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SEVEN WORKS
OF
VASUBANDHU

The Buddhist Psychological Doctor

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THE TWENTY VERSES AND THEIR
COMMENTARY

(VIMŚATIKĀ-KĀRIKĀ [VṚTTI])

INTRODUCTION

This famous work may well be one of the last three Vasubandhu wrote. It, *The Thirty Verses*, and *The Teaching of the Three Own-Beings* seem to belong together: the implications of one lead to the revelations of the next.

Perhaps no work of Vasubandhu's has been more consistently misunderstood than *The Twenty Verses*. It has frequently been used as an authoritative source for opinions that are in fact not even there. The main point here is not that consciousness unilaterally creates all forms in the universe, as has been supposed by Dharmapāla and Hsüan-tsang, but rather that an object-of-consciousness is "internal", and the "external" stimuli are only inferrable.* What is observed directly are always only perceptions, colored by particular consciousness-"seeds". The very fact that these "seeds" are spoken of at all indicates a double influence. On one hand, every consciousness-moment deposits a "seed"; on the other, each "seed" influences every subsequent consciousness-moment, until a "revolution at the basis" of consciousness is achieved.

In its entirety, this work is very free-wheeling, and directed at a wide variety of philosophical and generally human problems. Its ingenious refutation of atomism could stop even a twentieth-century particle physicist thinking.

Most interesting is the approach in this work towards "realities". Since experienced realities are all equally without a perceptible externally existing reference point, the difference between illusion and reality falls away. That is, all "realities" involve an amount of "illusion". Even where there is a unanimous concensus among aggregate-"series" regarding experienced events, this does not mean that their view is illusion-free reality. An aggregate complex "undergoing hallucinations"

*Vasubandhu admits the possibility of the necessity of external stimuli in his *Mahāyānasāṅgrahabhāṣya*, where he says, "A visual consciousness arises dependent on a visible and the eye, together with the store-consciousness." ["de la (kun gzhi) rnam par shes pa dang bcas pa'i mig dang gzugs rnam la bren nas mig gi rnam par shes pa 'byung ste /"], *Mahāyānasāṅgrahabhāṣya*, Peking/Tokyo ed. Tibetan Canon, vol. 112, p. 275, 4, 3.

(in conventional parlance) is experiencing as much "reality" as those which are not.

Since it is admitted that entire "realities" may be mentally created, Vasubandhu can dispense with a feature of Buddhist dogmatics that does not seem to him logical. Traditional Buddhist exegeses sometimes speak of "hells" as places of temporary retribitional suffering for those "series" that committed acts of suffering. Vasubandhu says that these hell-states must be totally "internal", since assuming "an approved place for the infliction of suffering" is to him abhorrent. These hell-states arise in the psychophysical complex, and it is there where the working out from them is done.

Concerning the Text :

The Twenty Verses, and their commentary, which is also by Vasubandhu, exist in their original Sanskrit form. They were edited by Sylvain Lévi in *Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études*, sciences historiques et philologiques, Librairie Ancienne Honoré Champion, Paris, 1925, volume 241-245. This translation is based on that edition.

TWENTY VERSES AND COMMENTARY
(VIṂŚATIKĀ-KĀRIKĀ- [VṚTTI])

In the Great Vehicle, the three realms of existence¹ are determined as being perception-only. As it is said in the sūtra*, "The three realms of existence are citta-only." Citta, manas, consciousness, and perception are synonyms. By the word "citta", citta along with its associations is intended here. "Only" is said to rule out any (external) object of sense or understanding.

All this is perception-only, because of the appearance of non-existent objects, just as there may be the seeing of non-existent nets of hair by someone afflicted with an optical disorder.¹

Here it is objected :

"If perception occurs without an object, any restriction as to place and time becomes illogical, as does non-restriction as to moment-series² and any activity which has been performed."²

What is being said? If the perception of visibles, etc. arises without any object of visibles, etc. why is it that it arises only in certain places, and not everywhere, and even in those places, why is it that it arises only sometimes, and not all the time? And why is it that it arises in the moment-series of all that are situated in that time and place, and not just in the moment-series of one, just as the appearance of hair, etc. arises in the moment-series of those afflicted by an optical disorder, and not in the moment-series of others? Why is it that the hair, bees, etc. seen by those afflicted by an optical disorder don't perform the functions of hair, etc. while it is not the case that other hair, etc. don't perform them? Food, drink, clothes, poison, weapons, etc. that are seen in a dream don't perform the functions of food, etc. while it is not the case that other food, etc. don't perform them. An illusory town does not

**Avataṃsaka-sūtra: Daśa-bhūmika* VI, p. 32 (R, p 49).

perform the functions of a town, because of its non-existence, while it is not the case that other towns don't perform them. Therefore, with the non-being of an object, any restriction as to place and time, any non-restriction as to moment-series, and any activity which has been performed, would be illogical.

Reply :

No, they are not illogical, because
Restriction as to place, etc. is demonstrated as in a dream. 3a

Now how is this ? In a dream, even without an (external) object of sense or understanding, only certain things are to be seen : bees, gardens, women, men, etc. and these only in certain places, and not everywhere. And even there in those places, they are to be seen only sometimes, and not all the time. In this way, even without an (external) object of sense or understanding, there may be restriction as to place and time.

And non-restriction as to moment-series
is like with the *pretas*.³ 3b

The phrase "is demonstrated" continues to apply here (to make the verse read : "And non-restriction as to moment-series is demonstrated as with the *pretas*."). How is it demonstrated ?

In the seeing of pus-rivers, etc. by all of them 3c

all together. A "pus-river" is a river filled with pus. Just as one says "a ghee pot". For all the *pretas* who are in a similar situation due to a similar retribution for action, and not just one of them, see a river filled with pus. With the expression "etc." rivers full of urine and feces, guarded by men holding clubs or swords, and other such perceptions, are included also. Thus, non-restriction as to moment-series in regard to perceptions is demonstrated even with an (external) object of sense or understanding being non-existent.

And activity which has been performed
is just like being affected in a dream.^{4a} 4a

A case of being affected in a dream is like where semen is released even without a couple's coming together. So, by these

various examples, the four-fold restriction as to place and time, and so on, is demonstrated.

And as in a hell-state,^{4b}
all of these 4b

are demonstrated. "In a hell-state" means "among those experiencing a hell-state". How are they demonstrated ?

In the seeing of hell-guardians, etc.
and in being tormented by them. 4c

Just as the seeing of hell-guardians, etc. by those experiencing a hell-state (and with the expression "etc." the seeing of dogs, crows, moving mountains, and so on, is included) is demonstrated with a restriction as to place and time for all of those experiencing a hell-state, and not just for one of them, and just as their torment inflicted by them is demonstrated through the sovereignty of the common retribution for their individual actions, even though the hell-guardians, and so on, are really non-existent. So the four-fold restriction as to place and time is to be known as demonstrated in yet another way.

Objection: But for what reason is the existence of hell-guardians, dogs, and crows (experienced in hell-states) not accepted ?

Reply :

Because they are illogical. For to assume that these kinds of hell-beings have an external existence is not logical. This is so because they don't feel the sufferings there themselves, or if they tormented each other mutually, there would be no difference in situation between those experiencing a hell-state and the hell-guardians, and if they mutually tormented each other having equal make-ups, sizes, and strengths, there would be no fear in those experiencing a hell-state, and since they couldn't stand the burning suffering of standing on a ground made of heated iron, how could they be tormenting others ? And how could there be an arising of those not experiencing a hell-state, together with those who are ?

Objection : How is this ? The arising of animals in a heaven-state may occur, so in the same way, there may be the arising of hell-guardians, etc. which have the distinct qualities of animals or *pretas*, in hell-states.

Reply :

There is no arising of animals in hell-states,
as there is in heaven-states,
nor is there any arising of *pretas*,
since they don't experience the sufferings that are engendered
there. 5

Those animals which arise in heaven-states experience all the pleasure that is engendered there because of (past) actions bringing pleasure to their environment. But hell-guardians, etc. don't experience hellish suffering in the same way. So the arising of animals (in hell-states) is not logical, and neither is the arising of *pretas* there.

An opinion: Then it's because of the actions of those experiencing a hell-state, that special material elements arise, which have special qualities as to color, make-up, size, and strength, and are cognized as hell-guardians, etc. That's why they are constantly transforming in various ways, and appear to be shaking their hands, etc. in order to instill fear, just as mountains that look like sheep appear to be coming and going, and just as thorns in forests of iron silk-cotton trees, appear to be bowing down and rising up again. And yet it isn't that (these phenomena) aren't arising.⁵

Reply :

If the arising and transformation of material elements due to the actions of those is accepted,
why isn't (such arising and transformation) of a consciousness accepted ? 6

Why is a transformation of consciousness itself due to (past) actions not accepted, and why instead are material elements constructed ? And furthermore,

It's being constructed that the process of impressions from actions takes place elsewhere than does its effect,
and it is not being accepted that it exists there where the impressions take place : Now what is your reason for this ? 7

Because it is through their action that such an arising and transformation of material elements is constructed for those

experiencing a hell-state, and inasmuch as impressions through actions enter together into their consciousness-series, and not anywhere else, why is it that that effect is not accepted as being such a transformation of consciousness taking place just where the impressions themselves do ?⁶ What is the reason for an effect being constructed where there is no process of impression ?

(You may say) : By reason of scriptural authority. If consciousness were only the appearance of visibles, etc. and there were no (external) objects of visibles, etc. the existence of the sense-fields of visibles, etc. would not have been spoken of by the Exalted One.

Reply :

This is no reason, because

Speaking of sense-fields of visibles, etc.

was intended for those to be introduced to Dharma,
just as in the case of spontaneously-generated beings.⁷ 8

It's just like in the case where spontaneously generated beings were discussed by the Exalted One. This was done with the intention of indicating the non-discontinuity of the citta-series in the future.⁸ "There is neither a sentient being, or a self, but only events along with their causes", has been stated by the Exalted One.* Thus, statements were made by the Exalted One regarding the existence of the sense-fields of visibles, etc. with an intention directed at people to be introduced to the Dharma. And what was the intention there ?

Because their appearances continue as perceptions,

because of (consciousnesses') own seeds,

the Sage spoke in terms of states of two-fold sense-fields." 9

What was said ? The Exalted One spoke of sense-fields of the eye and of visibles in those cases where a perception with the appearance of visibles arises from the attainment of a special transformation (in the consciousness-series) through its own seeds, and when this seed and perception become manifest with this appearance, respectively.⁹ In the same way, in those cases where a perception with the appearance of tactile sensations

**Majjhima* I, 138.

arises from the attainment of a special transformation (in the consciousness-series) through its own seeds, and when this seed and that appearance become manifest, the Exalted One spoke of sense-fields of the body and of tactile sensations, respectively. This is the intention.

What is the advantage of teaching with such an intention ?

In this way, there is entry into the selflessness of personality. 10a

If the sense-fields are taught in this way, people will enter into an understanding of the selflessness of personality. The group of six consciousnesses evolves because of duality. But when it is known that there is not any one seer, (any one hearer, any one smeller, any one taster, any one toucher), or any one thinker, those to be introduced to Dharma through the selflessness of personality will enter into an understanding of the selflessness of personality.

And in yet another way, this teaching is entry into the selflessness of events. 10b

"And in yet another way", etc. is in reference to how the teaching of perception-only is entry into the selflessness of events, when it becomes known that this perception-only makes an appearance of visibles, etc. arise, and that there is no experienced event with the characteristics of visibles, etc. But if there isn't an event in any way, then perception-only also isn't, so how can it be demonstrated ? But it's not because there isn't an event in any way that there is entry into the selflessness of events. Rather, it's

in regard to a constructed self. 10 c

It is selflessness in reference to a constructed self, i.e. all those things that constitute the "own-being" believed in by fools, that is the constructed with its "objects apprehended" and "subjects apprehenders", etc. and not in reference to the ineffable Self, which is the scope of Buddhas.¹⁰ In the same way, one penetrates the selflessness of perception-only itself in

reference to a "self" constructed by another perception¹¹, and through this determination of perception-only, there is entry into the selflessness of all events, and not by a denial of their existence.¹² Otherwise, there would be an object for this other perception because of a perception itself (i.e. either "perception-only" or "the perception of self" would be a real object), there would be at least one perception which has an object; consisting of another perception, and the state of perception-only wouldn't be demonstrated, because of the perception's state of having objects.¹³

But how is it to be understood that the existence of the sense-fields of visibles, etc. was spoken of by the Exalted One not because those things which singly become sense-objects of the perceptions of visibles, etc. really exist, but rather with a hidden intention ? Because

A sense-object is neither a single thing,
nor several things,
from the atomic point of view,
nor can it be an aggregate (of atoms),
so atoms can't be demonstrated. 11

What is being said ? The sense-field of visibles, etc. which consists (in a moment) of a single sense-object of a perception of visibles, etc. is either a unity, like the composite whole constructed by the Vaiśeṣikas*, or it is several things, from the atomic point of view, or it is an aggregation of atoms. Now, the sense-object can't be a single thing, because one can nowhere apprehend a composite whole which is different from its component parts. Nor can it be plural, because of atoms, since they can't be apprehended singly.¹⁴ Nor does an aggregation of atoms become a sense-object, because an atom as one entity can't be demonstrated, either.

How is it that it can't be demonstrated ? Because

Through the simultaneous conjunction of six elements,
the atom has six parts. 12a

*cf. *Discussion for the Demonstration of Action*, note 11, and the entire discussion in that treatise in section 3.

If there is a simultaneous conjunction of six elements in six directions, the atom comes to have six parts.¹⁵ For that which is the locus of one can't be the locus of another.

If there were a common locus for the six,
the agglomeration would only be one atom. 12b

It might be maintained that the locus for each single atom is the locus of all six elements. But then, because of the common locus for all of them, the agglomeration would be only one atom, because of the mutual exclusion of occupants of a locus. And then, no agglomeration would become visible.¹⁶ Nor, for that matter, can atoms join together at all, because of their state of having no parts. The Vaibhāṣikas of Kashmir say, "We aren't arguing such an absurdity. It's just when they're in aggregation, that they can join together." But the question must be asked: Is then an aggregation of atoms not an object different from the atoms themselves?

When there is no conjunction of atoms,
how can there be one for their aggregations?
Their conjunction is not demonstrated,
for they also have no parts. 13

So the aggregations themselves can't mutually join together, either. For there is no conjunction of atoms, because of their state of having no parts. That is to say, such a thing can't be demonstrated. So even in the case of an aggregation, which does have parts, its conjunction becomes inadmissible (because there can be no aggregation of atoms unless individual atoms conjoin. And so the atoms as one entity can't be demonstrated. And whether the conjunction of atoms is accepted, or isn't

(To assume) the singleness of that which has divisions
as to directional dimensions, is illogical. 14a

For one atom, there may be the directional dimension of being "in front", for another, of being "on the bottom", and if there are such divisions as to directional dimensions, how can the

singleness of an atom, which partakes of such divisions, be logical?

Or else, how could there be shade and blockage? 14b

If there were no divisions as to directional dimensions in an atom, how could there be shade in one place, light in another, when the sun is rising? For there could be no other location for the atom where there would be no light.¹⁷ And how could there be an obstruction of one atom by another, if divisions as to directional dimensions are not accepted? For there would be no other part for an atom, where, through the arrival of another atom, there would be a collision with this other atom. And if there is no collision, then the whole aggregation of all the atoms would have the dimensions of only one atom, because of their common locus, as has been stated previously.

It may be argued: Why can't it be accepted that shade and blockage refer to an agglomeration, and not to a single atom?

Reply: But in that case, is it being admitted that an agglomeration is something other than the atoms themselves? Objector: No, that can't be admitted.

If the agglomeration isn't something other,
then they can't refer to it. 14c

If it is not accepted that the agglomeration is something other than the atoms, then shade and blockage can't be demonstrated as occurring in reference to the agglomeration only. This is simply an attachment to mental construction. "Atoms" or "aggregations": what's the point of worrying with those, if "their basic characteristics of being visibles, etc." are not refuted?

What then is their characteristic? That they are in a state of being sense-objects of the eye etc., in a state of being blue, etc. It is just this which should be investigated. If a sense-object for the eye, and so on, is accepted in the form of blue, yellow, etc. then are these one entity, or several? Now what follows from this? The flaw inherent in assuming their severalness has already been discussed (in relation to the arguments on atomic aggregation).

If their unity existed, one couldn't arrive at anything gradually, there couldn't be apprehension and non-apprehension simultaneously,

there couldn't be separate, several, developments, and there would be no reason for the non-seeing of the very subtle. 15

If one entity as a sense-object for the eye, with no separations, and no severalness, were constructed, then one couldn't arrive at anything gradually on the Earth : that is, there could be no act of going. For, even with placing down a foot once, one would go everywhere. There could be no apprehension of a nearer "part of something" and a non-apprehension of a more removed "part", simultaneously. For a concurrent apprehension and non-apprehension of the same thing isn't logical. There would be no special development for species that are separate, such as elephants, horses, etc. and since they would all be one in that case, how could their separation be accepted? And how can they be accepted as single, anyway, since there is the apprehension of an empty space between two of them? And there would be no reason for the non-seeing of subtle water-beings, since they would be visible in common with the more apparent.

An otherness in entities is constructed if there is a division of characteristics, and not otherwise, so when speaking from the atomic point of view, one must by necessity construct divisions, and it cannot be demonstrated that they (the atoms) are in any way of one kind. With their unity undemonstrated, visibles', etc.'s state of being sense-objects of the eye, etc. is also undemonstrated, and thus perception-only *is* demonstrated.

If the existence and non-existence of objects of sense or understanding are being investigated by force of the means-of-cognition (direct perception, inference, appeal to reliable authority), direct perception must be recognized as being the most weighty of all means-of-cognition. But with an object of sense or understanding, not existing, how can there be any cognizing which can be termed "direct perception"?

Cognizing by direct perception is like in a dream, etc. 16a

For it is without an object of sense or understanding, as has been made known previously.

And when it occurs, the object is already not seen, so how can it be considered a state of direct perception? 16b

When a cognition through direct perception arises in the form "This is my direct perception", the object itself is already not seen, since this distinguishing takes place only through a mental consciousness, and the visual consciousness has already ceased by that time, so how can its being a direct perception be accepted? This is especially true for a sense-object, which is momentary, for that visible, or taste, etc. has already ceased by that time.¹⁸ It may be said that nothing which hasn't been experienced (by other consciousnesses) is remembered by the mental consciousness, and that this takes place by necessity as it is brought about by the experience of an object of sense or understanding, and that those can be considered to be a state of direct perception of sense-objects, visibles, etc. in this way. But this remembering of an experienced object of sense or understanding is not demonstrated, either. Because

It has been stated how perception occurs with its appearance. 17a

It has already been stated how perceptions in the shape of eye-consciousnesses, etc. arise with the appearance of an object, even without there being any (external) object of sense or understanding.

And remembering takes place from that. 17b

"From that" means "from the perception". A mental perception arises with the discrimination of a visible, etc. when that appearance is linked with memory, so an experience of an (external) object can't be demonstrated through the arising of a memory.

Objection: If, even when one is awake, perception has sense-objects which weren't, like in a dream, then people would understand their non-being by themselves. But that isn't the case. So it's not that the apprehension of objects is like in a dream, and all perceptions are really without an (external) object.

Reply: This argument won't bring us to the cognition you wish, because

Somebody who isn't awake doesn't understand the non-being of the visual sense-objects in a dream. 17c

Just as people when they are asleep in a dream have their faculties concentrated on impressions of appearances of discriminations which appear differently than they do later, and, as long as they aren't awake, don't understand the non-being of objects of sense and understanding that weren't just so when they become awakened by the attainment of a supermundane knowledge free from discriminations, which is the antidote to these (discriminations), then they truly understand the non-being of these sense-objects through meeting with a clear worldly subsequently attained knowledge.¹⁹ So their situations are similar.

Objection : If, through a special transformation of "their own" moment-series, perceptions with the appearance of (external) objects of sense or understanding arise for beings, and not through special objects themselves, then how can any certainty as regards perceptions be demonstrated from association with bad or good friends, or from hearing about existent and non-existent events²⁰, since there can exist neither association with the good or bad, nor any real teaching ?

Reply :

The certainty of perceptions takes place mutually,
by the state of their sovereign effect on one another. 18a

For all beings there is certainty of perception through a mutual sovereign effect of perceptions on one another, according to circumstances²¹. "Mutually" means "each affecting the other". So one special perception arises within a moment-series through a special perception within the moment-series, and not because of a special object.

Objection : If a perception is without an (external) object, just like in a dream, even for those who are awake, why is it that in the practise of the beneficial and unbeneficial there won't be an equal result from desirable and undesirable efforts, for those who are asleep and those who aren't ?²²

Reply : Because

Citta is affected by torpor in a dream,
so their results are different. 18b

This is the reason, not the existing being of an (external) object.

Objection : If all this is perception-only, there can't be body or speech for anybody. So how can the dying of sheep who have been attacked by shepherds, take place ? If their dying takes place without the shepherds having done anything, how can the shepherds be held responsible for the offense of taking life ?

Reply :

Dying may be a modification resulting from a special perception by another,
just like losses of memory, etc. may take place through the mental control of spirits, etc. 19

Just as there may be modifications in others, such as loss of memory, the seeing of dreams, or being taken possession of by spirits, by the mental control of psychic powers, as in the case of Sāraṇa's seeing dreams through Mahā-Kātyāyana's mental force, or, as in the case of the vanquishing of Vemacitra through mental harming coming from the forest-dwelling seers.²³ In the same way, through the force of a special perception of another, a certain modification of the aggregate-series, destroying its life-force, may arise, through which dying, which is to be known as a name for a discontinuity in the aggregate-series taking part in an organism* takes place.

Or else, how was it that the Daṇḍaka Forest became empty because of the anger of seers ? 20a

If it isn't accepted that the dying of beings can occur through the force of a special perception in others, how is it that the Exalted One, in order to demonstrate that mental harm constitutes a great offense, questioned Upāli when he was still a householder, as follows : "Householder ! Through what agency were the Daṇḍaka, Mataṅga, and Kalīṅga Forests made empty and sacred, as has been reported ?", and Upāli replied, "I heard that it happened through the mental harming of seers, Gautama."²⁴

If not, how could it be demonstrated that mental harm constitutes a great offense ? 20b

*cf. *Discussion of Five Aggregates*, p. 71.

***Majjhima* I, 37-38.

If this situation were constructed as not taking place through a mental harming, and it were to be said that those sentient beings that were living in that forest were destroyed by non-human spirits that had been propitiated as if they were seers, how could it be demonstrated by this passage that mental harm through mental action is a greater offense than bodily or verbal harm?²⁴ This passage demonstrates that the dying of so many sentient beings came about only through a mental harming.

Objection: But if all this is perception-only, do those who understand the cittas of others really know the cittas of others, or don't they?

Reply:

What about this?

Objector: If they don't know them, how can they be "those who understand the cittas of others"?

Reply: They know them.

The knowledge of those who understand others' cittas is not like an object.

And how is this? As in the case of a knowledge of one's own citta. 21a

Objector: And how is *that* knowledge (of one's own citta) not like an object?

Reply:

Because of non-knowledge, as in the case of the scope of Buddhas. 21b

It's just like in the case of the scope of Buddhas, which comes about through the ineffable Self. Thus both of these knowledges, because of their inherent non-knowledge, are not like an object, because it is through the state of an appearance of something which appears differently than it does later that there is a state of non-abandonment of the discrimination between object apprehended and subject apprehendor.²⁵

Though perception-only has unfathomable depth, and there are limitless kinds of ascertainments to be gained in it,

I have written this demonstration of perception-only according to my abilities;

but in its entirety it is beyond the scope of citta. 22 a

It is impossible for people like me to consider it in all its aspects, because it is not in the range of dialectics. And in order to show by whom it is known entirely as a scope of insight, it is said to be

the scope of Buddhas. 22b

In all its modes, it is the scope of Buddhas, Exalted Ones, because of their lack of impediment to the knowledge of everything that can be known in all aspects.

NOTES

1. See *A Discussion of the Five Aggregates*, note 12.
2. "There would be no restriction as to place and time of objects perceived" means that any object of sense or understanding would arise anywhere and at any time if there were no definite external object to which it corresponded. "Nor would there be non-restriction as regards consciousness-series' perceiving them" means that if there were no definite external object, it couldn't happen that all consciousness-series' in a given place and time see the same object. Of course Vasubandhu will deny that the latter is true at all, since there are always various ways of perceiving "the same sequence." And the restriction as to place and time for objects of sense and understanding does not depend on a definite external object, as it is a principle operating even in the perceptions taking place in dreams.
3. The *pretas* are "the hungry ghosts" of traditional Buddhist lore, who undergo special sufferings because of past unbeneficial actions. All of them will see the same pus-rivers, etc. even though others won't: another indication that experienced reality may be totally mentally created.
- 4a. The objector is saying that an external object of consciousness is proved by "action's being performed". This means, for instance, that food which is tasted while awake has the activity of nourishing, while "food" that is tasted in a dream is not really food, as it does not nourish the organism. Vasubandhu says that this argument is not fool-proof, because when a man has a sexual dream, the biological function of releasing semen is performed in this case.
- 4b. The hell-states will be reduced by Vasubandhu to afflicted events existing only in the consciousness-streams of those experiencing them.
5. Hallucinations exist as much as anything else does, since they are perceptions.

6. Residual impressions take place in consciousness. Retribution is a fruition or maturation of impressions, and thus should take place in the consciousness-series only.

7,8. "Spontaneously generated beings" are those that arise all at once, with all their organs neither lacking nor deficient. They do not have to undergo embryonic stages or any other development. Traditionally, gods, hell-beings, and the intermediate existences between one full life-series and the next (the *bardo* of the *Bardo-Thödol*, or *Tibetan Book of the Dead*) are considered to be "spontaneously generated beings" (cf. *Kośa* III 9 b-c). We have seen that Vasubandhu in *The Twenty Verses* denies the existence of special hell-beings, and "god-states" are for him again only special transformations of consciousness. As regards "intermediate existences" between lives, he says that they aren't really born yet, but only in the process of being born (*Kośa* III, ad 10, end). In the deeper perspective of Vasubandhu's *Explanation of Dependent Origination* and *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, every life-stream consists of an alternating series of "life" and "death", i.e. there is a dying and being again in every moment. In that sense, every "dying moment" is an intermediate existence. But then it also no longer really had the traditional characteristic of a "spontaneously generated being". Vasubandhu here assumes that the category of "spontaneously generated beings" really doesn't exist, and that the Buddha spoke of them, and in particular of spontaneously generated intermediate existences, only to demonstrate the non-discontinuity of the citta-series. Without the assumption of a spontaneously generated intermediate existence, people might assume that there is a discontinuity in citta between one life and the next, including the one life, next one, next one, next one, next one, etc. that is going on in each successive moment.

9. As far as what we directly experience is concerned, a "seed" and perception become manifest in what we term "seeing a visible." "The visible seen" is really a reflection of the "seed", i.e. an impression in consciousness, the visual consciousness is a special transformation in the consciousness-series affected by that "seed".

10. The completely signless perception of Buddhas is here seen to be equivalent with the Universal Self of the *Upaniṣads*. The recognition of their fundamental oneness is rare in Buddhist writing. The selflessness of events and personalities does not of course refer to this Universal Self, which Vasubandhu might more usually call "Emptiness" or "the Ground of all events". It refers rather to any fixed particular individualizing force in particulars.

11. "One" sees the selflessness of perception-only when "one" has seen that the "self" previously constructed by another perception is void. Actually, the use of the pronoun "one" is inaccurate, and does not occur in Sanskrit, where verbs need have no subjects. It has been adopted here as the least pernicious pronoun, but should not be taken too literally. In other words, the phrase "one sees" really stands for "there is a new consciousness-moment of seeing in a psychophysical complex". "One", as used here and subsequently in these translations, is not numerically "one".

12. This is an important difference. It is not that anything is being denied. It is just that any particular unchanging characters by which we could delimit events and personalities, don't exist.

13. If perception-only is not self-dissolving, "perception-only" would be an object of perception, and perception-only wouldn't be demonstrated. Obviously, "perception-only" is itself perception-only, and not a fixed object.

14. In Vaiśeṣika, atoms are absolutely imperceptible.

15. Any collision of one atom with another, any atom's being in a positional relation to another, implies that the atom has parts, and thus is not really an atom.

16. Since the atom is imperceptible, if the locus for an aggregation of atoms is common for all of them, then this aggregation, as taking up only the place of one atom, would only be one atom itself, and hence imperceptible.

17. The arising of shade is explainable only if there is blockage of one material complex by another. Now this becomes atomically impossible, since the mutual resistance of materialities is possible according to an atomic theory only where atoms collide. And the collision of atoms implies parts to atoms, cf. note 15.

18. A mental consciousness which becomes aware of a visible depends on a previous visual consciousness. But since all events are momentary, and the mental consciousness registers the visible after the visual consciousness has arisen, the visual consciousness is already past by that time, thus "cognizing a visible" is not strictly speaking "direct perception".

19. "A supermundane knowledge" is a perception free from mental marks and dualities, "pure perception". It is followed by "a clear worldly subsequently attained knowledge", where "objects" are again seen plurally, but are no longer conceptually clung to, since characteristics which would warrant dividing them off from one another are seen to be constructed.

20. If everything perceived is equally a transformation of consciousness, then what are the criteria by which one can distinguish the beneficial, unbeneficial, the existent and the non-existent?

21. Here it is seen that each perception influences the next, and the only basis for certainty of perception is the consistency of these influences.

22. If all perception is without a clear external object, then why is it that beneficial and unbeneficial acts committed in a dream don't have the same retributory effect as those committed while awake?

23. The objector is saying that if everything is perception-only, then only mental actions exist, and bodily and verbal actions have no reality. In that case, he says, when a shepherd kills a sheep, we can't really call him responsible for a death, because that bodily action wasn't real. Vasubandhu has already evolved an answer to this objection in *A Discussion for the Demonstration of Action*, where the ethical nature of an act is traced to the beneficiality or unbeneficiality of the "agent's" volition. The shepherd faces retribution for unbeneficial action as soon as the volition to kill arises. But then another volition, that "which sets into agitation", which puts the materiality-aggregate into action, must occur for there to be what is conventionally called "a bodily act". "A bodily act" is thus really, according to Vasu-

bandhu, "an act of volition affecting the body", and the killing of the sheep is strictly speaking a result of this volition. (See *A Discussion for the Demonstration of Action* 46, 47.)

Instead of reiterating this argument, Vasubandhu here focuses upon another point: that death may come about through special mental forces (i.e. perceptions) of "another". However, this does not seem to be an answer to the objector's question. The objector is asking how one can call the shepherd responsible for a bodily act if there is no bodily act; Vasubandhu is replying that death can result from a mental act, which seems besides the point. However, Vasubandhu's reply does emphasize again the organic interrelationship of the consciousness- and materiality- aggregates. (It is by the way not inconsistent to continue to speak of a materiality-aggregate in the context of "perception-only", since the materiality-aggregate are those events which are perceived primarily by the tactile consciousness. Here, one consciousness-aggregate is stated to have a radical effect on another psychophysical complex. Vasubandhu cites two canonical stories to back up his assertion. Sāraṇa, the son of King Udayana of Vatsā, became a pupil of Mahā-Kātyāyana, one of the Buddha's chief disciples. Mahā-Kātyāyana and Sāraṇa together journeyed to Ujjain, in the Kingdom of Avanti. There, King Pradyota of Avanti suspected Sāraṇa of having relations with his wives. Though the charge was unfounded, Pradyota had Sāraṇa beaten until he was streaming with blood. When released, Sāraṇa asked Mahā-Kātyāyana to absolve him from his monastic vows. He wanted to go to his father and levy an army against Pradyota. (The hostility between the Kingdoms of Avanti and Vatsa under Pradyota and Udayana had some history behind it by that time. Udayana had already spent some time as a prisoner of Pradyota, and had only been released because of the love between Udayana and Vāsavadattā, the daughter of Pradyota. This is the theme of Bhāsa's famous drama, *Pratijñāyāugandharāyana*. However, Sāraṇa apparently felt that his father's forces were equal to those of Pradyota in a fair fight, since on that previous occasion, Pradyota had captured Udayana by means of a ruse.) Mahā-Kātyāyana refused to release Sāraṇa from his vows, and instead preached to him about the unbeneficiality of violent action. When Sāraṇa remained obdurate, Mahā-Kātyāyana waited until he was asleep, and then affected his dreams by his own mental powers. He made Sāraṇa see in a dream a huge battle, in which Pradyota was victorious. Sāraṇa himself was led away for execution. On the way to death, he met Mahā-Kātyāyana, and begged him for forgiveness. In order to show him that this was only a dream, Mahā-Kātyāyana made rays of light come out of his right arm. This story is told in detail in Kumāralāta's *Kalpanā-maṇḍatikā*, XII, story no. 65. (This text used to be known as Aśvaghōṣa's *Sūtrālaṅkāra*, cf. Sylvain Lévi, "Aśvaghōṣa, le *Sūtrālaṅkāra* et ses sources", *Journal Asiatique*, 1908, II, pp 149 ff.) In the second story alluded to by Vasubandhu, Vemacitra, King of the Asuras, decided to pay no respect to a group of virtuous seers who were living together in leaf-huts in a great forest. He came to them with his shoes on, his sword hanging at one side, and his canopy of state held over him. After he left, the seers decided that

danger might come to them from him, unless he was led to see the limitation of his powers in comparison with theirs. Using their special powers, those seers, "as quickly as a strong man might stretch out his bent arm, or bend his arm stretched out, vanished from their leaf-huts and appeared before Sambara".* They asked him for a safety-pledge, Vemacitra arrogantly refused, telling them, "Terror is all that I do give."** The seers then replied :

"And dost thou only peril give
to us who ask for safety-pledge ?
Lo ! Then, accepting this from thee,
May never-ending fear be thine !
According to the seed that's sown,
So is the fruit ye reap therefrom."***

Then they disappeared from his presence, and re-appeared in their forest huts. That night, Vemacitra was tormented by terrible nightmares three times. These came directly from the forest seers' mental powers. According to Buddhaghōṣa, he was afflicted by terrible dreams thereafter, and finally became constantly terrified even when awake. This story is told in the *Samyutta-Nikāya* (I, XI, 225-227), and expanded in Buddhaghōṣa's *Sāraṭhappakāsini* (Comment on I, XI).

24. A violent mental act towards another's mental series carries more weight than a physical or verbal violence. For physical or verbal violence can be borne with forbearance, but a deliberate alteration of the consciousness-series of another may make even equanimity impossible.

25. The non-dual awareness of enlightened ones, and the empathetic insight into another's citta, are not knowledges in the sense of apprehending "an object", but rather represent the free flow of consciousness. The apprehension of an "object" always implies the presence of an appearance which is abandoned in these two kinds of awareness. Thus, these "knowledges" are really non-knowledges, because a specific object is not known within them.

*i.e. Vemacitra. This is the version of Carolyn Rhys-Davids in her translation of *Samyutta* I, XI, 227 (10), p 292.

**Ibid.

***Ibid., 9. 293.