

Preface

The investigations undertaken in the present monograph ensued as a response to the growing awareness of aporetic constellations in the history of Yogācāra research. This awareness crystallized particularly in connection with my work related to Sthiramati's *Trīṃśikāvijñaptibhāṣya*, in the course of which I have investigated the sources of a larger part of the terminology employed in Tr/TrBh.¹ In consideration of the specific phenomenological² models elaborated by Vasubandhu and Sthiramati, it seemed justified to place the *Trīṃśikā* and its *Bhāṣya* into the context of "Yogācāra-Vijñānavāda". However, the question that remained open was: which historical horizon is thereby actually referred to? — That is, while investigating the terminology that had been elaborated it was recognized how various technical contexts in TrBh are genetically related to particular earlier works. But, for various reasons, no properly defined historical horizon could be regarded as valid.

On the contrary, in the course of those investigations it had become evident that, in spite of being commonly used as a category of idea-historical classification, the designation "Yogācāra-Vijñānavāda" does not really possess a definite referential value apart from referring to a considerably confused horizon of a number of mutually contradictory assessments of an often imprecisely determined body of texts.³ It is, no doubt, correct that we have to limit our expectations with regard to the degree of precision that can be reached at the present stage in the history of buddhological research. Nevertheless, since scientific progress in our historical assessment of this important philosophical tradition is demanded as a presupposition for adequately understanding the dynamics of its development, it is necessary to reflect the unsatisfactory present state, to characterize various factors contributing to it and to critically address these with the aim of achieving greater clarity, both in terms of the theoretical awareness of the problems involved and in terms of the concrete historical solutions provided.

¹ The critical editions of the Sanskrit and Tibetan texts of TrBh were published in Vienna 2007 (ÖAW); those terminological historico-philological contextualizations (still to be expanded) will appear in connection with an annotated translation of Sthiramati's commentarial treatise as soon as possible (provided ironies of fate keep a low profile).

² The attribute "phenomenological" is being employed in a general sense with respect to Buddhist scholastic thought where philosophical models are elaborated side by side with descriptions of psychological states and dynamics, epistemological discussions, accounts of soteriological practices, etc. Abstracted from all references to specific events and personal experiences, this type of scholastic thought (in contrast to, e.g., *sūtra* literature with its abundance of anecdotic material) proceeds in the form of purely eidetic descriptions, thus qualifies to receive the general attribute "phenomenological".

³ The same can be said for the designations Yogācāra, Cittamātra and Vijñānavāda used, singly and interchangeably, as alternative expressions.

Given the fact that the cultural and educational backgrounds of the scholars contributing to Yogācāra studies are known to differ widely from each other, there exists an unavoidable diversity in the degrees of historical awareness, on the basis of which contributions are made. To no small extent, the general confusion regarding the basic demarcation of the historical horizon of "Yogācāra-Vijñānavāda" is precisely due to this difference of historical awareness, expanding from an almost complete lack of historical differentiation on the one hand, to positions proceeding from what seems amount to a sort of "over-historicizing" attitude on the other. In terms of the specific heuristic assumptions of individual scholars on various issues, this spectrum is naturally much more diversified. But in order to sketch the present problem in bold strokes, these purely formal stereotypes may serve a useful purpose at this point. While being easily recognizable by any experienced Yogācāra scholar, they are, of course, by no means meant to sublimate the desideratum of a differentiated account of the diverse positions of leading savants in the field.

What, for lack of a better term, has presently been designated as an "over-historicizing" attitude may express itself as a pronounced tendency to explain, even, a natural difference between different elements of a structural whole (e.g., the various parts of a given theoretical model) in terms of historical differences.¹ Expressed in other words, such an attitude tends to interpret a given synchronic² stage of structural diversity in terms of diachronic differentiation.³

In contrast thereto, attitudes of diminished historical awareness proceed in reverse direction and tend to reduce diachronic differentiation to a single synchronic layer of historically unaccountable diversification. In the field of Yogācāra studies, the latter type of historical reductionism is, in fact, closely associated with the name of Vasubandhu. The representatives of a fairly ahistorical perspective consider the name as referring to only one Yogācāra author, who, moreover, is regarded as the brother of Asaṅga, another illustrious and prolific Yogācāra philosopher. Most of what is an impressively large corpus of very diversified textual materials is then divided into two portions, and the authorship of one part is ascribed to Asaṅga, that of the other to Vasubandhu. In this way, one has succeeded in completely eradicating all historical development from the *Mauli Bhūmi* to the *Triṃśikā* in one stroke. And one has thereby not only bypassed all the problems of intertextual historical relationships, but has actually suppressed

¹ As a matter of fact, there are obviously a number of instances of composite theoretical models with a more or less complicated historical genesis (rather well known in this respect is the *pratītyasamutpāda* model; cf. SCHMITHAUSEN 2000a). But this principle hardly applies to every composite model. It is crucial to distinguish from case to case.

² Cf. below, p. X n.1.

³ That is, the very force and focus of a specific historical outlook may overlook that components of a model pertaining to a particular synchronic stage do mutually implicate each other.

the very possibility of understanding the introduction of novel Yogācāra-Vijñānavāda concepts as being solutions to previously aporetic constellations of phenomenological description that were overcome by a particular traditional continuity in the course of its own development within the larger context of mainly Abhidharma and early Mahāyāna thought.

Another tendency of interpretation, explicitly posturing as an historically informed attitude, provides an even more agonizing twist to the horizon of philosophical development than the mere reduction of the second Mahāyāna branch to a single synchronic layer had entailed. Apparently without being really aware of the inherent absurdities of the perspectives promoted, this interpretation essentially insists upon a reversal of the historical relationship between the two main branches of Mahāyāna (i.e., Madhyamaka and Yogācāra-Vijñānavāda).

Faced with such a panorama of confusing attitudes dominating the field of Yogācāra studies, no reliable ground was left for me upon which to found the perception of a demarcated horizon within which texts employing a specific set of Yogācāra-Vijñānavāda terminology could be located. This awareness, originally gained, as said, in the course of investigations related to the terminology found in Tr/TrBh, can be reformulated in general methodological terms. All Yogācāra-Vijñānavāda studies are necessarily hampered in their validity as long as no reliable foundation is being provided for properly understanding texts pertaining to this genre (e.g., MSA/MSABh, MSgr/MSgrBh, MAV/MAVBh, Tr/TrBh, etc.) within the horizon of "objective-historical" hermeneutic circles, described by W. Dilthey in words that may be quoted here for their simple clarity:

Aus einzelnen Worten und deren Verbindungen soll das Ganze eines Werkes verstanden werden, und doch setzt das volle Verständnis des einzelnen schon das des Ganzen voraus. Dieser Zirkel wiederholt sich in dem Verhältnis des einzelnen Werkes zu Geistesart und Entwicklung seines Urhebers, und er kehrt ebenso zurück im Verhältnis dieses Einzelwerkes zu seiner Literaturgattung.¹

(From single terms and their relationships the whole of a work is to be understood. However, a complete understanding of specific details already presupposes an understanding of the contextual whole.

This circle repeats itself with respect to the mode a single work is related to the characteristic mental horizon of its author and to the development of his authorship. And again it is present in the characteristic way a given single work is related to its genre.)

By referring to Dilthey, the intention, naturally, is not to reduce all the problems of understanding a text to his theoretical presuppositions. The issue at hand is not the theoretical problem of understanding (and translating) a

¹ W. DILTHEY, "Die Entstehung der Hermeneutik" (1900) in his *Gesammelte Schriften*, Göttingen 1964, volume 5: 316-338; here p. 330. The merely provisional translation is my own.

text in the light of any hermeneutical theory. At present, we are more simply concerned with the text as a structure of technical concepts that is related, both synchronically and diachronically, to similar structures.¹ And Dilthey has merely been quoted for his ability to characterize in two simple sentences the formal aspect of the problem of understanding with regard to conceptual and textual relationships and developments. Expressed in different terms, the insight communicated by Dilthey, which is crucial for us, is that technical concepts (and texts embodying them) are always to be understood within larger units of contextual structures providing their depths of meaningfulness, and within textual frameworks of assimilation and differentiation, both in synchronic and diachronic perspectives. Yet to locate any Yogācāra-Vijñānavāda text within a genre (as a specific horizon circumscribed by identifiable modes of elaboration) entails the task of demarcating it as pertaining to a distinct tradition starting in some way, and at some point(s?), to develop a specific set of characteristic technical terms forming the constituents of new reflective models of philosophical understanding.

Not least for the historian of ideas the introduction of a novel concept in the course of a given Buddhist tradition's development marks a significant stage, because its "predecessor" may retrospectively be perceived as an aporetic, a philosophically problematic, constellation, which the new concept — within a new contextual structure endowing it with meaningfulness — attempted to rectify. While such a novel concept may, in a sense, be said to

¹ A synchronic perspective focuses upon a formal system of interrelated elements functioning at a particular time, while a diachronic perspective is focused on the history of individual elements. Stemming originally from a purely structuralistic research milieu, these terms conveniently designate mutually non-exclusive methodological approaches and foci, which consider given phenomena within structures of different contextual directions. And as such they can likewise be applied to different contextual levels. On the level of textual relationships, we can apply both perspectives in order to understand correlations between texts (or between chapters of a given text), historical dependencies, textual strata, etc. On the conceptual level, we can understand concepts, in synchronic perspective, as components of systematic structures reflecting specific stages of philosophical development; but we can also diachronically focus on the employment of a technical term in its historical development within particular traditional contexts (cf., e.g., the articles on the notion of *dharma* in JIP 32 [2004]).

Furthermore, particular philosophical concepts forming the subject of our investigations may themselves embody both synchronic and diachronic implications. Being of a very different order, these implications are then related to the sphere of phenomenological description of our classical Indian authors. In other words, their terms coined to account for specific features of experiential reality may entail both synchronic and diachronic implications, that is, *as* phenomenological notions. An obvious example is the Yogācāra-Vijñānavāda notion of *vijñāna* with its diachronic (e.g., momentariness, *karma-phala-sambandha*, etc.) and synchronic (e.g., simultaneity of several levels and types of *vijñāna*, simultaneous presence of at least five *caittas*, etc.) implications.

Methodologically speaking, the employment of these structuralistic terms is useful when it is important to differentiate the descriptive perspectives, while indicating a theoretical awareness of the various kinds of contextual implications (directions, levels, etc.) one is analytically investigating.

preserve the older problem due to the very fact that it embodies the problem's solution, its essential function is to manifest a discontinuity, the end of a problem. As an older problem existed in relation to a conceptual framework constituting a model of understanding that is replaced by the new concept, it is clear that the new concept typically gains its own meaningfulness in a structural context — or by at least implicitly referring to such a structural context — that is different from the older one.

If I understand Prof Schmithausen, a leading authority in Yogācāra studies, correctly, it is precisely this awareness which led him to formulate the methodological paragraphs 1.7(1) and 1.7(2) in his monograph on the concept of *ālayavijñāna* (1987). According to these paragraphs, the validity of a postulated introductory passage of the concept of *ālayavijñāna* should be accounted for by means of two criteria, the first criterion being essentially one in diachronic perspective, the second one in synchronic perspective.¹ The second criterion demanded the functional structure, endowing the new concept with meaningfulness, to render the choice of the concept's name fully plausible, while the first criterion required that the introductory passage can be demonstrated to constitute a response to a systematical, doctrinal or exegetical constellation that had made the introduction of the concept inevitable.

Although arriving at different results, it has to be emphasized that my investigations proceed in basic agreement with Schmithausen's methodological criteria, which have, in fact, been explicitly adopted as the valid standards for evaluating crucial textual passages in this monograph.

As the *Trimśikāvijñaptibhāṣya* and other texts representing the same stage of philosophical reflection evidence, Yogācāra-Vijñānavāda produced a whole new set of theoretical notions, which, however, do not always occur all together in one text. This generates the question whether the Yogācāra-Vijñānavāda key terms have arisen together at all. And what kind of problems did they address? Can we perhaps even perceive the problems, to which these novel concepts provided solutions, as aspects of a more basic aporia? In what sense can we define the inception of Yogācāra-Vijñānavāda? Does this expression designate an integral structure of thought as a novel stage of philosophical reflection, and can we precisely locate its inception, or does it rather refer to historically disparate elements that are sometimes found eclectically treated together in a few texts?

These are some of the fundamental questions that will be considered in this study. My aim has hereby been to critically investigate, and to positively demonstrate, the possibility of providing a more solid foundation for the historical horizon of a specifically defined Yogācāra-Vijñānavāda stage of philosophical reflection than has hitherto been available.

¹ And, as it will become evident subsequently, the proper conception of the introductory passage of a subliminal consciousness turns out to be of significant relevance for understanding the inception of Yogācāra-Vijñānavāda.

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