traditions antecedent to the AA.

III. Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma

Traditionally, the mark of a Buddhist has always been his or her going for refuge to the Three Jewels (*triratna*): the Buddha, the Dharma and the Saṅgha. Sarvāstivāda scholars posed the question: Precisely what is the Buddha refuge? When one takes refuge in the Buddha what is one taking refuge in? The *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* gives a reply:

One who goes to the Buddha for refuge goes for refuge to the *āśaikṣa dharmas* which make him a *buddha*; [the *dharmas*] because of which the person is called "*buddha*"; [the *dharmas*] by obtaining which he understands all, thereby becoming a *buddha*. What are those *dharmas*? *Kṣayajñāna*, etc., together with their attendants.⁹

It goes on to say that one goes for refuge not to the Buddha's physical body, referred to as his "*rūpakāya*," but to the *āśaikṣa dharmas* comprising his mind. The reason is that these *dharmas* are undefiled (*anāsrava*), while his body remains defiled even after enlightenment.

On the same issue, the Sarvāstivāda *Mahāvibhāṣāśāstra* says:

Some say that to take refuge in the Buddha is to take refuge in the body constituted by the Tathāgata's head, neck, stomach, back, hands, and feet. It is explained, then, that the body, born of the father and the mother, is [composed of] defiled *dharmas*, and therefore not a source of refuge. The refuge is the Buddha's *āśaikṣa dharmas* which comprise enlightenment (*bodhi*), i.e. the *dharmakāya*.¹⁰

In these formulations, the Sarvāstivādins identified the qualities which made a *buddha* a *buddha*, that is, his essence. They identified this essence to be the undefiled qualities of his mind: his *anāsrava (āśaikṣa) dharmas*. And they called it the "*dharmakāya*," which could be translated in this context as the "Body of

[Undefined] *Dharmas*.” It was the *dharmakāya*, a *buddha*’s undefiled essence, as opposed to his *rūpakāya*, his physical body, which constituted the Buddha refuge.

It appears there were different traditions within Sarvāstivāda as to the identity of the *dharmakāya*’s undefiled *dharmas*. Vasubandhu notes that some scholars identify the Buddha refuge primarily with the eighteen *dharmas* exclusive to a *buddha*, the so-called “*āveṇika dharmas*,” which coexist with his *ḥṣaya-jñāna*.¹¹ These are explained at length in the *Kośabhāṣya*, where they are identified as the ten powers (*daśabala*), four fearlessnesses (*vaiśāradya*), three mindful equanimities (*smṛtyupasthāna*), and the great compassion (*mahākaruṇā*).¹² With these, other mental qualities, possessed by both *buddhas* and non-*buddhas*, are described.¹³ Together this collection constitutes close to the same list of undefiled *dharmas* which is presented throughout the *PP sūtras* and in AA 8 vss. 2–6 quoted earlier.

Later, the *Kośabhāṣya* uses the term “*dharmakāya*” in a new way. It describes buddhahood as the “*phalasampad*,” the “attainment of the fruit.” In this context the term “*dharmakāya*” refers to buddhahood in its entirety, not just to its undefiled mental qualities. Vasubandhu explains that *dharmakāya*, meaning *phalasampad*, includes four attainments: *jñānasampad* (gnosis attainment), *prahāṇasampad* (riddance attainment), *prabhāvasampad* (power attainment), and *rūpakāyasampad* (physical body attainment).¹⁴ This “*dharmakāya phalasampad*” of Sarvāstivāda may be a precursor of the AA’s “*phala dharmakāya*,” which also refers to buddhahood as a whole.

IV. *Dharmakāya and Buddhadharmas in the Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras*

The full enlightenment of a *buddha*, *samyaksambodhi*, is not treated at any length as a separate topic or chapter within the *PP sūtras* (except in the revised *PP* to be discussed later). In fact, reference to “*dharmakāya*” and “*rūpakāya*” in the *PP sūtras* is only very occasional. However, these *sūtras* do refer to buddhahood indirectly, and often, when they present formulaic lists of “all *dharmas*” (*sarvadharmāḥ*). The “all *dharmas*” are understood to comprise all phenomena in the universe, as described in *Abhidharma*.¹⁵ Included among all phenomena, of course, are a

buddha's undefiled *dharmas* (*anāsravadharmas*), as they are listed in AA 8. They are presented in extensive or abbreviated form throughout the *PP sūtras*. As the collection of *buddha's* mental qualities, his *asaikṣadharmas*, they constitute what the Sarvāstivāda *Abhidharma* referred to as his "*dharmakāya*." It is important to note, however, that unlike in the *Abhidharma*, nowhere in the *PP sūtras* is the collection of *buddha's* undefiled *dharmas* in itself identified as being the "*dharmakāya*." The reason for this probably lies in the difference between the ontologies of the *Abhidharma* and the *PP sūtras*.

The purpose of the *Abhidharma* was to negate the apparent permanence, etc., of things by analytically finding the *dharmas* which were their ultimate constituents. In contrast to this, the purpose of the *PP sūtras* was to negate the ultimacy of the *dharmas* themselves, to deny their self-existence (*svabhāva*). Its formulaic repetition of the *dharma* lists, which are drawn mainly from *Abhidharma*, was done in order to deny the self-existence of every one of the *dharmas* listed. The *PP's* analysis leading to salvific insight (*prajñā*) does not find *dharmas*. It finds only their emptiness of self-existence (*svabhāvasūnyatā*).¹⁶ This realization is known as the "*prajñāpāramitā*," the perfection of wisdom. It, conjoined with the mind seeking enlightenment for the salvation of all other beings (*bodhicitta*), is the very heart of the Mahāyāna path, which when completed, issues in buddhahood.

Like the *Abhidharma*, the *PP sūtras* identify the *dharmakāya*, not the *rūpakāya* (physical form), as that which really constitutes a *buddha*, his essence. But they differ as to what that essence is.¹⁷ In the *Abhidharma* it was the *buddha's* undefiled *dharmas*; these were his *dharmakāya*. But nowhere in the *PP sūtras* is the *dharmakāya* directly identified with the undefiled *dharmas*. This is because the highest attainment in the *PP* is not a collection of *dharmas*, no matter how exalted, but rather the perfect realization of the emptiness of all *dharmas*. Since "*dharmakāya*" is one of the words used to describe that highest attainment, its meaning in the *PP sūtras* is quite different from its meaning in the *Abhidharma*. In this regard, two observations should be made: 1. From the perspective of *prajñāpāramitā*, the *buddhadharmas*, along with all other *dharmas*, are not perceived. What is not perceived by perfect wisdom cannot be taken as the very essence of a *buddha*.¹⁸ 2. This means that unlike the *Abhidharma*, the *PP*

sūtras do not identify the *buddha's dharmakāya* with the collection of *buddhadharmas per se*. They identify it instead with *śūnyatā*, the emptiness of all *dharmas*, and with *prajñāpāramitā*, the realization of that emptiness.¹⁹

V. Three Kāyas in the Emerging Yogācāra

In a number of early Mahāyāna *sūtras*, along with references to the formless *dharmakāya* of the *buddha*, there are physical descriptions of *buddhas* which go far beyond what is found in the Pali canon.²⁰ Attempts have been made by scholars to trace the historical development of these ideas in Buddhism prior to the full-blown advent of the Mahāyāna.²¹ Here I will just note that certain *sāstras* seminal to a newly emerging Yogācāra school reformulated earlier two-*kāya* descriptions in order to accommodate these new forms. They presented a new theory of three *kāyas*: the *svābhāvikakāya*, the *sāmbhogikakāya*, and the *nairmāṇīkākāya*. Here "*sāmbhogikakāya*" was the term for the exalted *tathāgatas* of the Mahāyāna *sūtras*, while "*nairmāṇīkākāya*" referred to a *buddha's* infinite emanations into the realms of living beings.²² Both of these *kāyas* were to be considered sub-categories of the earlier, wider category: *rūpakāya*. The *svābhāvikakāya* corresponded broadly to what the Mahāyāna *sūtras* called the "*dharmakāya*." It will be the focus of what follows.

The earliest text known to formally introduce and explain a distinct terminology of three *kāyas* was the *MSA*, in its ninth chapter, on enlightenment (*bodhi*). The *MSA* served as the basis for extensive discussion of the three *kāyas* in the *Msg*, which often quotes it. These two texts with their commentaries seem to constitute a core Yogācāra literature upon which was based discussion of three *kāyas* in numerous other texts: the *Kāyatrayasūtra* and *Kāyatrayastotra*, *Kāyatrayāvatarasāstra*, *Ratnagotravibhāga*, *Buddhabhūmivivākhyāna*, etc. Brief mention is also made of three *kāyas* in the *DhDhV* and in the *MAVbhāṣya* (the *AA*, as a special case, will be discussed below).²³ The *MSA* and *Msg* were authored in the formative period of the Yogācāra school, the former perhaps in the 3rd to 4th century, the latter in the late 4th century C.E.²⁴ Together, these texts give us a good picture of the intellectual milieu in which the three-*kāya* theory first

appeared. They explain the three-*kāya* theory by demonstrating its relation to other Yogācāra models of enlightenment: *āśraya-parāvṛtti*, *dharmadhātuvīśuddhi*, *vimalatathatā* and *nirvikalpajñāna*, and *dharmakāya*. Here, I will only make a few points particularly relevant to AA 8.

To begin with, the *MSA* and its commentaries agree with the *PP sūtras* that while the undefiled *dharmas* are acknowledged to be qualities of a *buddha*, they are not taken as his defining quality or essence. *MSA* 9.4 says: “[Buddhahood] consists of excellent qualities, but it is not defined by them.”²⁵ Sthiramati’s commentary explains that buddhahood is obtained by accomplishing the various undefiled *dharmas*, etc., and when obtained, can be said to possess those qualities. But it is not defined by them, because those qualities, as understood through conceptual construction (*parikalpita*), are not the nature of a *buddha*. Buddhahood involves no such conceptual construction.²⁶

We are also reminded of the *PP sūtras* when *MSA* 9.79 says about enlightenment: “Those who see no attainment have the supreme attainment.”²⁷ Sthiramati comments: “At the *buddha* stage there is the highest attainment. That is the not seeing of the attainment of a *sāmbhogikakāya*, a *nairmāṇīkākāya*, the ten powers, the four fearlessnesses, i.e., the not seeing of any of the [*buddha*] *dharmas*. Why is that? Because it is the supreme attainment, the highest of all *dharmas*, the *dharmakāya*.”²⁸ The passages which precede and follow this make clear that buddhahood, although associated with a collection of undefiled *dharmas* and form bodies, is not to be identified with them. It is identified with the *dharmakāya*, explained here as non-conceptual gnosis (*nirvikalpajñāna*). In other places, it is explained as purified suchness (*vimalatathatā*).²⁹

We saw above that the *Abhidharmakośa*, in one verse, used the term “*dharmakāya*” in a special sense, to designate the state of buddhahood in its entirety. The term also carries this sense in Yogācāra texts, notably the *Msg* and the commentaries on the *MSA*, where the *dharmakāya* is identified with a *buddha*’s *āśraya-parāvṛtti* (the transformation of the basis).³⁰ The concept of “*āśraya-parāvṛtti*” in Yogācāra texts is a model for full enlightenment in which the basis of ordinary existence is transformed into the full enlightenment of a *buddha*, through a process of yogic realization. Different models of *āśraya-parāvṛtti* compete

with each other in early Yogācāra. Different models for the basis (*alayavijñāna*, *samālātathatā*, *saṃkleśabhāgaparatantrasvabhāva*, etc.) are said to be transformed through yogic practice into different corresponding models of enlightenment (*dharmakāya*, *nirvikalpa-jñāna* and *nirmalātathatā*, *dharmadhātuvīśuddhi*, etc.).³¹ But at the stage of the literature at which the three *kāyas* appear, all such models are considered equivalent to each other. When the *dharmakāya* is identified as a *buddha's āśrayaparāvṛtti* in the *MSA*, *Msg* and related texts, it refers to the yogic attainment of full enlightenment, buddhahood as a whole. In this usage it carries the same meaning as the term "*phala-dharmakāya*" of the *AA* commentaries.

Now, when the earliest *sāstras* known to teach three *kāyas* (*MSA*, *Msg*, *RGV*, *AA*) list them, the first is called "*svābhāvīkākāya*." *MSA* 9.60 *bhāṣya* and *Msg* 10.1, 10.3 present what may be the earliest Yogācāra definition of *svābhāvīkākāya*. They define it as being the *dharmakāya*, whose character is *āśrayaparāvṛtti*. In other words, they equate *svābhāvīkākāya* with *dharmakāya* in its sense of buddhahood as a whole. But why, one might ask, do we need another term for all of buddhahood? We already have so many of these terms. The answer is that there is buddhahood as it actually exists, i.e., as a *buddha* has realized it (*svābhāvīkākāya*); buddhahood as *ārya bodhisattvas* perceive it (*sāmbhogīkākāya*); and buddhahood as others perceive it (*nairmāṇīkākāya*). A *buddha* has achieved only one buddhahood, the *dharmakāya*. That *kāya* as it actually exists, as it is in its own nature (*svābhāvīkaḥ*) is the "own-nature body," *svābhāvīkākāyaḥ*; as experienced by *ārya bodhisattvas*, causing them to enjoy the *dharma* (*sāmbhogīkaḥ*), is *sāmbhogīkākāya*; and as experienced by others in its emanated forms (*nairmāṇīkaḥ*), is *nairmāṇīkākāya*. This is the explanation of the three *kāya* names given in *MSA* 9.60 *bhāṣya*.³² It is consistent with the way the terms are used throughout Yogācāra literature.³³ The first *kāya* is the real one. It is what a *buddha* actually is, formless, and known only to a *buddha*. The other two *kāyas* are how that *kāya* manifests in physical forms to the unenlightened.³⁴

Because within the early three *kāya* theory the *svābhāvīkākāya* is understood to be buddhahood, i.e., to be the *dharmakāya*, as it actually exists, the early commentaries began to substitute the term "*dharmakāya*" for the term "*svābhāvīkākāya*" in the list of

three *kāyas*. In later literature, it gradually becomes the norm to name the three *kāyas*: “*dharmakāya*, *sambhogakāya*, *nirmāṇakāya*.”³⁵ Thus the term “*dharmakāya*” possessed two closely related meanings in Yogācāra literature: *dharmakāya* meaning full enlightenment as a whole, and *dharmakāya* meaning the first of three *kāyas*. And these two meanings were mediated by the term: “*svābhāvīkākāya*.”

Some of the points made here are particularly relevant to the AA, and should be summarized: 1. In early Yogācāra *sāstras*, although buddhahood is conceptually understood to possess the undefiled *dharmas*, it is not to be identified with them. It is more properly identified as being the culmination of a process of yogic realization which goes beyond conceptual construction, understood as *āśrayaparāvṛtti*, and referred to as “*dharmakāya*” (also referred to as “*dharmadhātuviśuddhi*,” “*anāśravadhātu*,” etc.). 2. The first of the three *kāyas*, *svābhāvīkākāya*, is identified as being the *dharmakāya*, buddhahood, as it actually exists; as it is known only to a *buddha*. 3. It is therefore typical in Yogācāra literature to use the word “*dharmakāya*” with two closely related meanings: *dharmakāya* meaning buddhahood as a whole, and *dharmakāya* meaning the first of three *buddha kāyas*.

VI. Abhisamayālaṃkāra Chapter 8's Relation to the Large Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra

We must now look at AA chapter 8's relation to the *PP sūtras*. It is the *Large PP sūtra*, especially in its 25,000 *śloka* version, which served as the textual basis for the AA.³⁶ Near the end of one version of this *sūtra*, the version referred to in modern scholarship as the “revised *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*,”³⁷ there is a section which centers on the state of buddhahood, describing it in terms of more than two *buddha kāyas*. Some important late Indian scholars, and all Tibetan scholars I am aware of, quoted this section and understood it to be the primary textual basis for the AA's teaching on the *buddha kāyas* (AA 8 verses 1–33).³⁸ Its passages are numbered “VIII.1,” “VIII.2,” and “VIII.3” in Conze's editions of the *sūtra*. In his translation they read as follows³⁹:

VIII.1 *svābhāvikaḥ kāyaḥ*

Again, Subhuti, of those all-*dharma*s, which are like a dream, which are nonentities, which have nonexistence for own-being, which are empty of own-marks, which are perfectly pure through the knowledge of all modes, which are undefiled, the essential original nature, which has one mark only, i.e. no mark, should be known as the Tathāgata, the Arhat, the fully Enlightened One. It is thus that the *bodhisattva*, the great being, should train in perfect wisdom.

[*jñānātmako dharmakāyaḥ*]

Subhuti: What again, O Lord, are those undefiled all-*dharma*s?

The Lord: The 37 wings of enlightenment, the holy unlimited, the eight emancipations, . . . the four perfect purities, the ten perfections, the ten powers, the four grounds of self-confidence, the three ways in which (the Tathāgata) has nothing to hide, the threefold mindful equanimity, the nature which is never bewildered, the knowledge of all modes, the knowledge of the paths, all-knowledge—these, Subhuti, are the undefiled all-*dharma*s. It is thus, Subhuti, that the *bodhisattva*, the great being, should train in the perfection of wisdom.

VIII.2 *sāmbhogikaḥ kāyaḥ*

Moreover, Subhuti, when he has trained in perfect wisdom, when by the full attainment of just these *dharma*s he has known full enlightenment, his body always and everywhere adorned with the 32 marks of the superman and his 80 accessory characteristics, the Tathāgata, the Arhat, the fully Enlightened One, demonstrates to the *bodhisattvas*, the great beings, the supreme *dharma* of the Mahāyāna which brings them unsurpassed delight and joy, happiness and ease. It is thus that the *bodhisattva*, the great being, should train in perfect wisdom.

VIII.3 *nairmāṇikaḥ kāyaḥ*

Moreover, having trained in perfect wisdom, having, through the full attainment of just these *dharma*s, known full enlightenment, the Tathāgata, Arhat, the fully enlightened Buddha, in the ten directions, in endless and boundless world systems, during the whole of time, works the weal of all beings by means of a multiform cloud of transformation bodies. It is thus that the *bodhisattva*, the great being, should train in perfect wisdom.

Late Indian scholars (at least from the time of Ratnākara-

śānti) and Tibetan scholars up to the present day have assumed that AA 8 was commenting directly on these *sūtra* passages. For that reason they all understood it to be a straightforward exposition of the multiple *kāyas* (either three or four) as they were taught directly in the *PP sūtras*.⁴⁰

The bad news, for those who have relied on Tibetan commentaries for their understanding of the AA, is that this section of the *sūtra* did not exist at the time the AA was written.⁴¹ There is very strong evidence that passages VIII.1–VIII.3 were an interpolation, added to the *PP sūtra* long after the AA's composition. This means that AA 8 was commenting not on this section but on a different section of the *sūtra*, a section which, when properly identified, can give us a better picture of the AA's meaning.

What is the evidence of a late interpolation? Firstly, there were three Chinese translations of the entire *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā PP sūtra*: Mokṣala's (291 C.E.), Kumārajīva's (403 C.E.), and Hsüan tsang's (659–663 C.E.). Passages VIII.1–VIII.3 are not found in any of them.⁴² To my knowledge they are not found in any Chinese translation of any *Large PP sūtra*. This means that they were probably a late addition to the 25,000 *PP sūtra*, an addition not known to Chinese translators up to the seventh century. Secondly, passages VIII.1–VIII.3 are not found in any editions of the unrevised *Large PP sūtra* extant in Sanskrit or Tibetan, including the 100,000, 25,000 and 18,000 *śloka* versions. They are only found in one special version of the 25,000 *PP*, the revised edition, found in the Tibetan canon but never translated into Chinese.⁴³ Thirdly, and most importantly, Ārya Vimuktisena (early 6th century), who wrote the first AA commentary extant, tells us that the *PP sūtra* of his time did not contain the passages in question.

Within the eight chapters of the AA, there are seventy topics. The last four topics are the subject of chapter 8. According to Ārya Vimuktisena, they are: *svābhāvīkākāya*, *sāmbhogīkākāya*, *nairmāṇīkākāya*, and *nairmāṇīkākāyasya karma* (the *nairmāṇīkākāya*'s activity in the world).⁴⁴ The primary purpose of Ārya Vimuktisena's commentary is to align each topic of the AA to its corresponding passage in the 25,000 *PP sūtra*. He does this by identifying the AA topic and then quoting or paraphrasing its corresponding *sūtra* passage. We know when he is quoting

or paraphrasing the *sūtra*, rather than giving his own explanation, by his use of one or more of the standard expressions employed in Sanskrit to signal quotations: “*yad aha . . . iti*” (“as [the *sūtra*] said”), “*yathā*” (“as [said in *sūtra*]”), “*sūtre*” (“[as] in the *sūtra*”), or “*iti*” (indicating a direct quote).⁴⁵ For all 66 topics of the *AA*’s first seven chapters, he invariably follows this procedure and methodically marks his references to the *sūtra*. It is significant, then, that he suddenly stops quoting the *sūtra* when introducing the first two topics of chapter 8, *svābhāvīkākāya* and *sāmbhogīkākāya*. There is no mark of reference to the *sūtra* by quote or paraphrase. He just presents his own explanations. Then, upon introducing the third topic and fourth topics, *nairmāṇīkākāya* and *karma* (activity), he resumes quoting the *PP sūtra*. However, his quotes are drawn not from passages VIII.1–VIII.3 presented above, but from the passages in the *sūtra* which immediately follow them (VIII.4–VIII.5 in Conze’s numbering system).

What does this mean? At the point where Ārya Vimuktisena completes his explanations of the *svābhāvīkākāya* and *sāmbhogīkākāya*, he tells us. He says: “As for the teaching of these two [*kāyas*], they are taught in the section of the [*PP*] *sūtra* which teaches the *nairmāṇīkākāya*’s activity, [in the section on] the means of collecting disciples which is the giving of supramundane *dharma*. Therefore, they were not taught earlier.”⁴⁶ He is saying that the *PP sūtra* does not contain any distinct sections on *svābhāvīkākāya* and *sāmbhogīkākāya*. He finds their textual basis in the same place where he finds a textual basis for the *nairmāṇīkākāya*’s activity. And that is in a later portion of the *sūtra* (VIII.5), quite different from the passages we quoted above (VIII.1–VIII.3) of which he was completely unaware.⁴⁷ This means that passages VIII.1–VIII.3 were added to the *PP sūtra* some time after Ārya Vimuktisena, which was obviously a significant time after the *AA* was composed.

Where did these interpolated *sūtra* passages come from? If Ārya Vimuktisena’s own introductory remarks on each of the three *kāyas* are compared to *PP* passages VIII.1–VIII.3, it is quite clear that these passages were composed and inserted into the *sūtra* using Ārya Vimuktisena’s remarks as their basis. For the reasons given above, we know that Ārya Vimuktisena’s introductory comments on *svābhāvīkākāya* and *sāmbhogīkākāya* are his

own, and are not paraphrases of *PP* VIII.1–VIII.3. We know, in fact, that he had never heard of those passages. He also makes autonomous comments about *nairmāṇīkākāya*, prior to quoting its textual basis in *PP* VIII.4. Ārya Vimuktisena's own introductory remarks on *svābhāvīkākāya*, *sāmbhogīkākāya*, and *nairmāṇīkākāya* are very similar in wording to *PP* VIII.1, VIII.2, and VIII.3 respectively. Late Indian and Tibetan scholars, seeing the closeness between Ārya Vimuktisena's remarks and *PP* VIII.1–VIII.3, naturally assumed that he was paraphrasing the *sūtra*. But in fact the reverse was true. *PP* VIII.1–VIII.3 were inserted into the *sūtra* as a paraphrase of Ārya Vimuktisena!⁴⁸

A careful reading of Ārya Vimuktisena's commentary, then, tells us three things: 1. Contrary to what late Indian and Tibetan traditions believed, *AA* 8 was not based on *PP* passages VIII.1–VIII.3. 2. These *PP* passages were a late interpolation. They were written taking Ārya Vimuktisena's *AA* 8 commentary as their basis. 3. *AA* 8 was probably based on the section of the 25,000 *PP sūtra* identified by Ārya Vimuktisena, consisting of passages VIII.4 and VIII.5 (which immediately follow the interpolated passages VIII.1–VIII.3 in the revised *PP*).⁴⁹

What do *PP* passages VIII.4 and VIII.5 teach, upon which *AA* 8 was actually based? Surprisingly, they do not center on buddhahood, not even mentioning the *buddha kāyas* or a *buddha*'s activity. Instead, their teaching concerns the four ways in which *bodhisattvas* gather disciples (*catvāri saṃgraha vastūni*). The first of these ways is the giving of gifts, which includes the giving of material gifts and the gift of *dharma*. Within the gift of *dharma* are all the practices and realizations of Buddhists and non-Buddhists, all the *dharmas* of the three vehicles, including the achievement of the undefiled *buddha dharmas*, 32 marks and 80 signs, etc.⁵⁰ Thus, the qualities of buddhahood are not even the focus of the passage. They are merely included within a large inventory of realizations imparted by *bodhisattvas*. Numerous activities to help beings are also mentioned in the passage. But they are carried out not by a *buddha*, but by *bodhisattvas*, the *buddha* merely observing them.⁵¹ Consistent with much of the rest of the *PP sūtra*, the passage focuses on the activities of *bodhisattvas*, who work for living beings by engaging in the practice of *prajñāpāramitā* conjoined with skill in means. Its mention of *buddha* qualities is ancillary.

If AA chapter 8 were based on the *PP* passages quoted above, we might follow Tibetan scholars in concluding that AA chapter 8 taught whatever number of *kāyas* those passages taught. But it was not based on them. It was based on passages which presented the same sort of list of *buddha dharmas* which was to be found scattered throughout the *PP sūtras*. In explicating them, AA 8 was just explicating the *PP sūtras*' most common way of referring to buddhahood. But at the same time, without any clear basis in the *PP sūtra*, it used the specific terms "*svābhāvīkākāya*," "*sāmbhogīkākāya*," and "*nairmāṇīkākāya*," which it plainly drew from Yogācāra sources.⁵²

VIII. Conclusion

The author of AA, then, by explicating the *PP*'s lists of *buddha* qualities, was explaining the way the *PP sūtras* generally referred to buddhahood. And, at the same time, he was relating this to the way Yogācāra texts generally talked about buddhahood. What he sought to explain was not just the meaning of a few short *PP* passages, but the relationship between the different ways buddhahood was generally described in two of the main Mahāyāna textual traditions of his time, the *PP sūtras* and the Yogācāra *sāstras*.

Up to his time, nobody had explicitly related the *PP*'s buddhology to the increasingly popular Yogācāra descriptions. Were the *PP* and the Yogācāra talking about the same state of enlightenment, or not? Surely the author of the AA would want to say that they were. But this would mean that what the *PP* referred to in terms of "undefiled *dharmas*," "marks and signs," "*dharmakāya*," etc., must be the same thing that the Yogācāras referred to in terms of "the three *kāyas*". The obvious question would then be: how do the two descriptions correspond? Which items in the *PP* descriptions correspond to each of the three *kāyas* of Yogācāra? This is the question the author of the AA would have wanted to address. And this would mean that the AA was indeed a three-*kāya* text, mapping Yogācāra concepts onto the *PP sūtra*.

Given this background, let us pretend for a moment that we were the AA's first commentator (with no commentaries to

refer to). We analyze its 8th chapter, cognizant of the Yogācāra and *PP* traditions which were prevalent at the time of its composition.⁵³ It is highly likely we would interpret it as follows: The first of the three *kāyas* of Yogācāra is called both “*svābhāvika-kāya*” and “*dharmakāya*”. This is to be equated with the *dharmakāya* of the *PP sūtras*. It is often designated in the *PP* by listing the names of the undefiled *buddha dharmas*, but it is not to be identified with them, since it is beyond such designations. The *sāmbhogikakāya* of Yogācāra corresponds to the *buddha* in the *PP sūtra* who is said to possess the 32 marks and 80 signs. And since the *nairmāṇīkākāya* of Yogācāra must have some correspondence in the *PP*, the limitless forms emanated by *bodhisattvas* in the *PP* (section VIII.5) will have to be understood as emanations of the *buddha* himself, their activity then, being his activity. As for the title of the chapter, it is also called “*dharmakāya*,” where the term carries its second Yogācāran sense, meaning buddhahood as a whole. We should not be surprised, then, that this is precisely the interpretation of AA 8 which was made by its first great commentator, Ārya Vimuktisena.⁵⁴ And it continued to be the standard interpretation for several hundred years after him.⁵⁵

We conclude, then, that AA 8 was not newly presenting a theory of four *kāyas*, as many have claimed, but was instead performing a task which was far more pressing at the time it was written: to show, for the first time, the relation between *PP* descriptions of enlightenment and Yogācāra descriptions. According to this theory, the AA is teaching three *kāyas*. But it does so idiosyncratically, because rather than explaining them within a strict Yogācāra context (as in *MSA*, *Msg*, etc.), it tries to show how they are tacitly expressed in *PP* passages which make no explicit mention of them. Here, I have formulated this theory based upon AA chapter 8, its textual antecedents, its first commentators, and historical considerations. There is much more evidence to support it in the Sanskrit of the AA and in other texts of its period, but that will be the subject of another paper.⁵⁶

NOTES

1. Haribhadra (c. 770–810 C.E.), to my knowledge, was the first to ascribe the AA to Maitreya. He did so in his *Āloka* and *Sphuṭārtha* (Amano, p. 2).

He claimed that Asaṅga and Vasubandhu wrote commentaries on the AA, although these have never been found. If true, the AA was composed by the 4th century C.E. The first commentary extant in any language is Ārya Vimuktisena's (c. early 6th century). If this was the first commentary, it would put the AA's terminus ad quem in the 5th century.

2. The last verse of the AA names its final topic: "*dharmakāyaphalam*," "the resultant *dharmakāya*," meaning the state of buddhahood. In Ārya Vimuktisena's AA *Vṛtti* (Peking 5185, fol. 100–3–7) the AA's final chapter is called: "*chos kyi sku'i skabs bsab pa'i 'bras bu'i leu*," "The *Dharmakāya* Section, the Chapter on the Result of the Trainings" ("*bras bu*" = "*phalam*"). In Hari-bhadra's *Sphuṭārtha* (Amano, p. 262) the AA's final chapter is called "*Dharma-kāyabhīṣambodha*," "Complete Enlightenment: the *Dharmakāya*."

In Indian commentaries on the AA (those by Ārya Vimuktisena, Bhadanta Vimuktisena, Dharmamitra, Ratnākaraśānti, Abhayākara-gupta), the word "*kāya*" in "*dharmakāya*" is etymologized in one or more of three ways: *kāya* = *āśraya*: support, basis ("*dharmakāya*" = the support of all excellent qualities, *dharma*s); *kāya* = *śarīra*: body ("*dharmakāya*" = body of *dharma*tā); or *kāya* = *saṃcaya*: collection or accumulation ("*dharmakāya*" = collection of excellent qualities, *dharma*s). The term "*kāya*" in "*rūpakāya*," in both pre-Mahāyāna and Mahāyāna texts, has generally meant "*śarīra*," "body."

3. e.g. Conze, *PP Lit.*, p. 103; Dutt, *Mahāyāna Buddhism*, p. 155; Poussin, *Siddhi*, pp. 790–791; Obermiller, *Analysis of the Abhisamayālamkāra*, pp. 11–12.

4. As far as we know, Hari-bhadra was the first to claim that the AA taught four *kāya*s.

5. The statements of this paragraph were made for the purpose of providing the broader context into which the subject matter of this paper fits. I am aware that these statements require a great deal of supporting evidence. The purpose of this paper is to begin providing that evidence, starting first with an analysis of the AA's textual antecedents. Evidence for my description of each of the controversy's other historical stages will be taken up in future papers.

6. One point should be made at the outset. Although the participants in the debate always read their views into the AA, if our analysis finally decides that the AA taught one *kāya* theory rather than the other, it does not comprise a refutation of the other theory. It only establishes which theory the AA taught. Even apart from the AA, both the three-*kāya* and four-*kāya* theories of enlightenment in non-tantric Mahāyāna Buddhism are quite supportable within the tradition, based on other scriptures and on reason.

7. *Abhisamayālamkāravṛtti*, Pk 5185, Vol. 88, fols. 92-4-6–92-5-7. Sanskrit for the first chapter of this text has been edited by C. Pensa. Up to the present time, the rest of the text is available only in the Tibetan canon.

8. *Sphuṭārtha*, Amano, pp. 268–270. *Āloka*, Wogihara, pp. 914–916.

9. *Kośabhāṣya*, 4.32.

10. *Mahāvibhāṣa*, 34.7. Poussin, *L'Abhidharmakośa*, ch. 6, p. 76.

11. *Kośabhāṣya* 4.32, 7.28.

12. *Ibid.* 7.28.

13. *Ibid.* 7.28: *araṇāsamādhi*, *pranīdhijñāna*, the four *pratisamvid*, the six

abhijñās, the four *dhyānas*, the four *ārūpyasamāpattis*, the four *āpramānas*, the eight *vimokṣas*, eight *abhibhūvāyatanas*, and the ten *kṛtsnāyatanas*. The 37 *bodhipakṣas* are described in detail in chapter 6.

14. *Ibid.* 7.34.

15. For the list of *sarvadharmāḥ*, see Conze, *Mahāprajñāpāramitā Sūtra*, fols. P 165–169, section 1.5; Conze, *Large Sūtra*, pp. 120–123.

16. e.g. *Aṣṭādaśa*: Conze, *The Gilgit Manuscript of the Aṣṭādaśasahasrikā-prajñāpāramitā*, fol. 276b, p. 35. *Pañcaviṃ*: Conze, *Mahāprajñāpāramitā*, fol. P. 524:

"*tad bodhisattvo mahāsattvaḥ prajñāpāramitāyāṃ caran dvayo śūnyatayo sthītū atyantaśūnyatāyāṃ anavarāgraśūnyatāyāṃ ca sattvānāṃ dharmam deśayati/ śūnyaṃ traidhātukam eta[n] nāsty atra rūpaṃ vā vedanā vā samjñā vā samskārā vā vijñānaṃ vā skandhā vā dhātavo vā āyatanāni vā api tu khalu sarva ete dharmā avastukā abhāvasvabhāvās . . .*" "Thus the Bodhisattva, Mahāsattva, engaging in the perfection of insight, having stood in the two emptinesses: the boundless emptiness and the emptiness without beginning or end, teaches the *dharma* for living beings. [He tells them:] 'Everything in the three realms is empty. Here there is no form, feeling, perception, mental formations, or consciousness. There are no *skandhas*, no elements, no sense fields . . . Rather, all these *dharma*s are unreal. Their self-existence is non-existent . . .'" Note here and in the notes which follow that where I do not name the translator into English, the translation is mine.

17. By the word "essence" here, I mean the most important quality or qualities of a thing, those qualities without which it would cease to be that thing. The discussion here concerns the *PP*, which denies the self-existence of all phenomena. Therefore, when I say "essence" I do not mean any kind of self-existent or independent nature. I mean that which makes a *buddha* a *buddha*.

18. e.g. *Pañcaviṃśati*: Conze, *Mahāprajñāpāramitā*, fol. P 78:

"*yena prajñācakṣuṣā samanvāgato bodhisattvo mahāsattvo na kaṃcid dharmam prajānāti saṃskṛitam vā asaṃskṛitam vā kuśalam vā akuśalam vā sāvadāyam vā anavadāyam vā sāsravam vā anāsravam vā samkleśam vā niḥkleśam vā laukikam vā lokottaram vā samkliṣṭam vā vyavadānam vā. yena prajñācakṣuṣā bodhisattvena mahāsattvena kaścid dharmo na dṛiṣṭo na śruto na mato na vijñātaḥ. idam bodhisattvasya mahāsattvasya pariśuddham prajñā cakṣuḥ.*" Translated in Conze, *Large Sūtra*, p. 77: "A *bodhisattva* who is endowed with that wisdom eye does not know any *dharma*—be it conditioned or unconditioned, wholesome or unwholesome, faulty or faultless, with or without outflows, defiled or undefiled, worldly or supramundane. With that wisdom eye he does not see any *dharma*, or hear, know, or discern one. This is the perfectly pure wisdom eye of a *bodhisattva*."

19. *Aṣṭasāhasrikā PP* fol. 94:

"*sacet kausika ayaṃ te jambūdvīpaḥ paripūrṇas cūdikā badūhas tathāgataśarīrāṇāṃ diyeta/ iyaṃ ca prajñāpāramitā likhitvopanāmyeta/ tata ekatereṇa bhāgena pravāryamāno 'nāyor dvayor bhāgayoḥ sthāpitayoḥ kalamāṃ tvam kausika bhāgam grhṇīyāḥ// śakra āha/ sacen me bhagavann ayaṃ jambūdvīpaḥ paripūrṇas cūdikā baddhas tathāgataśarīrāṇāṃ diyeta/ iyaṃ ca prajñāpāramitā likhitvopanāmyeta/ tata ekatereṇa bhāgena pravāryamāno 'nāyor dvayor bhāgayoḥ sthāpitayor imāṃ evāhaṃ bhagavan prajñāpāramitāṃ parigrhṇīyāḥ// tat kasya hetoḥ/ yathā 'pi nāma tathāgata*

netrī citrikāreṇa/ etad dhi tathāgatānām bhūtarthikam śarīram// tat kasya hetoḥ/ uktam hy etad bhagavatā dharmakāyā buddhā bhagavanataḥ/ mā khalu punar imam bhikṣavaḥ satkāyaṃ kāyaṃ manyadhvam/ dharmakāyapariniṣpattito māṃ bhikṣavo draṅsyathaiṣa ca tathāgatakāyo bhūtakotiḥ prabhāvito druṣṭavyo yad uta prajñāpāramitā// "Bhagavān: If, Kauśika, on the one hand you were given this world filled up to the top with relics of the *tathāgatas*; and if, on the other hand, you could share in a written copy of this perfection of wisdom; and if now you had to choose between the two, which one would you take? Śakra: I would take just this perfection of wisdom [*prajñāpāramitā*]. Because of my respect for [it as] the guide of the *tathāgatas*. Because in actuality it is the body of the *tathāgatas*. As the Bhagavān has said: 'The *dharmakāyas* are the *buddhas*, the *bhagavans*. But, monks, you should not think that this [physical] body is my true body. Monks, you will see me from the perfection of the *dharmakāya*. And this *tathāgatakāya* should be seen as brought about by the true limit, i.e. by the perfection of wisdom.'"

Aṣṭasāhasrikā PP, fols. 512–514:

"evam ukte dharmodgato bodhisattvo mahāsattvaḥ sadāpraruditam bodhisattvaṃ mahāsattvaṃ etad avocat/ na khalu kulaputra tathāgatāḥ kutaścid āgacchanti vā gacchanti vā/ acalitā hi tathatā yā ca tathatā sa tathāgataḥ/ na hi kula putrānutpāda āgacchati vā gacchati vā yaś cānutpādaḥ sa tathāgataḥ/ na hi kulaputra bhūtakotiḥ āgamaṇam vā gamaṇam vā prajñāyate yā ca bhūtakotiḥ sa tathāgataḥ/ na hi kulaputra śūnyatāyā āgamaṇam vā gamaṇam vā prajñāyate yā ca śūnyatā sa tathāgataḥ/ . . . na hi kulaputrānyatrebhyo dharmebhyas tathāgataḥ yā ca kulaputraisām eva dharmāṇām tathatā yā ca sarvadharmatathatā yā ca tathāgatatahatā ekaivaiṣā tathatā/ nāsti kulaputra tathatāyā dvaidhikārah ekaivaiṣā tathatā kulaputra tathatā na dve na tisro gaṇanāvvyativṛta kulaputra tathatā yad ulāsattvāt/ . . . dharmodgata āha/ evam etat kulaputraivam etat/ evam eva kulaputra ye kecit tathāgatarūpeṇa vā ghoṣeṇa vā 'bhinivīṣṭās te tathāgatasya' āgamaṇam ca gamaṇam ca kalpayanti/ . . . sarve te bāla-jātīyā duṣprajñajātīyā iti vaktavyāḥ/ tadyathā 'pi nāma sa eva puruṣo yo 'nudake udakasamjñam utpādayati/ tat kasya hetoḥ/ na hi tathāgato rūpakāyato druṣṭavyaḥ dharmakāyās tathāgataḥ/ na ca kulaputra dharmatā āgacchati vā gacchati vā/ evam eva kulaputra nāsti tathāgatānām āgamaṇam vā gamaṇam vā/ . . . kulaputra sarvadharmāḥ svaṣṇopamā uktā Bhagavatā/ ye kecit kulaputra svaṣṇopamān sarva dharmāms tathāgatena nirdeśitān yathābhūtam nu prajānanti te tathāgatān nāma-kāyena vā rūpakāyena vā abhinivīṣya tathāgatānām āgamaṇam vā gamaṇam vā kalpayanti/ yathā 'pi nāma dharmatām aprajānanto ye ca tathāgatānām āgamaṇam vā gamaṇam vā kalpayanti sarve te bāla-jātīyāḥ pṛthagjanāḥ . . . / ye khalu punaḥ kulaputra svaṣṇopamān sarvadharmān svaṣṇopamāḥ sarvadharmā itī tathāgatena deśitān yathābhūtam prajānanti na te kasyacid dharmasya' āgamaṇam vā gamaṇam vā kalpayanti . . . te dharmatāyā tathāgataṃ prajānanti/ . . . ye ca tathāgatasyedṛśīm dharmatām prajānanti te āsannā anuttarāyāḥ samyaksambodhes caranti te ca prajñāpāramitāyāṃ caranti// "Dharmodgata: Son of the family, *tathāgatas* certainly do not come from anywhere, nor do they go anywhere. For, indeed, suchness (*tathatā*) is unmoving, and the *Tathāgata* is suchness. Nor, son of the family, does non-arising come or go; the *Tathāgata* is non-arising. Nor is a coming or going of the true limit (*bhūtakotiḥ*) known; the *Tathāgata* is the true limit. Nor is a coming of emptiness (*śūnyatā*) known; the *Tathāgata* is emptiness . . . Nor, son of the family, is the *Tathāgata* other than the *dharmas*, for that which is

the suchness of these *dharmas*, that which is the suchness of all *dharmas*, that which is the suchness of the Tathāgata, is just this one suchness. For suchness has no division. This suchness is just one, son of the family. Suchness is not two, not three. Suchness is beyond enumeration because it is not a being (*asattvāt*).

[Dharmodgata gives a metaphor of a foolish man who mistakes a mirage of water for actual water. He asks Sadāprarudita whether the mirage-water has come from anywhere or goes anywhere. Sadāprarudita replies that, since there is no water in the mirage, there is no coming or going of water, and the man who believes there is water in the mirage is foolish.]

Dharmodgata: In just the same way, son of the family, those who have adhered to the Tathāgata through his form or his voice imagine a coming or going of the Tathāgata. They are to be called foolish and stupid, just like the person who perceives water where there is no water. [This is] because the Tathāgata is not to be seen from his *rūpakāya*. The *dharmakāyas* are the *tathāgatas*, and the real nature of things [*dharmatā*] does not come or go. Likewise, there is no coming or going of the Tathāgata. . . . The Bhagavān has said that all *dharmas* are like a dream. And those who do not know all *dharmas* to be like a dream as explained by the Tathāgata, they adhere to the *tathāgatas* through [their] name body [*nāmakāya*] or form body [*rūpakāya*] and imagine there is a coming or going of the *tathāgatas*. . . . But those who know all *dharmas* to be like a dream as they really are, as explained by the Tathāgata, they do not imagine a coming or going of any *dharma*, . . . they know the Tathāgata by means of the real nature [*dharmatā*]. . . . Those who know such a real nature [*dharmatā*] of the Tathāgata, they practice close to full enlightenment; they practice the perfection of wisdom [*prajñāpāramitā*].” (Portions of this passage are very close to *Vajracchedikā PP*, vs. 26).

Pañcavimsati: Conze, *Mahāprajñāpāramitā*, fol. P 485b:

“*subhutiṃ āha bodhir ityucyate kasyaitad adhivacanam/ bhagavān āha: bodhir iti subhute śūnyatāyā etad adhivacanam tathatāyā etad adhivacanam bhūtakoṣṭher etad adhivacanam dharmadhātor etad adhivacanam . . . / api tu khalu subhute buddhānāṃ eṣā bhagavatāṃ bodhis tasmād bodhir ityucyate/ api tu khalu subhute buddhair eṣā bhagavadbhir abhisambuddhās tasmād bodhir ityucyate!*” “Subhuti: ‘Enlightenment’ is spoken of, Bhagavan. For what is that a designation? The Bhagavān: ‘Enlightenment’ is a designation for emptiness. It is a designation for thusness. It is a designation for the true limit. It is a designation for the *dharma*-realm. . . . Moreover, Subhuti, because the *buddhas*, the *bhagavāns*, have this enlightenment, it is called ‘enlightenment.’ Moreover, Subhuti, because it is realized by the *buddhas*, the *bhagavāns*, it is called ‘enlightenment.’”

Note in these passages how enlightenment (*bodhi*, *dharmakāya*, *tathāgata-kāya*, etc.) is associated both with thusness, *tathatā*, and with the gnosis that realizes it, *prajñāpāramitā*.

The bases for this analysis are the descriptions of *dharmakāya* in versions of the 8000, 18,000 and 25,000 *PP sūtras* available in Sanskrit and Tibetan, and closely related descriptions in the *Vajracchedikā PP* and the *Saptaśatikā PP*. According to Professor Lewis Lancaster’s studies of the development of the 8000 *PP sūtras* in Chinese translations, the accounts of *dharmakāya* I have

given probably belong to the middle and late stages of the 8000 *PP*, whose earliest Chinese translations were made in the early 5th and mid-7th centuries (Rawlinson, pp. 16, 30). The *Vajracchedikā PP* was translated into Chinese at the beginning of the 5th century (Conze, *PP Literature*, p. 60). Obviously, these *PP sūtras* had a significant period of development in India prior to their translation in China. A very similar account of *dharmakāya* vs. *rūpakāya* is found in the *Samadhirajasūtra*, whose terminus ad quem has been put in the 4th century (Regamay, *Three Chapters from Samadhirajasūtra*, pp. 11–12. But see Schopen, “Notes on the Cult of the Book,” pp. 153 ff. and “Sukhāvati,” p. 204 where he notes that available evidence has pushed back speculative estimations of the dates of the 8000 *PP*, *Vajracchedikā PP*, and *Samadhirajasūtra*, dating the latter two to perhaps the 2nd century C.E.). It is widely held among modern scholars, including Lancaster (“The Oldest Mahāyāna Sūtra,” p. 36), that the two-*kāya* theory found in the *PP sūtras* was a forerunner of the Yogācāra three-*kāya* terminology, a terminology which appears in the *AA* (“*svābhāvīkākāya*” “*sāmbhogīkākāya*” “*nairmāṇīkākāya*”). It is likely, therefore, that the *PP* conceptions of *dharmakāya* discussed above developed prior to the period of composition of the *AA* (ca 4th to 5th century), although expressions of them continued to be added to the *PP sūtras* throughout the following centuries.

One point should be made parenthetically. Lancaster identified one mention of the word “*dharmakāya*” in a passage of the 8000 *PP* which seems to carry the meaning “collection of *dharma* texts,” rather than the meanings identified here: thusness and *prajñāpāramitā*. Lancaster believes that this passage is part of the earliest stage of development of the 8000 *PP* text (“The Oldest Mahāyāna Sūtra,” p. 36). What I am focusing on here are the meanings of the word “*dharmakāya*” in the middle and late texts which became especially important to the Yogācāras and, I believe, to the author of the *AA*.

20. *Sūtras* such as the *PP*, *Avataṃsaka*, *Akṣayamati*, *Sukhāvativyūha*, *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa*, etc. In them, exalted *tathāgatas* are described presiding over pure *buddhakṣetras*, e.g., Śākyamuni, Akṣobhya of the *PP sūtras*, Vairocana of the *Avataṃsaka*, Amitābha of the *Sukhāvativyūha*, etc. And descriptions are given of *buddhas* and *bodhisattvas* emanating infinite arrays of forms to teach living beings at the times and places fitted to their needs.

21. N. Dutt, *Mahāyāna Buddhism*, pp. 136–170; *Hobogrin*, article: “Busshin” by P. Demieville; La Vallée Poussin, *La Siddhi*, pp. 762–813, “Notes sur les Corps du Bouddha.”

22. This summarizes part of the description of these two *kāyas* found in Sthiramati’s and Asvabhāva’s commentaries on *MSA* 9.61 and in Vasubandhu’s and Asvabhāva’s commentaries on *Msg* 10.30.

23. *MAVbhāṣya* 4.14. *DhDhV*, sDe dge *phi*, fol. 47b4, 51b6. *RGV*, chapter 2, presents a three-*kāya* theory at some length. Because its focus is so squarely on the theory of *tathāgatagarbha*, it stands apart somewhat from the other texts mentioned here. However, it relates its basic model of enlightenment, *nirmala tathatā*, to the theory of three *kāyas* in much the same way that the *MSA*, *Msg*, and their commentaries relate *dharmadhātuvīśuddhi* and *nirmalatahatā/nirvikalpajñāna* to the *kāyas*. It quotes from *MSA* 9, and in one portion

of its second chapter it is clearly applying the *MSA*'s buddhology to its theory of *tathāgatagarbha*. See *RGV*, Johnson pp. 85–88, Takasaki, p. 41.

24. A bibliography of modern scholars' speculations on the history of early Yogācāra can be found in Nakamura, *Indian Buddhism*, p. 263. Summaries are found in Ruegg, *La Theorie*, pp. 30–55; Davidson, "Buddhist Systems of Transformation," pp. 14–49, 126–149. Davidson reexamines the questions of authorship of all early Yogācāra *śāstras*, and concludes that the authorship of the *MAV*, *DhDhV*, and *AA* is still unknown. I agree.

25. Levi, *MSA* 9.4, p. 34.

26. *Vṛttibhāṣya*, sDe-dge *mi*, fols. 108a2–108b4.

27. Levi, *MSA* 9.79, p. 48.

28. *Vṛttibhāṣya*, sDe-dge *mi*, fols. 144a7–144b1.

29. *Vṛttibhāṣya*, sDe-dge *mi*, fols. 144a2–144b7 (commenting on *MSA* vss. 79–81). On full enlightenment as *vimalatathatā*, see *MSA* 9.56–59 *bhāṣya* and *vṛttibhāṣya*.

30. *Msg* 10.3 characterizes *dharmakāya* as *āśrayaparāvṛtti*, the complete transformation of the basis which is full enlightenment (*apratīṣṭhita nirvāṇa*, *Msg* 9.1). The precedent for this is *Samdhinirmocanasūtra*, 10.1–10.2, where the Bhagavān tells Mañjuśrī that the *dharmakāya* of the *tathāgatas* is to be identified with their *āśrayapariṣṭi* (on the etymologies and general semantic equivalence of *-parāvṛtti* and *-pariṣṭi* in classical Yogācāra texts, see Davidson, pp. 152–3). *MSA* 9.60 *bhāṣya* makes the same characterization. At 9.77 the *bhāṣya* closely relates *dharmakāya* with the *anāsravadhātu*, a *MSA* model of full enlightenment. Sthiramati's *vṛttibhāṣya* on *MSA* 9.60 and 66 identifies *dharmakāya* directly with *dharmadhātuviśuddhi*, another Yogācāra model of full enlightenment.

31. Davidson, pp. 199–259 separates out several different models of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* in Yogācāra. The important point here is that the Yogācāra understood its models of full enlightenment, including the three-*kāya* model, in terms of *āśrayaparāvṛtti*, i.e., as the completion of a process of yogic realization, not just an an object of logical analysis.

32. Levi, *MSA bhāṣya*, p. 45: "trividhaḥ kāyo buddhānām/ svābhāviko dharmakāya āśrayaparāvṛttīlakṣaṇaḥ/ sām̐bhogiko yena paśanmanḍaleṣu dharmasām̐bhogam karoti/ nairmāniko yena nirmānena satvārtham karoti!"

33. *MSA* 9.60–62, *bhāṣya* and *vṛttibhāṣya*; *Msg* 7.11, 10, 1, 10.3 *bhāṣya* and *upanibhandhana*: *RGVV* ch. 2 preamble and vss. 2.38–2.61; *Kāyatrayastotra*; *Kāyatrayasūtra*; *Kāyatrayāvatāraśāstra*; the three *kāya* chapter ("sku gsum rnam par 'byed pa") which appears in later editions of the *Suvarṇaprabhāsaśūtra*.

34. This hearkens back to the *PP sūtras*' opposition of *dharmakāya* to *rupākāya* which we saw earlier (the *dharmakāya* being what the Buddha actually is; the *rupākāya* being what fools think he is). Typical in Yogācāra literature is the description of the *svābhāvīkākāya* as "pratyātmaveda:n," "known only to himself" (to the Buddha), not to others (*Kāyatrayastotra* vs. 1; *Kāyatrayasūtra* Pk 949 Vol. 37, fol. 108-3-2; *RGV* 2.42). *MSA* 9.60 describes the *svābhāvīkākāya* as "subtle" (*sukṣma*), Sthiramati explaining this to mean that it is not a cognitive object for *śrāvakas* or *pratyekabuddhas* (*vṛttibhāṣya* sDe dge *mi*, fols. 166b5–6).

35. *MSA* chapter 9 may well be the first presentation of three *kāyas* in

Yogācāra literature. It labels the first of the three *kāyas*: “*svābhāvīkākāya*” (not “*dharmakāya*”). The next earliest texts to teach three *kāyas* are probably *Msg* chapter 10 (based on *MSA* 9), *AA* chapter 8, *Ratnagotravibhāga* chapter 2 (see Davidson, pp. 132–144 for recent speculations on the chronology of the “*Maitreya*” corpus), and the *Buddhabhūmisūtra* (the four verses near the end of the *sūtra* on *dharmadhātuvīśuddhi*. The relative dating of the *MSA* and *Buddhabhūmisūtra* is presently somewhat controversial, but that does not affect the argument here). Like *MSA* 9, all of these texts call the first *kāya* “*svābhāvīkākāya*.” Of all the early Yogācāra *sāstras* to teach three *kāyas*, only the *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga* refers to the first as “*dharmakāya*.” But this text mentions the three *kāyas* only in passing, and obviously drew the theory from other sources. It is in the commentaries and subcommentaries to these texts, ascribed to Vasubandhu, Asvabhāva, Sthiramati, etc., that the term “*dharmakāya*” begins regularly replacing the term “*svābhāvīkākāya*” in the list of three *kāyas*. And this becomes the norm in later texts such as the *Kāyatrayāvātārasāstra*, *Kāyatrayasūtra*, *Kāyatrayastotra*, and *Madhyamakāvātāra*.

36. By “*Large PP sūtra*” I mean the *sūtra* which Conze identified as existing in three versions: 18,000, 25,000, and 100,000 *ślokas*, all of which are largely the same in content but differ in the extent to which they repeat the same *PP* formulas regarding the emptiness of all *dharmas*. Conze, *PP Literature*, pp. 10–11. There are three reasons for identifying the 25,000 *śloka* version as the basis of the *AA*. First, upon analysis, the 8000-*śloka sūtra* does not provide an adequate textual basis for the last three and a half chapters of the *AA*, while the *Large PP sūtra* does (this will be detailed in my forthcoming dissertation). Thus, only the *Large PP* could have been the textual basis for the *AA* in its entirety. Secondly, as far as we know, the 25,000 *PP* was the first *PP sūtra* identified by classical Indian scholars as the *AA*’s textual basis. And it took more than two hundred years before any other *PP sūtra* was so identified (the 8000 *PP* by Haribhadra). Thirdly, more commentaries associate the *AA* with the 25,000-*śloka* version of the *PP* than any other, including the three earliest *AA* commentaries.

37. Nancy R. Lethcoe, “Some Notes on the Relationship between the *Abhisamayālamkāra*, the revised *Pañcavimsatisahāsrīkā*, and the Chinese translations of the unrevised *Pañcavimsatisahāsrīkā*,” *JAOS*, 96.4 (1976), 499. Conze (*PP Literature*, p. 36) calls the revised version of the 25,000 *śloka PP sūtra* the “recast version of the *Pañcavimsati. PP*” (Pk #5188 in the Tibetan canon). I shall refer to it as the “revised 25,000 *PP*.” It is a redaction of the 25,000 *PP*, composed, I believe, after Ārya Vimuktisena, which shows the correspondence between the passages of the *Large PP sūtra* and the topics of the *AA*. In it, each portion of the *sūtra* is labelled with the name of the *AA* section for which that portion of the *sūtra* was thought to be the textual basis. The reason I think it appeared after Ārya Vimuktisena will become clear in what follows.

38. I am referring here to Ratnākaraśānti’s *Suddhamati*, Pk 5199, 281-5-2 ff. and *Sāratamā*, Pk 5200, 92-4-4 ff., (Jaini’s Sanskrit edition, p. 172); Abhayākaragupta’s *Marmakaumudī*, Pk 5202, 198-5-6 ff. and *Munimatālamkāra*, Pk 5299, 232-1-3 ff.; Bu ston’s *Lung gi snye ma*, vol. 2, p. 204 ff.; gYag ston’s *Rin po che’i phreng ba blo gsal mgul rgyan*, vol. 4, p. 382 ff.; Tsong kha pa’s *Legs*

bshad gser phreng, vol. 2, 465–4 ff.; rGyal tshab's *rNam bshad snying po'i rgyan*, p. 549 ff., Sera rje btsun chos kyi rgyal mtshan's *Chos sku spyi don*, 14b3 to 15b7.

39. This passage is numbered VIII.1, VIII.2, and VIII.3 in Conze, *Large Sūtra*, pp. 653–4 and *Mahā-Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*, fols. P523a8–P523b5. Where Conze translates "*anāsrava*" as "without outflows," I have substituted "undefiled" in order to keep the terminology of this paper consistent.

40. The titles: "*svābhāvikaḥ kāyaḥ*," "*sāmbhogikaḥ kāyaḥ*," and "*nairmāṇikaḥ kāyaḥ*" appear in the revised 25,000 *PP* as the titles of their respective passages (Conze, *Mahā-Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*, fols. P523a8–523b5). Ratnākaraśānti and Abhayākara Gupta quoted these passages as the *PP* textual basis for *AA* 8, and as evidence that the *AA* teaches three *buddha kāyas* (*Sāratamā*, Jaini, ed., p. 172; *Marmakaumudi*, Pk 5202, 198-5-6–199-1-1). The title "*jñānātmako dharmakāyaḥ*" labels the portion of the passage which Tibetan scholars believed Haribhadra took as the textual basis for his description of the second *buddha kāya* (the *kāya* which consists of the collection of *buddha*'s gnoles, "*jñānātmako dharmakāyaḥ*"). Haribhadra in his *Āloka* (Wogihara, pp. 914–916) and *Spuṭārtha* (Amano, pp. 262–271) delineated the *jñānātmako dharmakāyaḥ*, and Tibetan scholars identified Haribhadra's *PP* basis for it as it is labelled in the passage above (Bu ston's *Lung gi snye ma*, Vol. 2, p. 206; rGyal tshab's *rNam bshad snying po'i rgyan*, p. 551; Sera rje tsun pa's *Chos sku phyi don*, fol. 15a5). I have put the title "*jñānātmako dharmakāyaḥ*" in brackets because it does not actually appear in the revised 25,000 *PP*, while the names of the other three *kāyas* do.

41. E. Obermiller's groundbreaking study of the *AA* analyzed the *AA* by referring to Haribhadra's *AA* - *Āloka* and *AA* - *Spuṭārthā* and by relying heavily on several major Tibetan *AA* commentaries (*Analysis of the Abhisamayālamkāra*, 1933, pp. vii–viii). His report that *AA* 8 taught four *buddhakāyas* was based on these sources. But the Tibetan commentators upon whom he relied (Bu ston, Tsong kha pa, rGyal tshab, 'Jam dbyang bshad pa) all identified revised 25,000 *PP* passages VIII.1–VIII.3 (quoted above) as the *sūtra* basis for *AA* 8's *buddhakāya* teaching (see note 38). A number of influential scholars since Obermiller have followed his lead, based on similar sources, reporting simply that *AA* 8 teaches four *kāyas* (see note 3). In order to arrive at a proper interpretation of *AA* 8, it is important first to identify its actual textual basis in the *PP sūtra*, and then to see if this can shed light on its teaching of the *buddhakāyas*. This is what I will attempt to do in what follows. Because no modern scholar has yet done this, there has been a tendency to repeat what scholars such as Obermiller have said without realizing that the Tibetan sources upon which he relied had misidentified the *PP sūtra* basis of *AA* 8, and that this has a bearing on the interpretation of *AA* 8.

42. Lethcoe, *op. cit.*, pp. 499–504.

43. For a description of extant *PP sūtras*, see Conze, *PP Literature*, 31–74. The revised 25,000 *PP* is extant in 18th and 19th century Nepalese Sanskrit manuscripts and in the Tibetan canon (Pk 5188). Although included among *śāstras* in the bsTan 'gyur of the Tibetan canon, I am treating it here not as a *śāstra* but as a *sūtra*. There are several reasons for this. Nancy Lethcoe, using Chinese translations of the 25,000 *PP sūtra*, has charted the development of this *sūtra* over a period of several centuries and has clearly shown that its

revised version, extant only in Sanskrit and Tibetan, lies within that continuum of development. It is a late version of the 25,000 *PP sūtra*, revised by the insertion of *AA* topic names, and less obviously, by occasional transpositions, additions and deletions which bring the *sūtra* more closely into line with the *AA* (Lethcoe, *op. cit.* note 37). It gives the appearance of being just the 25,000 *PP sūtra* itself, distinguished only by its having the names of the *AA* topics inserted into it after the corresponding *sūtra* passages. The passages are the usual dialogues between the Bhagavān, Subhuti, Śariputra, etc., without any intervening exegesis or commentary whatsoever. At some point Indian commentators on the *AA* began quoting this revised version of the 25,000 *PP* when giving the *sūtra* basis for the *AA*. Ratnākaraśānti and Abhayākaragupta quoted revised 25,000 *PP* passages VIII.1–VIII.3 as a *sūtra* basis for *AA* 8 (see note 37). It may be that by the time of Ratnākaraśānti (c. 1000 C.E.), and perhaps somewhat earlier, Indian scholars found the revised 25,000 *PP* the most convenient version of the *sūtra* to use when commenting on the *AA*, since only this version of the *PP* had its passages marked with the *AA* topic names for ready reference. The Tibetan commentators then followed them in this. When Indian and Tibetan scholars quoted the revised 25,000 *PP* (passages VIII.1–VIII.3), they referred to it as “*mahāti bhagavatī*,” or “*sūtre*” (Tib. “*mdo las*”), which means they were treating it as a *sūtra*, not as a *śāstra* (see note 38).

Since later Indian and Tibetan scholars quoted the revised 25,000 *PP* as *sūtra*, why was it put into the *bsTan 'gyur* section of the Tibetan Tripiṭaka (the collection of *śāstras*, commentaries) rather than the *bKa' 'gyur* section (the collection of *sūtras*)? We can only surmise, but it would appear that because the topic names of the *AA* had been inserted into the *sūtra*, it could not be considered simply the Buddha's word. After all, words of *śāstra* (the *AA*), even if only topic titles, are not the word of the Buddha. Furthermore, in the Tibetan translation of the revised 25,000 *PP*, Haribhadra is identified as the compiler. *Sūtras* are not supposed to have a compiler apart from the Buddha and those in dialogue with him. Some such considerations probably required that, for classification purposes, the revised 25,000 *PP* not be put into the *bKa' 'gyur*.

44. *AA - vṛtti*, Pk 5185, Vol. 88, pp. 92–100. At 92-4-6 ff. Ārya Vimuktisena identifies the three *kāyas* as the first three topics of *AA* 8. At 98-4-7 and 98-5-1 to 98-5-3, he explicitly identifies the fourth topic of *AA* as “*sprul pa'i sku'i phrin las*,” “the activity of the *nairmāṇikakāya*.”

45. Only the first chapter of Ārya Vimuktisena's commentary is available to me in Sanskrit (Pensa's critical edition of the *AA - vṛtti*), but it can be used to find the correlative Tibetan terms in the Tibetan translation of the rest of the commentary (Pk 5185): “*zhes gang gsungs pa yin no*,” “*zhes bya ba la sogs pa gang gsungs pa yin no*,” “*ji skad du*,” “*mdo las*,” and “*zhes bya ba*.”

For 51 of the 66 topics comprising the *AA*'s first seven chapters, Ārya Vimuktisena makes clear that he is quoting *sūtra* directly, rather than paraphrasing, because he uses the vocative forms of the names of one or more characters from the *sūtra* (“Bhagavan,” “Subhute,” “Sariputra,” etc.). But even in the other 15 cases, he explicitly indicates he is either quoting or paraphrasing

by always using one or more of the Sanskrit markers mentioned above. It is only when we come to the first two topics of AA 8 that no such Sanskrit markers appear. He suddenly stops quoting or paraphrasing *sūtra* and just presents his own explanations.

46. Pk 5185, p. 98-4-6 to 98-4-7; sDe dge ka, fol. 205b2-3. The Tibetan reads: 'di gnyis kyi bshad pa ni sprul pa'i sku'i phrin las ston pa'i mdo las 'jig rten las 'das pa'i chos kyi sbyin pa'i bsdu ba'i dngos po nyid kyi ston par 'gyur te des na dang po ma gsungs so.

47. Ārya Vimuktisena identifies the *PP* textual basis for all of AA 8 to be the portions of the *Large PP sūtra* which Conze numbers "VIII 4" and "VIII 5" (Conze, *Large Sūtra*, pp. 573-643; *Mahā-Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*, fols. P523b6 to P594a1). These portions are indeed found in all versions of the *Large PP sūtra* extant in Chinese, Sanskrit, and Tibetan.

48. Relevant portions of Ārya Vimuktisena's own introductory remarks on each of the three *kāyas* in his **AA - vṛtti** are as follows:

svābhāvikakāya (commenting on AA 8 vss. 1-6): *chos kyi dbyings dang ldan par gyur ba zag pa med pa'i chos thams cad kyi rnam pa thams cad du rnam par dag pa'i rang bzhin te ngo bo nyid gang yin pa de ni bcos ma ma yin pa'i don gyis na bcom ldan 'das kyi ngo bo nyid kyi sku yin par shes par bya stel' . . . gang dag gis rnam pa thams cad du shin tu rnam par dag pa'i ngo bo nyid chos kyi skur 'gyur ba zag pa med pa'i chos de rnam kyang gang zhig yin zhe na/ byang chub phyogs mthun tshad med dang/ rnam par thar dang mthar gyis ni/ . . . etc. (quoting AA 8 vss. 2-6 listing the buddhadharmas), Pk 5185, fols. 92-4-8 ff.*

sāmbhogikakāya (commenting on AA 8 vs 12): *sku des sangs rgyas bcom ldan 'das byang chub sems dpa' chen po sa chen po la zhugs pa rnam dang thabs cig tu ka na ma tho ba med pa theg pa chen po'i chos kyi longs spyod kyi dga' ba dang bde ba so sor myong bar mdzad pa yin no/, Pk 5185, fols. 96-2-6 ff.*

nairmāṇikakāya (commenting on AA 8 vss. 33-34a): *'bras bu'i gnas skabs rnam pa thams cad legs par yongs su rdzogs pa'i chos kyi sku thob pa ni 'khor ba ji srid par phyogs bcu'i 'jig rten gyi khams rnam su sprul ba rnam kyi lhun gyis grub ching rgyun mi 'chad par sems can gyi don sna tshogs pa 'jug par byed pa'i sgo nas gnas yongs su gyur ba'i phrin las kyi dbang du mdzad do/, Pk 5185, fols. 98-5-1 ff.*

The revised **25,000 PP passages VIII.1-VIII.3** read as follows (I quote the Tibetan for comparison to Ārya Vimuktisena's passages above): VIII.1-**svābhāvikakāya**: *rab 'byor gzhan yang zag pa med pa'i chos rmi lam lta bu dngos po dang mi ldan pa dngos po med pa'i rang bzhin can rang gis mtshan nyid kyi stong pa rnam pa thams cad yongs su dag par 'gyur ba de dag thams cad kyi rang bzhin gang yin pa mtshan nyid gcig po 'di lta stel mtshan nyid med pa de ni de bzhin gshegs pa dgra bcom pa yang dag par rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas yin par rig par bya stel rab 'byor byang chub sems dpa' sems dpa' chen po de ltar shes rab kyi pha rol tu phin pa la bslab par bya'ol /rab 'byor gyis gsol bal bcom ldan 'das zag pa med pa'i chos thams cad kyang gang dag lags/ bcom ldan 'das kyi bka' stsal bal byang chub kyi phogs kyi chos sum cu risa bdun dang/ tshad med pa bzhi dang/ . . . etc. (listing all the buddhadharmas)/ rab 'byor 'di ni zag pa med pa'i chos thams cad ces bya'ol /rab 'byor de ltar byang chub sems dpa' sems dpa' chen po shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa 'di la bslab par bya'o zhes bya ba ni ngo bo nyid kyi sku yin no//, Pk 5188, fols. 3-4-1 ff. This passage of the *sūtra* appears to have been written based on Ārya Vimuktisena's*

remarks on AA 8 vss. 1–6 above, while also making use of the terminology of PP section VIII.4 which immediately follows interpolated passages VIII.1–VIII.3 (PP VIII.4: . . . *chos thams cad rmi lam lta bu dngos po ma mchis pa dngo bo ma mchis pa'i ngo bo nyid rang gi mtshan nyid kyi stong pa rnams la 'di dag ni . . . etc.,* fols. 4–1–1 ff.). Note that Ārya Vimuktisena raises a hypothetical question in his comments on *svābhāvīkākāya*: “*gang dag gis rnam pa thams cad du shin tu rnam par dag pa'i ngo bo nyid chos kyi skur 'gyur ba zag pa med pa'i chos de rnams kyang gang zhig yin zhe nal.*” “What are those undefiled dharmas whose completely purified nature is the *dharma-kāya*?” As the answer to this he quotes AA vs. 2–6. The author of PP VIII.1 puts Ārya Vimuktisena's hypothetical question into the mouth of Subhuti. If Ārya Vimuktisena had been quoting PP VIII.1, rather than the other way around, he would have indicated so with appropriate quotation markers, and by putting the names “Bhagavan” and “Subhuti” in the vocative, as he had done in similar cases throughout his commentary. To my knowledge, Ārya Vimuktisena never raises a question as a hypothetical when it was actually raised by a character in the *sūtra*. In such cases he always quotes the character in the *sūtra* asking the question.

VIII.2—*sāmbhogīkākāya*: *rab 'byor gzhan yang shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa 'di la bslabs shing chos de dag thams cad thob nas bla na med pa yang dag par rdzogs pa'i byang chub tu mngon par rdzogs par sangs rgyas tel thams cad tu thams cad rnam pa thams cad nas thams cad du de bzhin gshegs pa dgra beom pa yang dag par rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas rnams kyi sku skeyes bu chen po'i mtshan sum cu rtsha gnyis kyi brgyan pa/ dpe byad bzang bo rgyad cus brgyan pa/ byang chub sems dpa' sems dpa' chen po rnams la theg pa chen po mchog gi chos kyi longs spyod bla na med pa la dga'ba dang/ bde ba dang/ tshim pa dang/ rab tu dga' ba ston par mdzad par 'gyur ro zhes/ rab 'byor de ltar byang chub sems (dpa' sems dpa' chen po shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa la bslab par bya'o zhes bya ba ni longs spyod rdzogs pa'i sku yin nol/)* Pk 5188, fols. 3–5–2 ff. There is no passage like this anywhere else in the PP *sūtras*. It is clearly modelled on Ārya Vimuktisena's remarks.

PP VIII.3—*nairmāṇīkākāya*: *rab 'byor gzhan yang shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa la sob pa na chos de dag thams cad rtogs par byas nas bla na med pa yang dag par rdzogs pa'i byang chub tu mngon par rdzogs par sangs rgyas nas phyogs heu'i 'jig rten gyi khams dpag tu med mtha' med par dus thams cad du de bzhin gshegs pa dgra beom pa yang dag par rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas kyi sku (sDe dge: “sku'i”) sprul pa sna tshogs kyi sphrin gyi (sDe dge: “gyis”) sems can thams cad gyi don mdzad pa de ltar rab 'byor byang chub sems dpa' sems dpa' chen po shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa la bslab par bya'o zhes bya ba ni sprul pa'i sku yin nol/* Pk 5811, fols. 3–5–6 ff. Again, this is clearly based on Ārya Vimuktisena's remarks. Ārya Vimuktisena quotes the PP textual basis for *nairmāṇīkākāya* after making his own comments on the subject; and that textual basis is PP VIII.4. He had never heard of PP VIII.3.

49. Ārya Vimuktisena's identification of PP VIII.4 and VIII.5 as the textual bases for AA chapter 8 is reasonable. These passages are found in all extant recensions and translations of the *Large PP Sūtra* in Sanskrit, Chinese and Tibetan. They are found in the Gilgit manuscript of the 18,000 PP which is dated to 5th or 6th century C.E., and in Mokṣala's Chinese translation of the 25,000 PP, dated 291 C.E. So there is no reason to doubt that they were

part of the *Large PP Sūtra* at the time that the *AA* was composed, c. 4th–5th century C.E. Within the *Large PP*, passages VIII.4–VIII.5 comprise the last part of the *sūtra*, and immediately follow the passages identified by Ārya Vimuktisena and later commentators as the textual bases for *AA* chapter 7. The likelihood is that the author of the *AA* did indeed base his chapter 8 on them.

50. Conze, *Large Sūtra*, Motilal edition, pp. 576–643, especially pp. 578–587. Conze, *Mahā-prajñāpāramitā sūtra*, VIII 4–VIII 5. Pk 731, pp. 137–2–4 to 187–3–3, especially pp. 139–1–1 to 145–5–5.

51. Conze, *Large Sūtra*, Motilal edition, p. 578.

52. Dutt, Conze and Lethcoe have all noted that the revised 25,000 *PP sūtra* is a recast version of the 25,000 *PP sūtra*, the section headings of the *AA* having been inserted into the corresponding sections of the *sūtra*. In addition, Conze and Lethcoe noted that the *sūtra* in its revised edition was altered in certain places (by additions and transpositions) to bring it more closely into line with the *AA* (Nalinaksha Dutt, ed., *The Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā, Edited with Critical Notes and Introduction*, [London: Luzac & Co., 1934] pp. v–xiii. Conze, *The Prajñāpāramitā Literature*, pp. 37–39. Lethcoe, “Some Notes,” pp. 500 ff.). With specific reference to revised 25,000 *PP* passages VIII.1–VIII.3, Conze, noting that these passages are missing in the Gilgit Manuscript of the 18,000 *PP*, believed they were later additions to the *PP sūtra* (Conze, *The Gilgit Manuscript of the Aṣṭādaśasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra*, p. xvii). Elsewhere, however, based on the report of Taranatha, Conze surmised that the revised 25,000 *PP* belonged to the 5th century, and that Ārya Vimuktisena consulted the revised *PP* before writing his own commentary on the *AA* (*PP Literature*, p. 37). Lethcoe found that revised *PP* passages VIII.1–VIII.3 were missing in all Chinese translations of the 25,000 *PP* (Lethcoe, p. 504). No scholar, up to the present time, has noticed the evidence of Ārya Vimuktisena’s commentary, which proves that *PP* passages VIII.1–VIII.3 were added after Ārya Vimuktisena (and were composed taking his remarks as basis). Nor has anyone noticed the implications of this for the interpretation of *AA* 8.

The revised 25,000 *PP* Sanskrit manuscripts do not identify its compiler. The Tohoku index of the *bsTan ’gyur* identifies Haribhadra as the compiler, and in the final lines of the Tibetan translation, the compiler does clearly identify himself as “Seng ge bzang po,” Tibetan for “Haribhadra” (Pk 5188, fols. 61–3–1 to 61–3–2). Conze’s surmise that the revised 25,000 *PP* predated Ārya Vimuktisena (early 6th century) cast its attribution to Haribhadra (late 8th century) into doubt. The proof presented here that passages VIII.–VIII.3 post-date Ārya Vimuktisena may indicate that the entire text post-dates him, thereby lending some further support for its attribution to Haribhadra.

Dutt, noting that the indexes to the Tibetan *bsTan ’gyur* give Haribhadra as the compiler, tentatively identified him as the author (referring to him as “Siṃhabhadra,” a mistaken restoration of the Tibetan “Séng ge bzang po”). However, he was very tentative about it, because, he claimed, Haribhadra nowhere identified himself in the revised *PP* as its compiler (Dutt, ed. *The Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, p. viii). However, as noted above, Haribhadra does identify himself as the compiler at the very end of the text

as it has come down to us in its Tibetan translation.

53. At this point I would refer the reader back to the second section of this paper where AA 8 vss. 1–6 were quoted and translated.

54. Pk 5185, fols. 92–4–6–100–3–7. Ārya Vimuktisena is dated to the early 6th century C.E. (Ruegg, *Literature of Madhyamaka*, p. 87).

55. As far as we know, Haribhadra (late 8th century C.E.) was the first to revise this interpretation by newly proposing that the AA taught not three but four *kāyas*.

56. In a future paper, I will examine AA chapter 8's place within the structure of the AA as a whole. Special attention will be paid to the AA's table of contents and concluding verses. Certain idiomatic Sanskrit word constructions will be analyzed and compared to similar constructions found in other (Yogācāra) texts. This sort of philological and comparative textual analysis will support the theory formulated in this paper, by providing further evidence that the AA teaches three (and not four) *buddhakāyas*.

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Abbreviations: PK = Peking edition of the Tibetan Tripitaka. Tibetan Tripitaka Research Institute, Tokyokyo, 1956

AA = *Abhisamayālaṅkāra*

DhDhV = *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga*

MAV = *Madhyāntavibhāga*

MSA = *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra*

Msg = *Mahāyānasamgraha*

PP = *Prajñāpāramitā*

RGV = *Ratnagotravibhāga*

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