

# Notes on a Problem and on Two Attempts to Solve it

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## I. Description of the Problem

Khenpo Tsültrim Gyamtso, Rinpoche, in his *Progressive Stages of Meditation on Emptiness* says:

At (the Śrāvaka stage) one does not consider the emptiness of all phenomena but only the emptiness or lack of self in the person. The importance of this is that it is the clinging to the idea that one has a single, permanent, independent, truly existing self that is the root cause of all one's suffering. ...

Westerners often confuse self in this context with person, ego or personality. They argue that they do not think of the person, ego or personality as a lasting, single, independent entity. This is to miss the point. The person, personality or ego as such are not a problem. One can analyze them quite rationally into their constituent parts. The Western tradition has all sorts of ways of doing this. The Buddhist way is to talk of the five *skandhas*, the eighteen *dhātus* or the twelve gates of consciousness. The question is not whether or not the person, personality or ego is a changing, composite train of events conditioned by many complex factors. Any rational analysis shows that this is the case. The question is why then do we behave emotionally as if it were lasting, single and independent. Thus when looking for the self it is very important to remember it is an emotional response that one is examining.<sup>2</sup>

The Abhidharma tradition puts great significance on the philosophical analysis of reality into its *dharmas* in order to overcome 'self.' A *dharma* in the sense of 'existence as a real entity' (*dravyasat*) is defined as 'that entity of which the cognition (*buddhi*) is produced without dependence (on other entities),' i.e., this entity cannot be analyzed further into constituent elements, as in the case of visible form or sensations. It is that which exists by virtue of its own intrinsic nature (*svabhāva*) and is synonymous with absolute existence (*paramārthasat*).<sup>3</sup>

For an understanding of the Abhidharma philosophy it is vitally important that one distinguishes 'existence as a real entity' from 'existence as a provisional entity' (*prajñaptisat*). The latter is defined as 'that entity of which the cognition (*buddhi*) is produced in dependence (on other entities),' i.e., this entity can be analyzed further into constituent elements, as in the case of a pot or an army. It lacks any intrinsic nature (*svabhāva*) and is synonymous with conventional existence (*saṃvṛitisat*).<sup>4</sup>

Edward Conze writes:

As the supreme antidote to the belief in a 'self,' the *dharma*-theory must try to account for the course of events without any reference to a 'self,' and must explain what actually happens on the assumption that the 'self' is not an active or actual factor. Of the five functions of the alleged 'self,' two are rejected as fictitious, and the other three accounted for by other factors.

1. The 'self' is that which *appropriates* and *owns*. This function is simply denied. 'Owning' and 'belonging' are dismissed as categories invented by people swayed by craving and ignorance, who superimpose their own imaginations on the real facts as they exist. The dharmic world knows no difference between a 'thing' on the one side and its 'attributes' on the other. Each *dharma* has only one attribute, and is identical with it.
2. The 'self' is that permanent factor within the concrete personality which somehow *unites* (and maintains) its successive activities. This function is also denied. ...
3. The 'self' is that which *acts* and *initiates*. In fact, there is action (*karma*), but no agent (*kāraka*). Our responsible actions are not the work of a 'self,' but of the constituents of the fourth *skandha*. For (i) there is nowhere a permanent factor, (ii) actual experience never reveals this kind of a 'self' as a separate entity, and (iii) in the absence of identifiable properties this 'self' is a mere word.
4. The 'self' is the *subject* which 'knows or sees.' In fact there is knowing but no knower; there is consciousness, but no one who is conscious. ...
5. The 'self' is that which *distinguishes* one person from another. So many things seem private and personal to me, especially my memories and my *karma*, that this side of the idea of a 'self' had to be acknowledged to some extent (a) by ascribing some validity to the distinction between 'inside' and 'outside' (*ādhyātmika*, *ajjhatt(itk)a* in Pali; *bāhya*), and (b) by recognizing the existence of separate lines of continuity (*santāna*).<sup>5</sup>

But not only does the Abhidharma tradition analyze reality into its *dharmas* in order to overcome a single, permanent, independent, truly existing self, i.e., 'I' and 'mine,' but also the conditioned *dharmas* have a radically momentary existence.<sup>6</sup> An instant or moment (*kṣaṇa*) is the smallest unit of time.

Thus the analysis of the Abhidharma leads to a problem which needs to be solved. The problem is that if the world exists only as a multitude of discrete *dharma*s which exist in the present for one fleeting shortest moment of time only and then vanish out of the present existence, then this view seems to abolish any sense of continuity and thus seems to endanger the practice of the spiritual paths and the doctrine of *karma* and seems as well to be completely counterintuitive to common experience.

How can *dharma*s cause an effect after they have vanished out of the present existence? How can a tiny momentary *dharma* account for the complexities, connections and apparent continuities of our world? How do we explain our sense of individuality and distinctiveness from other persons and our sense of responsibility for our own actions?

## II. Different Attempts to Solve the Problem

In early Buddhism these questions were addressed through the doctrine of dependent origination (*pratityasamutpāda*).<sup>7</sup> As Collett Cox puts it:

All aspects or factors constituting one's experience are understood to be connected through a relation of mutually dependent production: the continuity of the conditioning effect of these factors – that is, the necessary connection between certain factors as causes and their subsequent effects – provides both the basis for 'individual' continuity and the possibility of dynamic change.<sup>8</sup>

While accepting the doctrine of dependent origination as a general way of addressing the problem, the Vaibhāṣikas and Sautrāntikas, based on their distinct ontological systems, further developed their own opposing individual ways of responding to the issues at hand. I will now try to briefly summarize these two different attempts, starting with the Sarvāstivāda-Vaibhāṣika system.

## III. The Ontological Situation of the Sarvāstivāda-Vaibhāṣikas and their Attempt to Solve the Problem

Like all Buddhists, the Sarvāstivāda-Vaibhāṣikas adhere to the doctrine of the absence of a unifying substratum or self and the doctrine of momentariness. Yet according to their general ontological system, each *dharma* as a real entity (*dravya*) is determined or distinguished by an intrinsic nature (*svabhāva*) which does not indicate the *dharma*'s temporal status but rather its atemporal existential status, its atemporal underlying and defining nature, which exists at all times, past, present and future. Yet although a *dharma* remains unchanged in intrinsic nature (*svabhāva*) at all times, it changes in mode of existence (*bhāva*), indicating the temporal status due to the arising and passing away of its activity. As Saṃghabhadra states:

The objection that the *dharma* would be eternal (*nityastha*) is well refuted, for, although the intrinsic nature of the conditioned *dharma* exists always (*sadā asti*), there is a differentiation of the states (*avasthā*), there is transformation (*pariṇāma*). The differentiation of the states is produced from the conditions. There is no duration (*sthiti*) beyond a moment: consequently the intrinsic nature of the *dharma* is also impermanent, for this intrinsic nature is not distinct (*vyatirikta*) from the differentiation [or specification (*viśeṣa*)].<sup>9</sup>

Within the framework of this general ontological system, the Sarvāstivāda-Vaibhāṣikas answer 'our problem' in several different moves: by analyzing in detail the *pratityasamutpāda* by means

of the six causes, four conditions and five effects;<sup>10</sup> by the general causal efficacy of all past *dharmas*, by unmanifest form (*avijñaptirūpa*), by the formations dissociated from the mind (*viprayuktasaṃskāra*): homogeneous character (*sabhāgatā*), possession (*prāpti*) and non-possession (*aprāpti*). In the following, I will focus only on how the Sarvāstivāda-Vaibhāṣikas address 'our problem' through the use of 'possession' (*prāpti*) and I will briefly explain this in contrast to the Sautrāntikas' attempt to address the problem via their theory of seeds.

## IV. The Use of Possession within the Sarvāstivāda-Vaibhāṣika System

Though the Buddhist tradition rejected as fictitious the notion of 'mine' as related to a permanent truly existing self, the Sarvāstivāda-Vaibhāṣikas admitted 'possession' as one of the 'formations dissociated from the mind' (*viprayuktasaṃskāra*) which they consider to be real entities (*dravya*) and impermanent by nature. Possession (*prāpti*) does not function as the cause of the arising (*utpattihetu*) or the activity of *dharmas* which can be explained on the basis of causes and conditions, but it fulfills the need to account for the connection of a particular *dharma* to a given life-stream, in particular for the connection to 'cessation due to discrimination' (*pratisaṃkhyānirodha*) and 'cessation not due to discrimination' (*apratisaṃkhyānirodha*), real entities (*dravya*) in their system which, as unconditioned *dharmas*, do not arise due to causes and conditions.

Besides the two cessations, possession applies only to *dharmas* that fall within one's own life-stream, i.e., one's own five *skandhas*, but not to *dharmas* that fall within the life-stream of another person or to *dharmas* 'not constituting sentient beings' (*asattvākhya*).<sup>11</sup> As such, internally it is the cause of the distinction between states (*vyavasthāhetu*) of sentient beings, and externally it delimits each sentient being from another sentient being and from insentient matter. For Saṃghabhadra, possession has an activity as the cause of the non-disappearance of *dharmas* that have been acquired and it is the marker of the cognition (*jñānacihna*) that 'this' belongs to 'that'.<sup>12</sup>

Further, the Sarvāstivāda-Vaibhāṣikas felt the need for the distinctive *dharma* 'possession' in order to explain the abandonment of afflictions.

Affliction which arises simultaneously with its possession, like all *dharmas* in the Sarvāstivāda-Vaibhāṣika ontological system, exists in the past, present and future time periods, yet manifests its activity (*kāritra*) only in the present due to certain causes and conditions. Once the present activity of that affliction and its possession become past, they stay connected to that life-stream because subsequent present possessions arise successively dependent upon that original possession. Therefore, whether this affliction is presently active or not, the uniform outflow of successive possessions connects the life-stream to that past affliction.<sup>13</sup> It should be noted here, as AKB ii. 40 points out, that within this scheme 'the *prāptis* that arise from moment to moment are infinite in number. ... Fortunately, they possess a great quality: (i) they are non-material, (ii) they give way one to the other. If they were material, the *prāptis* of a single being could not find a place in the universe.'

As the afflictions exist in the three time periods, they cannot be destroyed; however, one can interrupt or terminate the connection of the possession to the life-stream through counteragents (*pratipakṣa*) and the possession of counteragents which obstruct the activity of the possession of the affliction. Yet, within the Sarvāstivāda-Vaibhāṣika system, the counteragent cannot directly

obstruct the affliction as the affliction and the counteragent are both 'dharmas associated with mind' and, being of opposite ethical quality, cannot arise simultaneously within one moment of mind. Yet the connection of the possession to the life-stream can be interrupted or destroyed indirectly through the possession of the counteragent which, both being *dharmas* dissociated from mind, can exist simultaneously even though they are of opposite ethical quality. Hence the need for the existence of the real entity (*dravya*) 'possession.'

But the Sarvāstivāda-Vaibhāṣikas also felt the need to assume the existence of possession as a distinct dissociated *dharma*, in order to explain certain difficulties in connection with the ordinary operation of mind. The difficulties were the following: According to the Sarvāstivāda-Vaibhāṣikas, mind and its mental events can be either good, bad or indeterminate, and all simultaneously arisen mind and mental events must be of the same ethical quality. Now, if each moment of mind as 'homogeneous cause' (*sabhāgahetu*) and 'condition as the equivalent and immediate antecedent' (*samanantarapratyaya*) produces a subsequent moment of mind of a similar quality only, then how is it possible, for example, that a good moment of mind and its mental events can be followed by a bad moment of mind and its mental events?

Now according to the Sarvāstivāda-Vaibhāṣikas, it is not only the present *dharma* that is connected to the life-stream through 'possession,' but when the present activity of a good or bad *dharma* and its possession become past, they stay connected to that life-stream because subsequent present possessions arise successively dependent upon that original possession. Therefore, whether this good or bad *dharma* is presently active or not, the uniform outflow of successive possession connects the life-stream to that past good or bad *dharma*. Since possession is a *dharma* dissociated from mind and as such does not necessarily have to be of the same ethical quality as the mind and its mental events, possession of a past bad *dharma*, for example, can arise simultaneously with a good moment of mind and its mental events. Within the Sarvāstivāda-Vaibhāṣika ontological system, past *dharmas* are real entities (*dravya*) and as long as their connection to a particular life-stream, which is established through the homogeneous stream of possession, is not disconnected, they, as a cause, have the capability (*sāmarthya*) to give forth a present *dharma* of a similar ethical quality. Thus although possession does not function as the cause of the arising of *dharmas*, it acts as the mediator so that the past *dharmas*, if the necessary causes and conditions are present, can give forth their effect. It is in this way that, for example, a good moment of mind and its mental events can be followed by a bad moment of mind and its mental events.

## V. The Ontological Situation of the Sautrāntikas and their Attempt to Solve the Problem

Again, like all Buddhists, the Sautrāntikas adhere to the doctrine of the absence of a unifying substratum or self and the doctrine of momentariness. However, their general ontological system, in contrast to the Sarvāstivāda-Vaibhāṣikas, denies that past and future *dharmas*, the three unconditioned *dharmas* of space (*ākāśa*), 'cessation due to discrimination' (*pratisaṃkhyānirodha*) and 'cessation not due to discrimination' (*apratisaṃkhyānirodha*), and the 'formations dissociated from mind' (*cittaviprayuktasaṃskāra*), e.g., possession, are real entities (*dravya*). Thus, for the Sautrāntikas only the present conditioned *dharmas* truly exist. They assert the identity of intrinsic nature (*svabhāva*) and activity (*kāritra*) and deny the Sarvāstivāda-Vaibhāṣika distinction that the intrinsic nature as a *dharma*'s atemporal underlying nature and

the activity of a *dharma* as indicating a *dharma*'s temporal status are neither different nor the same.

Thus, in regard to solving 'our problem,' the Sautrāntikas in general take recourse in the operations of contiguous causes and conditions and their effects while denying the simultaneous arising of cause and effect. Yet specifically, instead of relying on different moves, e.g., possession, homogeneous character, past *dharmas*, unmanifest form, etc., they rely on their theory of seeds to explain the connections and apparent continuities as well as the dynamic changes of our world, causal production, the sense of individuality and distinctiveness from other persons, the doctrine of *karma*, memory, the succession of dissimilar moments of mind, the abandonment of afflictions, the distinction between an ordinary person and noble one, etc.

Now I will briefly try to summarize the important features of the theory of seeds.

## VI. Definition and Classification of Seed

In AKB ii. 36 d (F 185) Vasubandhu answers the question: But what should be understood by 'seed' (*bija*)?

Seed (*bija*) is defined as that 'name-and-form' (*nāmarūpa*, iii. 30), that is to say, the five *skandhas*, which has capability (*samartha*) in the production of an effect either immediately (*sākṣāt*) or remotely (*pāramparyeṇa*), through a distinctive characteristic in the transformation of the life-stream (*saṃtatipariṇānaviśeṣa*).

And then Vasubandhu goes on to further define three of the terms used in the definition:

- (1) *Samṅtati*, or 'stream,' is the *saṃskāras* of the past, of the present and of the future, having the nature of cause and effect, that constitute an uninterrupted life-stream.
- (2) *Pariṇāma*, or 'transformation,' is the change (*anyathātva*) between prior and subsequent moments within the stream.
- (3) *Viśeṣa*, or 'distinctive characteristic' or the culminating point of this transformation, is the moment of this life-stream that is capable of producing an effect immediately.

AKB ii. 36 d (F 184) distinguishes four different kinds of seeds:

1. seeds of affliction that are not yet plucked out (*anapoddhṛita*) by the noble path (*āryamārga*);
2. seeds of affliction that are not yet damaged (*anupahata*) by the mundane path (*laukikamārga*);
3. seeds of innate (*aupapattika*) good *dharmas* that are not yet damaged by false views;
4. seeds of good *dharmas* 'acquired through application' (*prāyogika*, *yatnabhāvin*) that are to be nourished (*paripuṣṭa*) to the point of mastery (*vaśitvakāle*).

Samṅhabhadra, when presenting Vasubandhu's position in his \**Nyāyānusāra*, extends these four categories by including seeds of obscured, indeterminate *dharmas* (*nivṛitāvyaḅṛita*) that are not yet plucked out or damaged by the noble path or the mundane path, and seeds of unobscured, indeterminate *dharmas* (*anivṛitāvyaḅṛita*) that are not yet damaged through lack of effort.<sup>14</sup>

## VII. The Existential Status of the Seed

As it was not an easy task in the West to clarify the notions of potentiality and actuality and of substantial existence and nominal existence, neither was it easy in the East. So it is not

surprising to find that different scholars have different views on the existential status of the seeds as understood by Vasubandhu.

In the following, I will just summarize what different scholars say about the existential status of the seed. I will use the following definitions as reference:

*Sanvṛitisatya*, conventional truth: If the notion of a particular entity disappears when that entity is broken (e.g., a pot) or [when that entity] can be resolved by cognition into its components (e.g., water), that entity exists only conventionally.<sup>15</sup>

*Paramārthasatya*, absolute truth: Entities that are not subject either to further material or mental analysis exist absolutely.<sup>16</sup>

*Bija*, seed, is defined as that ‘name-and-form’ (*nāmarūpa*, iii. 30), that is to say, the five *skandhas*, which has capability (*samartha*) in the production of an effect either immediately (*sākṣāt*) or remotely (*pāramparyeṇa*), through a distinctive characteristic in the transformation of the life-stream (*saṃtatipariṇāmavišeṣa*).

*Sanvṛitisatya* is considered to be equivalent with ‘existence as a real entity’ (*dravyasat*) and *paramārthasatya* with ‘existence as a provisional entity.’

Collett Cox comments:

In Vasubandhu’s interpretation, seeds are defined as name and form: that is, the five aggregates that have the capability of producing an effect. These seeds are not separately existing factors, but rather are the very mental and material aggregates of which the life-stream consists. Their potential for development, or, in Vasubandhu’s words, their power to produce (*utpādanaśakti*), is then identified as their seed-state (*bijabhāva*). Since this seed-state is a potentiality and not an actualized event manifesting definite qualities, seed-states of any moral quality can coexist in one life-stream.<sup>17</sup>

She mentions then in a footnote that Hyōdō<sup>18</sup> argues for a distinction in Vasubandhu’s interpretation between the seeds (*bija*), or the aggregates (*skandhas*) themselves, and the seed-state (*bijabhāva*), or the potential of those aggregates to produce an effect<sup>19</sup> which he claims to be Vasubandhu’s own innovation in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*. He suggests that Vasubandhu recognized seeds as real entities (*dravya*) and the seed-state as provisional entity (*prajñapti*) based on the assumption that causes must be real entities.

Yaśomitra, on the other hand, identifies both the seed and the seed-state as provisional entities and claims that the seed is neither the same or associated with the mind, nor different or dissociated from it. If the seed were dissociated from mind then the argument concerning seeds and possession, whose existence as a real entity Vasubandhu denies, would be merely a question of names. If the seed were associated with mind, there would be the fault of mixture (*sāṅkaryā-doṣa*) of the character of the seed and the character of mind, i.e., different truly existing seeds of different ethical character cannot exist associated with mind at the same time because one could no longer determine the nature of a particular mind (*citta*) as good (*kuśala*) or bad (*akuśala*). Thus, Yaśomitra claims that the seed has the nature of a dependent provisional entity and as such is neither an entity separate from mind nor an entity not separate from mind. For Yaśomitra, the fact that, for example, a specific power (*śakti*) or seed (*bija*) is implanted by a good (*kuśala*) mind in a bad (*akuśala*) mind, does not transform the latter since it is only a *specific* power (*śakti*) that cannot produce effects which, as a provisional entity, it is not competent to produce.<sup>20</sup>

Samghabhadra in his *\*Nyāyānusāra* asks Vasubandhu whether these five aggregates combine to form one seed or whether each aggregate separately constitutes a seed that acts as the cause of the production of good *dharmas*, etc. In the first case the seed would be categorized as conventional truth as it could be further analyzed into its components. As conventional truth is synonymous with provisional entity, the seed could not act as a real cause of the production of good *dharmas*, etc.

In the second case it could be argued, in accord with AKB i. 20 (F 37) and the footnote of Louis de La Vallée Poussin, that the Sautrāntikas and Vasubandhu, in contrast to the Sarvāstivāda-Vaibhāṣikas, claim that *skandhas* are only provisional entities and, as such, the seed, as each aggregate separately, would also only constitute a provisional entity. For Samghabhadra's more intricate arguments on this point see DD 190.

Stefan Anacker claims:

It is recognized by Vasubandhu that his 'seed' is only a metaphor for a force within entities constituting a 'series' which allows them to gradually undergo transformations. More exactly, 'a seed for an event' means simply the psychophysical complex itself, when it is capable of producing this effect, either immediately or mediately, through a transformation in 'its own' 'series.'

The *Samyuktābhidharmahṛidaya* states that the specific nature of the formations is weak (*durbala*), and they cannot arise by themselves but that through the multiple power condition (*praytyayabala*) all *dharmas* achieve to arise.<sup>21</sup> So it could be argued that a momentary seed generated by a good or bad action may be without the necessary associated causes and conditions and thus too weak to give forth its manifest effect but yet strong enough to remain in a latent phase. In this latent phase it projects moment by moment a homogeneous series of seeds until the necessary causes and conditions come together at which point it gives forth a manifest effect. So from this point of view there seems to be a real causal efficacy on a latent level generating a homogeneous series of seeds which, however, lacks the causes and conditions to give forth a manifest effect and does not have the specific power to transform the simultaneously arising manifest level because it is not competent to do so.

## VIII. The Relationship between Seeds and Possession

In AKB ii. 36 d (F 184) Vasubandhu points out that 'possession' (*prāpti*), which is not a real entity (*dravya*) for the Sautrāntikas, refers provisionally to the presence of seeds (*bija*) in certain states (*avasthā*) within the psycho-physical basis or support (*āśraya* = *nāmarūpa*), and then moves on to list the four categories of seeds mentioned above in section VI.

## IX. The Description of the Different Stages of Causal Efficacy

Samghabhadra in his *\*Nyāyānusāra* describes Vasubandhu's contiguous transmission of a seed's potential efficacy and its eventual manifestation as a distinctive characteristic in the transformation of the life-stream (*saṃtatitpariṇāma viśeṣa*):

The masters of the Sautrāntikas do not say that past action generates the future effect: that which causes the future effect to arise is the last moment or distinctive characteristic (*viśeṣa*) in the transformation (*pariṇāma*) of the life-stream (*saṃtāna*) projected by the original action. It is as in the world where the seed generates the future fruit: that is to



say, as the future fruit arises from the seed; it is not that it arises from a destroyed seed; it is not that it arises immediately after the seed; but, that which generates the fruit, that is the last moment or distinctive characteristic in the transformation of the stream or series projected by the original seed. At first, from the seed arises the sprout (*ānkura*); then arises in a successive stream or series the leaf, etc., up to the flower. From the flower then arises the fruit. One says, however, that the fruit arises from the seed: because the capability or power to generate the fruit has been projected (*ākṣipta*) by the seed, and is arrived at through intermediaries (*paraṃparāyāta*) to the flower. For if the flower would not possess a capability or power projected by the seed, it would not generate such kind of fruit.

In the same way the future effect arises from the action: it is not that the effect arises from the destroyed action; it is not that the effect arises immediately after the action; that which makes the effect arise is the last moment or distinctive characteristic (*viśeṣa*) in the transformation of the life-stream projected by the original action. By 'life-stream of action' (*karmasaṃtāna*) one understands the life-stream of minds, successive moments which have action for their beginning; by 'transformation' (*pariṇāma*) one understands the fact that this life-stream is different from moment to moment. This 'transformation,' at the last moment, possesses the controlling power to generate immediately the effect: this moment, being different from the rest of the transforming life-stream, is called 'last moment' or 'distinctive characteristic' in the transformation (*pariṇāma-viśeṣa*).<sup>22</sup>

The causal process which has a latent ripening phase then could be described in the following way: In the first moment of this causal process due to a distinctive intention (*cetanā*) a *dharma* 'takes' (*grīhṇāti*) or 'projects' (*ākṣipati*) its effect and becomes in the second moment its seed, i.e., the capability to give forth an effect; the seed then continues in a latent phase by generating a homogeneous series for a more or less extended time period until the causes and conditions come together through which the capability of the seed becomes effective in the 'last moment' or 'distinctive characteristic' in the transformation (*pariṇāma-viśeṣa*) in which it 'gives forth' (*prayacchati*) or produces (*dadāti*) its effect.<sup>23</sup>

However, it seems that not all causal processes go through all of these different stages, as the projecting of the effect can occur in the first moment and the giving forth of the effect in the next moment and so bypass the whole seed phase, and as there is also action which projects its effect but never gives forth its effect, for example, when a certain negative action which was destined to ripen in a lower rebirth does not produce this rebirth because the person attains Arhathood.

Question: What kind of *dharmas* manifest seeds? In general, within the Sautrāntika system all material causes give forth their effect immediately in the next moment, i.e., it seems that they do not go through a seed-phase. All strong good or bad intentions generate seeds. If, for example, the functioning of memory and of indeterminate *dharmas* is explained on the basis of seeds, the nature of the seed needs further investigation as these seeds are not necessarily generated through good or bad intentions.<sup>24</sup>

## X. The Explanation of the Succession of Dissimilar Moments of Mind

Since in the Sautrāntika system seed-states of different ethical quality can coexist and ripen in one life-stream, they also, dependent on specific causes and conditions, can give forth effects of

different ethical quality. For example, within a bad moment of mind there lies a distinctive capability or seed that has been projected by a prior good intention, and, dependent on the presence of the necessary causes and conditions, a good *dharma* can be produced immediately after the destruction of that bad moment of mind.

## XI. The Explanation of the Abandonment of Afflictions and of the Status of Sentient Beings

Again, since seed-states of different ethical quality can coexist and ripen in one life-stream and as their giving forth of effects depends on the presence of specific causes and conditions, Vasubandhu thinks that he can explain how afflictions arise and how they are abandoned under the direct influence of contiguous causes or conditions of religious praxis, i.e., through the power of the path of vision and meditation.<sup>25</sup>

The presence or absence of specific seeds (*bija*) in certain states (*avasthā*) within the psycho-physical basis or support (*āśraya* = *nāmarūpa*) also allows him to distinguish different sentient beings as well as to distinguish the different status of sentient beings, i.e., ordinary being (*prithagjana*), Arhat, etc.

Upon becoming an Ārya, by means of the power of the path, (i.e., vision of the truths, cultivation), the person is transmuted (*parāṅrīta*), becomes different from what he or she was. The affliction, once it has been destroyed by means of the power of the path, cannot manifest again. As when grain which has been completely burned by fire becomes different from what it was, is no longer capable of germinating, in the same way one says that the Ārya has abandoned affliction, because his or her person (*āśraya*) no longer contains the seed (*bija*) capable of producing the affliction.

As for the mundane path, this path does not definitively destroy the affliction; it only damages it or disturbs it.<sup>26</sup>

## XII. Conclusion

The intention of these notes was just to summarize how the Sarvāstivāda-Vaibhāṣikas and the Sautrāntikas answer 'our problem' and to show how the particular answers grow out of the different ontological systems of these two schools.

It would be interesting to explore how the theory of seeds was further developed in connection with the exposition of the *ālayavijñāna* in the Yogācāra and Yogācāra-Madhyamaka (Shentong) tradition, and, as well, to explore, for example, similarities and differences to the unconsciousness and its archetypes in modern western psychology and its therapeutic aspects.

### Abbreviations:

AKB	<i>Abhidharmakośabhāṣya</i> by Vasubandhu
BTI	<i>Buddhist Thought in India</i> by Edward Conze
DA: NAS	<i>Documents d'Abhidharma</i> : Louis de La Vallée Poussin's translation of sections of Saṃghabhadra's *Nyāyānusāra.
DD	<i>Disputed Dharmas. Early Buddhist Theories on Existence</i> by Collett Cox.
Hyōdō	Hyōdō Kazuo. (1980) "Kusharon ni mieru setsuissaiubu to kyōryōbu no ijuku setsu." <i>Bukkhyō shisō shi</i> 3: 57 - 88
MPN	<i>The Mind and its Place in Nature</i> by C. D. Broad
PSME	<i>Progressive Stages of Meditation of Emptiness</i> by Ven. Khenpo Tsültrim Gyamtso, Rinpoche. Translated and arranged by Shenpen Hookham.
STB	<i>The Sautrāntika Theory of Bija</i> by Padmanabh S. Jaini.
SAH	<i>Samyuktābhidharmahṛdaya</i> , Vol. I: Bart Dessein

### Footnotes

- <sup>1</sup> These notes are an attempt to briefly summarize important aspects of the functions of 'possession' (*prāpti*) within the Sarvāstivāda-Vaiśiṣṭika system and of the theory of seeds within the Sautrāntika system. The notes are based on the chapter: 'Possession and Non-possession,' in Collett Cox's *Disputed Dharmas*; on the chapters: 'Dharma and Dharmas,' and 'Doctrinal Disputes,' in Edward Conze's *Buddhist Thought in India*; on Padmanabh S. Jaini's *The Sautrāntika Theory of Bija*; on Louis de La Vallée Poussin's *Documents d'Abhidharma*; on Vasubandhu's *Karmasiddhiprakaraṇa*.
- <sup>2</sup> PSME 19ff.
- <sup>3</sup> See *Notes on Saṃghabhadra's Ontology*, p. iii.
- <sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, p. iii.
- <sup>5</sup> BTI 103f.
- <sup>6</sup> Cf. Louis de La Vallée Poussin's *Notes sur le 'moment' ou kṣana des bouddhistes*; AKB iii. 85ff.
- <sup>7</sup> Cf. AKB iii. 18ff.
- <sup>8</sup> DD 86
- <sup>9</sup> DA: NAS p. 633a13.
- <sup>10</sup> Cf. AKB ii. 49 - 73.
- <sup>11</sup> Because they are potentially 'shared by all sentient beings,' according to Yaśomitra.
- <sup>12</sup> Cf. DD 188f.
- <sup>13</sup> Cf. DD 89ff.
- <sup>14</sup> Cf. DD 189f.
- <sup>15</sup> DD 138; cf. AKB vi. 4.
- <sup>16</sup> DD 140; cf. AKB vi. 4.
- <sup>17</sup> DD 95

- <sup>18</sup> Hyōdō (1980) 69-73. As this article seems to be available only in Japanese I have limited myself to reproducing a few remarks from Collett Cox's DD 104.
- <sup>19</sup> Collett Cox states that this distinction is not reflected in Hsüan-tsang's translation from which Louis de La Vallée Poussin made his French translation.
- <sup>20</sup> Cf. DD 215f.; STB 243f.
- <sup>21</sup> Cf. SAH 91.
- <sup>22</sup> DA: NAS: 629b3
- <sup>23</sup> Louis de La Vallée Poussin in footnotes to AKB v. 2 mentions that the contaminant (*anuśaya*), the seed of the affliction (*kleśa*), which is not abandoned, not completely known (*parijñā*) 'becomes active and grows' or nourishes itself (*anuśete*) by reason of two things: (i) its object (*ālambana*), and (ii) the *dharma*s associated (*saṃprayoga*) with it.
- <sup>24</sup> Cf. AKB ii. 54 c-d: [Only] (i) bad *dharma*s and (b) good *dharma*s which are impure are a ripening cause.
- (i) Bad *dharma*s – which are entirely impure – and (ii) good *dharma*s which are impure are alone a ripening cause, because their nature is to ripen (*vipākadharmatvāt = vipaktiprakṛititvāt*).
- (iii) The indeterminate *dharma*s are not a ripening cause, because they are weak in the way that rotten seeds, even though moistened, do not grow.
- (iv) The pure *dharma*s are not a ripening cause because they are not moistened (*abhiṣyandita*) through craving (*trīṣṇā*) in the way that intact seeds (*sārabija*), not moistened, do not grow.
- Moreover, pure *dharma*s are not bound (*paratisaṃyukta*), do not belong to any realm of existence: to which realm could the ripened effect belong that they would produce?
- The *dharma*s that are neither indeterminate nor pure, possess the two qualities necessary for ripening: (1) the proper force, and (2) the moistening of craving, in the manner of the intact and moistened seed.
- Cf. AKB v. 27c for a discussion on the existential status of the object of memory. Cf. AKB ix. 273ff.
- Cf. MPN chapter 'Memory,' pp. 221 - 274; chapter 'The Nature of Traces and Dispositions,' pp. 430 - 486.
- <sup>25</sup> See AKB v. 60ff. for an explanation of the four ways of abandonment of afflictions, of the abandonment through distancing from its object, etc.
- <sup>26</sup> AKB ii. 36 d (F 183).