Zeitschrift: Asiatische Studien : Zeitschrift der Schweizerischen Asiengesellschaft = Études asiatiques : revue de la Société Suisse-Asie

Herausgeber: Schweizerische Asiengesellschaft

Band: 46 (1992)

Heft: 1: Études bouddhiques offertes à Jacques May

Artikel: An unravelling of the Dharma-dharmat-vibhga-vrtti of Vasubandhu

Autor: Anacker, Stefan

DOI: https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-146946

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. Mehr erfahren

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. En savoir plus

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. Find out more

Download PDF: 07.01.2026

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, https://www.e-periodica.ch

AN UNRAVELLING OF THE *DHARMA-DHARMATĀ-VIBHĀGA-VṚTTI* OF VASUBANDHU

Stefan Anacker, Porrentruy, Switzerland

It is only fitting that this discussion of the *Dharma-dharmatā-vibhāga-vṛtti*, one of the key works of Vasubandhu, should be written in honor of my friend Professor Jacques May, as it was he who sent me the photo-copy of Jōshō Nozawa's edition and collation of the Tibetan texts of the work.[1] The *Dharma-dharmatā-vibhāga-vṛtti* is apt to be of interest to Prof. May also, as it is a work of Yogācāra Śūnyavāda, but written in a somewhat forbidding Abhidharmika style with many lists and definitions, far removed from the world of Candrakīrti.

The *Dharma-dharmatā-vibhāga-vṛtti* has never attracted the same kind of interest as its companion commentary, the *Madhyānta-vibhāga-bhāsya*,[2] and even here will not receive a full translation, but rather an intensive

1 "The *Dharmadharmatāvibhaṅga* and the *Dharmadharmatāvibhaṅgavṛtti*, Tibetan texts, edited and collated, based upon the Peking and Derge editions," by Jōshō Nozawa, in *Yamaguchi hakushi hanreki kinen Indogaku Bukkyōgaku ronsō* (Collection of articles on Indology and Buddhology published in commemoration of the 61st birthday of Prof. Susumu Yamaguchi), Kyōto, Hōzōkan, 1955. This edition of the Tibetan texts is my main source for the *Dharma-dharmatā-vibhāga-vṛtti*. Neither the *Dharma-dharmatā-vibhāga*, nor its *vṛtti*, exist in Chinese. There is one extended fragment of the Sanskrit original, which was published, unidentified, by Sylvain Lévi as an annex to his edition of the *Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṅkāra* and *bhāṣya*, and subsequently in Bagchi's edition also.

2 *Madhyānta-vibhāga-bhāsya* (ed. Gadjin Nagao), Suzuki Research Foundation, Tōkyō, 1964; (ed. Nathmal Tatia and Anantalal Thakur), K.P. Jayaswal Research Institute, Patna, 1967; translated into English by S. Kochamuttom in *The Buddhist Doctrine of Experience*, and by the present writer in *Seven Works of Vasubandhu*, both published by Motilal Banarsidass in Delhi in 1984. As regards the latter work, this may be the occasion to correct certain errors which remain in the first edition. In the second edition, most but not all of these have been corrected. The only errors shameful to an Ābhidharmika are the following: The *Pañcaskandhaka* cannot claim to have the Śūnyavāda ending I gave it, as the last two questions and answers of the text refer to the terms *sabhāga* and *tatsabhāga*. (p. 75). In the translation of the *Karma-siddhi*, generally impeccable, one error crept in on p. 109, line 19, which should of course read "When there are afflictions, how can it be that there is no contact?" In the translation of the *Triṁsikā*, the end of verse 8 should of course read "It is either beneficial, or unbeneficial or *neither*." (p. 187). In the *Viṁśatikā*, the bottom of page 165 should read: "A perception with the appearance of visibles arises through a special transformation (in the consciousness-series) coming from its own seeds. In respect to such a perception, the Exalted One spoke of sense-fields of the eye and of visibles in reference to this seed and to the appearance which arises, respectively", etc.

summary of its varied content. The reasons for this comparative neglect may lie in some features of the work itself. It is a book of some complexity, with its interlocking lists, and, judging from the extant Sanskrit fragment, its high-flown style itself, with its pompous compounds, is far removed from the usual lucid simplicity of Vasubandhu's commentary style, though it shares with all of Vasubandhu's commentaries that I know an extraordinary compactness of expression. Yet the work is of great importance. It is probably intended as a text to be studied as a preliminary to the richer *Madhyānta-vibhāga*, as several of the key words of the latter work, as well as many of the similes there employed, are explained in it. The *Dharma-dharmatā-vibhāga* itself, the Maitreyanātha[3] work on which Vasubandhu wrote this commentary, though also in a somewhat ponderous style, is extremely short, and in prose, unlike the *Madhyānta-vibhāga*, and the Vasubandhu commentary itself is a modest "*vṛtti*", not a full-blown "*bhāsya*".

Texts such as the *Dharma-dharmatā-vibhāga-vṛtti* and the *Madhyānta-vibhāga-bhāṣya* are fundamentally Śūnyavāda, because rooted in the Mahāyāna sūtras and in particular on the *Prajñā-pāramitā*, but are at the same time "Yogācāra" in the sense of describing practises or transformations of consciousness in an Ābhidharmika way, which relates to *upāya*, the practical, or therapeutic, aspect of Mahāyāna Buddhism. As such, these works make use of many provisional categories, which are used for particular purposes but which are abandoned sometimes in the course of the works themselves, and certainly in the realization of Emptiness itself. And for Vasubandhu here, as often[4], the realization of Emptiness is the most important "event", and, as he says expressly in this work, it is Emptiness' having been experienced which makes all further efforts for the eradication of afflictions, and for the attainment of complete enlightenment, possible. Sometimes Vasubandhu is more thoroughly Śūnyavāda than Maitreyanātha, as will be seen in this summary of the *Dharma-dharmatā-vibhāga-vṛtti*.

The provisional distinction is that between *dharmas*, which have the charcteristic of undergoing affliction (*saṁkleśa*), and *Dharmatā*, which has the characteristic of alleviation (*vyavadāna*). Vasubandhu asks if they can be distinguished at all. It is, after all, nothing but the skandhas,

3 My reasons for separating Asaṅga & Maitreyanātha are given in *Seven Works*, p. 14, but I am not dogmatic about the matter.

4 See notably *Triṁśikā* 26-30, *Trisvabhāvanirdeśa*, 36-38.

sense-fields, etc., which are subsumed under these two broader categories (p. 20)[5].

The characteristic of "*dharmas*", in contrast to *Dharmatā*, is the construction of that which was not (*abhūta-parikalpa*), which always involves a construction of a duality. In fact, whenever there is an object which is apprehended, a duality is implied, e.g. "visible" implies "visual consciousness". (p. 21) All conceptions of own-being (*svabhāva*) and differentiation (*viśeṣa*) are a construction of that which was not. The construction of that which was not is defined in this treatise as the appearance (*ābhāsa*) of the non-existing (*asat*) as existing. That which does not exist may appear to exist, and will only be discovered as not having existed after careful attention. All "dharmas" constructed by the construction of that which was not will be seen to be only illusion (*bhrānti-mātra*). And such is the nature of all "dharmas" (p. 22).

Dharmatā, on the other hand, is the undifferentiated Suchness (*aviśeṣa-tathatā*) that lies behind all so-called objects apprehended (*grāhya*), subjects apprehendors (*grāhaka*), things which can be designated (*abhidheya*) and their designation (*abhidhāna*). It is, as Vasubandhu specifies this Maitreyanātha definition, the Suchness where there is no differentiation (*viśeṣa*) between objects apprehended and subjects apprehendors, and between that which can be designated and its designation, which is the characteristic of Dharmatā. There are no differentiations in Suchness, because of the non-differentiations enumerated, i.e. because it is ineffable, and because nothing is differentiated. "This is an object apprehended", "This is a subject apprehendor", "This is something which can be designated", "This is its designation" – all such considerations do not exist in Tathatā, because the dualities that allow us to speak of them don't exist. Dharmatā, i.e. Tathatā, is non-reversed (*aviparīta*)[6] and karmically indeterminate (*avyākṛta*)[7], Vasubandhu adds. (p. 22).

It is the illusion (*bhrānti*) which arises because of the appearance of the non-existent as existent which is the cause of affliction, or rather it is

5 The page numbers refer to the Nozawa edition.

6 "Non-reversed" means that none of the "reversals" (*viparyāsa*) coming from constructions of the mental consciousness exist there, cf. also *Madhyānta-vibhāga-bhāṣya* I, 1.

7 The highest "good" in Buddhism has traditionally been regarded as karmically indeterminate (the "beneficial" being what *leads* to the highest good, cf. *Dhammasaṅgaṇi* 983, 989, where Nirvāṇa is called karmically indeterminate, and *Karmaprajñapti* (Peking/Tōkyō Tibetan Tripiṭaka, vol. 115, pp. 87, 2, 4-6, where volitions in a not yet fully concentrated meditational state are beneficial, but volitions in a totally meditationally concentrated state are karmically indeterminate.)

the subsequent intentness (*abhiniveśa*) of holding fast to such illusion which is the cause of affliction. But how can there be the appearance of the non-existent as existent? It is as in the case of an elephant seen in a magical show. It is the construction of that which was not that makes the non-existent appear as existent, and this appearance of the non-existent as existent is the defining characteristic of illusion. Without illusion, there could be no freedom (*mukti*) from illusion. (p. 23). There could be no affliction, since illusion is the cause of affliction. And if there is no affliction, there can be no alleviation either. Because anterior to an alleviation, there must be an affliction. Without affliction, liberation would occur without any effort, and this is contradicted by direct perception (*pratyakṣa*). And all efforts of sentient beings would be without meaning (*anartha*) if this were the case, and this is also contrary to logic.[8] It is also illogical because there are sentient beings which are bound by illusory names. And it is for this reason, Vasubandhu says, that the characteristic of a "dharma" as "apparent as it is talked about" (*yathābhilāpa-saṁprakhyāna*), and the characteristic of a "dharma" as non-differentiated, is spoken of – the first relates to dharmas as constructed, the second to the non-existence of fixed dharmas in Suchness. (p. 24)

It may be seen that Vasubandhu has not kept intact the Maitreyanātha "differentiation", and it is immediately further explained that the differentiation inherent in the previous section of this treatise is of course invalid by reason of what has been revealed now. "Dharmas" and "Dharmatā" can be differentiated because the non-existent and the existent can be differentiated, but Vasubandhu goes on to say that the existent and the non-existent really cannot be differentiated, because Dharmatā is only realized when there are no dharmas, and when "objects apprehended", etc., are not differentiated![9] (p. 25)

In the following section (p. 25), Maitreyanātha indulges in the first of his lists, when he states that the correct investigation of a "dharma" rests on six aspects: its characteristic, the proof (*siddhi*) of this characteristic, its severalness and non-separatedness (*anekatva-apṛthaktva*), its locus (*sthāna*), its commonness and uncommonness (*sādhāraṇa-asādhāraṇa*), and the understanding of the non-being (*abhāva*) of the appearances (*pratibhāsa*) of the object apprehended and the subject apprehendor. But

8 cf. *Madhyānta-vibhāga-bhāṣya*, I 21.

9 " – yod pa daṅ med pa dag khyad par med paḥi phyir ro. ji ltar khyad par med ce na? chos ñid ni chos med pa tsam gyis rab tu phye ba yin paḥi phyir te, gzuṅ ba la sogs paḥi khyad par med paḥi phyir ro."

as Ābhidharmika as this list seems, it is soon to be seen to be Yogācāra Śūnyavāda, also, for the "characteristic" of "dharmas" that is meant is that an unreal construction appears. The "proof" of this is that without the non-existing appearing as existing, there could logically (*yuktena*) be neither illusion nor lack of illusion, and hence neither affliction nor alleviation. Its "severalness" and "non-separatedness" relates to its existence and its non-existence, its differentiation and its non-differentiation. An illusion has a certain kind of existence, and it is one of the glories of Yogācāra to have recognized the existence, however provisional, of illusion.[10] Its "locus" is its environment, i.e. Saṁsāra. Its commonness relates to all the features it has in common with other dharmas: its arising (*jāti*), its having an action in the world (*vyavahāra*), its being of utility (*upakāra*) or detriment (*apakāra*), its being a good quality (*guṇa*) or a flaw (*doṣa*). Its uncommonness relates to the nature of its basis, i.e. the store consciousness (*ālaya-vijñāna*) and the evolving consciousnesses (*prāvṛtti-vijñāna*) which make it appear, and its karmic effect of being either beneficial (*kuśala*), unbeneficial (*akuśala*), or indeterminate (*avyākṛta*). (p. 26). This is said because the origin of each dharma lies in a different store-consciousness series or in a different moment of the same store-consciousness series, its becoming manifest depends always on a particular evolving consciousness moment, and its karmic effect is peculiar to it alone. "Understanding the non-being of the appearances of object apprehended and subject apprehendor" means realizing that the "external" arises because of perceptions (*vijñapti*), and that perceptions arise differently in regard to the same moment for different consciousness-streams (p. 27), and thus cannot relate to an "objective" object.

Perceptions may be divided into the unaccomplished (*asamāpanna*) and accomplished (*samāpanna*). The unaccomplished includes all perceptions where an object apprehended appears through a construction, and where this serves as a focus (*viṣaya*) for one consciousness-moment, but not for another. The accomplished relates to perceptions of images in

10 *Madhyānta-vibhāga-bhāṣya*, ad I 4 b, ad V, 17. The realization of the *existence* of illusion has been of great value in my work with so-called "psychotic" persons. (Of course the category "psychotic" cannot be valid, even by Abhidharma where the skandha patterns are always changing, and even less by Mahāyāna where all categories ultimately do not exist. In fact, these categories in Occidental psychology have done much more harm than good). One cannot help them by considering their illusions unreal, as they are real, in a certain manner of speaking, as long as they exist. So the *Madhyānta-vibhāga* even begins with the verse "Abhūta-parikalpo 'sti." (I, 1). The reality of illusion has never been recognized in classical Advaita-Vedānta, nor in Mādhyamika.

meditational concentration which are not shared by other consciousness-streams. Again, we see by these examples the non-existence of an "objective" object shared by all consciousness series present. And if "the object apprehended" has no existence, the "subject apprehendor" has no existence, either. (p. 28). In the fulfilled (*pariniṣpanna*), neither object nor subject appear.

Maitreyanātha presents us with another list for "the correct investigation of Dharmatā", which also rests on six aspects: its characteristic, its support (*āśraya*), its penetration (*nirvedha*), its contact (*sparśa*), its memory (*anusmṛti*) and understanding its nature (*tad-ātmābhyupagamana*). The characteristic of Dharmatā is Suchness, where there are no differentiations of object and subject, that which can be designated, and its designation. Its "support" is the skandhas, for it is they that undergo affliction and alleviation. Its "penetration" is in the Path of Application (*prayoga-mārga*), comprised by a mental attention on all Mahāyāna methods in the three aspects of hearing and reading, contemplating, and practising. Its "contact": In the Path of Seeing (*darśana-mārga*), right vision is attained, that is, Emptiness is directly experienced (*anubhūta*) by direct perception. It is the memory of the Path of Seeing which leads to all the allies of enlightenment (*bodhipaksya*), i.e. the Path of Cultivation (*bhāvana-mārga*). The Path of Cultivation begins immediately after the Path of Seeing[11], and it is the memory of its fulfilled penetration which impels to all the other allies of enlightenment, i.e. the elimination of the roots of all afflictions. (p. 30).

"Understanding its nature": That, because the roots of all afflictions can be eliminated in the Path of Cultivation, Suchness is without afflictions, and signless. Suchness is all there is. This occurs in a revolution at the basis (*āśraya-parāvṛtti*). Entry into revolution at the basis depends on 10 aspects, and here we are introduced to a particularly impenetrable, on first sight at least, Maitreyanātha list: (1) its own-nature, (2) its domain (*vastu*), (3) the "persons" (*pudgala*) who undergo it, (4) its speciality (*viśeṣa*), (5) its practise (*prayojana*), (6) its basis (*āśraya*), (7) its mental

11 The Path of Cultivation is usually considered to begin immediately after the sixteen moments which make up the Path of Seeing, where Emptiness is realized. (cf. *Abhisamayālaṅkāra* II 10 b and Haribhadra's comments on this passage in *Abhisamayālaṅkārāloka*) In "the Sautrāntika 'uncontaminated' by Yogācāra" outlook of Yaśomitra, however, the sixteenth moment of the Path of Seeing is the first moment of the Path of Cultivation (*Abhidharmakośa-vyākhyā*, ad II, 15).

attention (*manasikāra*) (8) its use (*prayoga*), (9) its benefit (*anuśaṁsana*), and (10) entry into it (*praveśa*).

Its own-nature is that Suchness is unafflicted and pure, and that all disturbances are adventitious (*āgantuka*) to it. Suchness becomes non-apparent (*aprakhyāṇa*) because of adventitious flaws, apparent when it is realized. "Entry into its domain": the revolution at the basis through the Suchness of the perceptions of the ordinary environmental world (*sādhārana-bhājana-loka-vijñapti-tathatā-parivṛtti*)[12] the revolution through the Suchness of the dharmas of the Mahāyāna sūtras (*sutrānta-dharma-tathatā-parivṛtti*), and the revolution through the Suchness of the perceptions of an extraordinary sentient realm (*asādhāraṇa-sattva-dhātu-vijñapti-tathatā-parivṛtti*). The first two are experienced only by Bodhisattvas, the third also by Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas. This implies that for the Mahāyānist, the world is already intrinsically enlightened, and the ordinary world can bring a "revolution at the basis" in the same way extraordinary mental states only will for the Hīnayānist. "Entry into its specialty" is its special quality of purifying the Buddha realms of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. The signless knowledge of Suchness is linked with the ability to teach it (initially in signs) to others. (pp. 31-32). Its further "specialities" are that it makes a knowledge of all aspects directly perceptible, that it has an infinitely deep aspect to reveal, and that it leads to all skills needed to help others. These three are related to the *dharma-kāya*, the *sambhoga-kāya*, and the *nirmāṇa-kāya*, respectively.

"Entry into its practise" comes from the special vows formerly taken, understanding it to be the only object of Mahāyāna teaching, and all the further practises taken on the ten Stages. It is seen that all dharmas, whether combined (*asaṁbhinna*) or not, may serve for the realization of their underlying Suchness. "Entry into its basis" is non-discriminatory knowledge (*nirvikalpa-jñāna*). How can it be entered? By entering into non-discriminatory knowledge in 6 ways: through its object, through the giving up of all mental marks, through its right application, by its characteristic, by its benefit, and by its complete knowledge (*parijñāna*). Its "object" is the preliminary entry into it, which still needs external objects for becoming involved (*adhimukti*), gaining certainly (*niścaya*), and fulfilling all preparations. Giving up all mental marks abandons all

12 *Parivṛtti*, as Nozawa has already noted, is equivalent in this text to *parāvṛtti*, cf. Nozawa, p. 46.

distinctions formerly made, even those which have aided previously. Even the mental marks arising in higher practise will be discarded.

"Its right application": Once it is seen that objective objects do not exist, and perception-only is realized, then, because there are no objects, perception also does not exist, for in the absence of objects, there can be no perception. Thus neither object nor perception can exist. "Entry through its characteristic" has three aspects: it is the basis of vaguely felt Dharmatā, it is the basis of ineffable non-dual Dharmatā, and it is realizing this Dharmatā. Non-discriminatory knowledge becomes apparent when the usual environmental world is not apparent, i.e. when there are no sense-faculties divided as they would be divided in talk, no sense-objects, and no perceptions. It is only the latter which make non-discriminatory knowledge non-apparent. Thus this knowledge is unbased (*apratiṣṭha*), without appearances, without perceptions, and without marks (*anābhāsa, avijñaptika, aniketa*). It is unbased because not based on any sense or mental consciousness. It has no appearance, because it is not an object of sense. (pp. 34-35).

"Its benefit" is that the Dharma-kāya is attained, one dwells in the highest bliss (*agra-sukha-vihāra*), right vision is predominant, and it enables to give the right advice (*avavāda*). "The entry through its entry" has four aspects: the complete knowledge of the antidotes (*pratipakṣa-parijñāna*), the complete knowledge of its characteristic (*lakṣaṇa-parijñāna*), the complete knowledge of its speciality (*viśeṣa-parijñāna*), and the complete knowledge of its action (*karma-parijñāna*). But the only really effective antidote, it turns out, is non-discriminatory knowledge, which is the antidote to all ideas of "personality", "transformation" (*pariṇāma*), "separatedness" (*pṛthaktva*), taking the non-existent for the existent, etc. Vasubandhu notes to these explanations that an apprehension of the non-existence of separatedness also involves not separating "dharma" and "Dharmatā"! (p. 36)

And on "the complete knowledge of its characteristics", Vasubandhu differs blatantly from Maitreyanātha. Maitreyanātha gives another list to characterize non-discriminatory knowledge, stating that it is the non-mental attention to discriminations, having passed beyond (*samatikrānta*) all discriminations, putting to rest (*upaśama*) all discriminations, being non-discriminatory simply by its nature (*svarūpārtha*), and that it can be apprehended simply by being noted (*abhilakṣaṇa-grāha*). Vasubandhu's objections, which reveal him to be more Śūnyavāda than Maitreyanātha, are as follows:

If non-discriminatory knowledge were simply a non-mental attention to discriminations, its nature as non-discriminatory *knowledge* becomes illogical (*ayukta*). If non-discriminatory knowledge were only the result of a non-mental attention to the constructed (*parikalpita*), then little children would automatically have this knowledge. If non-discriminatory knowledge were simply having passed beyond all discriminations, it would be attained already in the second of the four meditations (*dhyāna*), because it is entirely free from mental application (*vitarka*) and discursive thought (*vicāra*). If non-discriminatory knowledge were simply a putting to rest of all discriminations, states of sleep, intoxication, and fainting must be considered cases of "non-discriminatory knowledge". If non-discriminatory knowledge were non-discriminatory simply by its nature, the skandhas of materiality (*rūpa*), etc., would be non-discriminatory knowledge, since they do not discriminate. (p. 37) If non-discriminatory knowledge were attained by simply noting it, then by being mentally attentive to the fact that there is non-discriminatory knowledge, it would be attained. But non-discriminatory knowledge, Vasubandhu retorts, is free from all these characteristics, and so the *lakṣaṇa-parijñāna* turns out for him to be an *alakṣaṇa-parijñāna*!

The complete knowledge of its specialty is a knowledge of its being without discriminations, unlimited (*apradeśika*), unbased (*apratiṣṭhita*), permanent (*atyanta*), and ultimate (*anuttara*). It is special as being without discriminations, since Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas never reach this, as they always have the discriminations of qualities or flaws in Saṁsāra. They also don't reach its unlimitedness, because they are always focused on the Four Noble Truths with their inherent limitations. They also don't reach its unbased state, as they base themselves on a Nirvāṇa. They also don't reach its permanence, because they focus on a Nirvāṇa where there are no more skandhas. They also don't attain the highest, since the highest state is that of a Buddha. Non-discriminatory knowledge is completely without discriminations, as there is no consideration of "Nirvāṇa" or "Saṁsāra", or "good qualities" and "flaws", within it. It is unlimited, because it reaches the limits of the knowable. It is unbased, because based neither on Saṁsāra or Nirvāṇa. It is permanent (p. 38), because through it a Nirvāṇa without a remainder (*nirupadhiśeṣa-nirvāṇa*) occurs. It is the highest, because its action makes discriminations depart, and it brings about the ultimate beneficial: the elimination of obstructions (*āvaraṇa*), because it allows for entry into subsequently attained knowledges (*pṛṣṭhalabdha-jñāna*), because it clears the Buddha-field, because it matures (*vipac-*) sentient beings, and because it grants the knowledge of

all aspects (*sarvākārajñatā*). Vasubandhu makes some further comments: that it overcomes past *vāsanās*, also; glosses "subsequently attained knowledge" as knowing all knowables with the memory of a previous non-discriminatory knowledge, even though the consciousnesses of these subsequently attained knowledges are again with objects of sense (*saviṣaya*). (p. 39)

First it can be apprehended that the mental construction of non-existent objects is a case of perception-only; afterwards, through this apprehension, the non-apprehension of "objects" is reached, through perception-only. Once the non-apprehension of all "objects" is reached, the non-apprehension of perception-only is reached, because it is illogical that there be "perception" without an object to be perceived (*vijñāpanīyārtha*). (p. 40). Similarly, once the non-distinguishing of object apprehended and subject apprehendor is reached, it can be understood that all dualities in general do not exist. Thus, non-discriminatory knowledge itself is reached. In this way, there is non-apprehension of even the dharmas accepted in Buddhism: skandhas, etc. In fact, non-discriminatory knowledge is the non-apprehension of any signs (*nimitta*). This is realized in mental attention.

"Entry through its use" is essentially the use of non-discriminatory knowledge at all stages of the Bodhisattva path. (p. 41). If one assumes no revolution at the basis, the following faulty ideas result: The faulty idea that there is no basis for non-entry into afflictions: without the *parāvṛtti* of an *āśraya,* series with afflictions could never shake these off and enter Dharmatā. Potentially afflicted (*sāsrava*) consciousnesses have a basis, and their antidotes also have a basis. The faulty idea that there is no basis for entry into a Path: for instance, when it is assumed that "personality" (*pudgala*) necessarily belongs to Saṁsāra. But it is the skandhas which give rise to the idea of a "personality", and it is also they that constitute the basis (*gzhi*) for the "personality" in Nirvāṇa! (p. 42) Some conclude from this that consciousness is itself Suchness, but this doesn't hold (*nôpapadyate*), as Vasubandhu says, because of the arising of adverse factors and their antidotes, because there is one moment in which there is the cessation of adverse factors, and because they are thus contrary (*ḥgal-ba*). Thus afflictions and antidotes cannot have the same basis, just as cold and heat don't. Finally, they are different because skandhas in a Nirvāṇa without a remainder are without a basis for conceptions (*prajñapti*). The third and fourth faulty ideas are that there is no basis for the conception of a "personality" in Nirvāṇa, and no basis for the conceptions of the three kinds of enlightenment. By realizing the opposites of these faulty views, four kinds of qualities in Dharmatā can be known.

Similes for the construction of that which was not include a magical creation, a dream, a Gandharva's city, a reflection in a mirror, and the moon in the water. In all these cases, an object is apprehended which does not exist. And so it is for all dharmas. (p. 43). Revolution at the basis occurs without any dharmas and without any conception of dharmas, and this is why these similes are used for "dharmas".

Similes for revolution at the basis: space, gold, and water[13], which are perfectly pure by nature. Space may be obscured by an adventitious fog and can be utterly cleared from it in the next moment. In the same way, Emptiness is obscured by adventitious flaws, but can be cleared from them in one moment. In the same way, gold may be found in a mine vein together with dirt, but the dirt was only "adventitiously" connected with the gold, and may be totally removed from it. In the same way, water in a stream may be connected with particles of earth, and may be cleared from them without the arising of anything new – in fact, it was clear from the beginning. Thus the basic luminousness (*prabhāsvaratā*) of revolution at the basis can be exemplified. (p. 44).

It is when the appearance of adventitious obstructions is removed that they no longer appear, and that which appears once separated from them is Dharmatā, but since it was there from the beginning, there is no "arising" and "appearing" of it, properly speaking. This is all the more true because a revolution at the basis can take place in any moment.[14] By these examples of gold and water, it can be seen that revolution at the basis is endowed with a positive parallel example (*sādharmya*).[15] Clothes being washed from adventitious dirt can also serve as an example. This complex but useful Yogācāra commentary actually abruptly ends in this homey way, with the washing of clothes, and how this reveals the intrinsic purity and non-affliction of Dharmatā, i.e. Śūnyatā!

13 cf. *Madhyānta-vibhāga-bhāṣya*, ad I 16 a, where the similes are however not explained.

14 cf. *Madhyānta-vibhāga-bhāṣya* I, 1, where *śūnyatā* is found in *abhūta-parikalpa; Trisvabhāvanirdeśa* 24-25, where the "fulfilled" is reached in construction-only; *Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṅkāra-bhāṣya* IX, 4-5, where all dharmas are Buddha-dharmas, because they can all reveal Suchness, which is itself undivided (*abhinna*).

15 These similes are thus more than mere similes; they are logical exemplifications which show that the state of affairs of Suchness' being intrinsically pure, but being disturbed by adventitious flaws, has parallel positive examples (*sapakṣa*). The very therapeutic similes from the *Kāśyapa-parivarta-sūtra* employed by Vasubandhu in *Madhyānta-vibhāga-bhāṣya* ad V 26, Anacker pp. 268-270, may also be regarded as parallel positive examples for the situations they symbolize.