THE TRIKĀYA: A STUDY OF THE BUDDHOLOGY OF THE EARLY Vijnānavāda SCHOOL OF INDIAN BUDDHISM

by

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This is a study of the trikāya (the so-called "three bodies of the Buddha") doctrine whereby the early Indian Vijnānavāda Buddhists harmonized various beliefs about the Buddha.

The most important twentieth-century studies are reviewed, but are found to contain no reliable interpretation of the early doctrine. Therefore, I have undertaken this study to clarify and interpret the trikāya. The main textual source is Asaṅga's Mahāyānasaṅgraha, which contains the earliest systematic outline of the Vijnānavāda system. The Buddhological passages have first been translated (from Tibetan and Chinese) in light of the commentaries by Vasubandhu and Asvabhāva. They have then been compared and arranged to expose the general structure of Asaṅga's trikāya.

Why did Asaṅga introduce the trikāya when other integrative Buddhologies (especially the rūpakāya/dharmakāya of the prajñāpāramitā) were already at hand? A comparison of his application of the trikāya with the prajñāpāramitā treatment of similar concerns reveals that the former integrates one idea that the latter does not—that of the Buddhafield. The necessity to include this nascent doctrine appears to have been the main reason for the introduction of the trikāya.

In the conclusion, the trikāya has been analyzed further to obtain an abstract Structuralist model exhibiting Asaṅga's Buddhology in terms acceptable to the non-believer. It is a useful framework within which to study the concept of Buddhahood itself, and its relation to other Vijnānavāda dogma. It is also a convenient way to compare the results of modern investigations.

This model, derived by an extension of Asaṅga's own search for the
implicit pattern behind diverse scriptural statements about Buddhahood, is similar to those used by the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss. Therefore, various hypotheses were suggested by his writings.

The model is a two-dimensional diagram which represents the encounter between Buddha (Svabhāvikakāya—at the top) and Man (Prthagjana—at the bottom). They are, simultaneously, poles of a dialectical tension and uninhabited existential categories. The inhabited region in the middle of the diagram is composed of a continuum of three situations along the horizontal axis. Each contains three elements: Buddha, Aspirant and Environment. The actual encounters between Buddha and Aspirant occur in these situations. They include that of the Neophyte in the world, for whom the Buddha is merely a message; the Śrāvaka who is approached by a Nirmānakāya ("historical Buddha") who teaches him by pain, and the Bodhisattva who approaches the Sambhogakāya (the god-like figure in a Buddhafield) who matures him through pleasure. In the course of these three, the aspirant undergoes "reorientation," i.e., moves up the vertical axis to become a Buddha who, in turn, reaches out to another aspirant. The remainder of the Buddhological ideas from the text are placed within this diagram.

Finally, the applicability of this model to other Buddhological questions is examined.
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<td>BEFEO</td>
<td>Bulletin de l'Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient.</td>
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<td>Dk</td>
<td>Dharmakāya</td>
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<td>JAOS</td>
<td>Journal of the American Oriental Society</td>
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<td>LC</td>
<td>Lokesh Chandra, Tibetan Sanskrit Dictionary (New Delhi: International Academy for Indian Culture, 1960)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mvy</td>
<td>Mahāvyutpatti and Index to Mahāvyutpatti. Collegiate Series, no. 3, 3rd printing (Kichudo: Kyoto University, Dept. of Literature, 1965)</td>
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<td>Nk</td>
<td>Nirmānakāya</td>
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If Dr. K. Cissell had not spent a tremendous amount of her own time teaching me to read Buddhist Chinese, the Chinese texts would still be closed. Thank you, Kathy.
Especially warm thanks are due J. Richardson and N. K. Clifford who, in addition to offering innumerable gestures of personal friendship and official aid, have been inspirations to the scholarly life. From Professor Richardson in particular, I learned that the study of another's faith is primarily an institutionalized act of respect.

The importance of the trikāya was brought to my attention by the activities of the Tibetan sprul-sku, whose traditional role is informed and legitimized through this doctrine. Their Western careers show that it is a powerful mold for human aspirations. Particular thanks go to Tarthang Tulku, who gave me many days of his time. I must also acknowledge with great respect the examples of the Venerable Dezhung Tulku and Kalu Rinpoche. Both are paragons of the concepts studied here.

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INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is a study of the trikāya (the so-called "three bodies of the Buddha") doctrine—one of the main schemes through which Mahāyāna Buddhists have understood the concept "buddha."

Buddhahood\(^1\) is the most important notion underlying the Buddhist beliefs and practices of the past two millennia. It is both the impetus for, and the goal of, the religious life. The Buddhist tradition offers a saving message to those enmeshed in a pain-filled world. This message originated from a Buddha, who claims to be articulating the method by which he personally found release from pain, and works to convert the aspirant, who has accepted the message, into a Buddha. This new Buddha then reformulates a message for the salvation of others. While these are two different individuals insofar as they possess different personal characteristics, they share the same Buddhahood insofar as the efficacy of their teaching is concerned.

The early Indian community split into several schools which developed numerous beliefs about Buddhahood. While the history of this period is murky, it is safe to say that many leading masters of the fourth century A.D. were acquainted with a broad spectrum of beliefs in every area of dogma and were attempting to formulate catholic systems within which these could be accommodated. The broadest of the resulting schools was the Vijñānavāda (or Yogācāra\(^2\)) whose development continued in both Tibet and the Far East.

The founders of the Vijñānavāda divided Buddhist theory into several categories of concerns and developed a comprehensive theory, capable of incorporating a wide range of opinions, around each. The category which included the various early ideas about Buddhahood was organized around the new trikāya theory. In addition to harmonizing the early ideas, the trikāya has since
proven capable of stimulating the development of new Buddhological doctrines in other cultures, and in harmonizing them with the Indian ones.

Despite its importance, no satisfactory explanation of the trikāya is available. Modern interpretations have failed in at least one of three ways:

— Many scholars, working only from the trikāya passages of the Vijñānavādin treatises, have produced interpretations which contradict other key aspects of the system.

— Many have produced narrow interpretations of the doctrine in one classical text, which are inapplicable to later developments grounded in the classical trikāya and explained by reference to it.

— The few scholars who have worked from the later traditions (e.g., H. V. Guenther) have often produced interpretations which appear to be anachronistic when applied to the earlier texts.

In this study I attempt to develop an interpretation which will be applicable to the entire range of Indo-Tibetan Buddhology. The study includes a survey of previous scholarship, an intensive examination of the trikāya doctrine as it appears in Asanga's Mahāyānasamgraha, the derivation of a structural model through which to interpret the doctrine, and a brief commentary of the applicability of this model to other texts. In addition, a bibliography of primary sources for an expanded study is included in Appendix B. While the arrangement and analysis of the data from the Mahāyānasamgraha constitutes the bulk of the study, its focus is the new structural model.

While formulating this model, it became obvious that the analysis of the factors which led Buddhists to replace a two-kāya by a trikāya theory, and to
defend the latter even while adopting further multi-kāya theories, illuminates the broader question of how the relationship between aspirant and other gives rise to various two, three and four-term descriptions of religious experience. One of the next stages in an extended enquiry would be to begin a comparative study of trinitarianism on the basis of these insights.
Western emphasis on the historical individual has degraded the symbolic "buddha" to a proper noun, a personal designation which is automatically read as "a Buddha" or "the Buddha." In order to preserve some polyvalence, this term which would simply be "buddha" in the texts under consideration will be rendered by "Buddhahood" in this study. Please note that "Buddhahood" is not a state of being in which an individual Buddha may exist.

The lack of agreement on a name for this school is due to the many traditions descending from the early masters (who usually called their message simply the "Mahāyāna"). Later adherents to this tradition in India, Tibet, China and Japan understood the teaching in slightly different ways, accepted different traditions about it, and called it by different names. In addition, some saw the early Vījñānavāda as several traditions and applied a different name to each. Most of the names are versions of three labels: Vījñānavāda (those who speak about viññāna), Vijnaptimātra or Cittamātra ("Ideation-only" or "Mind-only"), Yogācāra ("Practitioners of Yoga") or Fa-hsiang ("Dharma-marks"—a Far-Eastern term).

In the present study the early treatises ascribed to Maitreya-Asaṅga-Vasubandhu are regarded as one loose "Vījñānavāda" system. This term was chosen over "Yogācāra" because it stresses the systematic rather than the meditative aspect.

An example is the Tibetan institution of "sprul-sk'u" in which a certain monastic role is continuously filled by the same individual via the official recognition of his or her successive reincarnations. This institution is derived from the trikāya ("sprul-sk'u" is simply the Tibetan translation of "Nirmānakāya," one of the three kāyas of the trikāya) and can be understood only through the parent doctrine. If that is interpreted in the usual way (i.e., the Nirmānakāya is an incarnation of a real transcendent Buddha), many details of the sprul-sk'u's status and functions remain incomprehensible.
CHAPTER I

REVIEW OF SCHOLARSHIP
The lack of any adequate interpretation of the trikāya is not due to neglect of the topic. As early as 1939 Lamotte had spoken of the "immense" literature on the topic, and several studies have been published since.

New research must begin with a careful review of the earlier work. In this section I shall present such a review and attempt to define those approaches which have been most (and least) successful. A complete survey of scholarship is unnecessary. The following review deals only with the major twentieth-century studies. No mention has been made of notices from the nineteenth century (Burnouf, Edkins, Beal, Schlagintweit and Kern all touched on it), or of passing references in practically all later populatizations of the Mahāyāna. In addition to the primary scholarly investigations, a few Indian, Japanese and British works have been included because they represent the popular modern understanding of the doctrine in those countries. The entries are in chronological order.

As several of these studies are sprinkled with non-standard, inconsistent restorations of Sanskrit terms and other difficulties, I have not marked specific errors within quotations.


This pastiche of Tibetan texts includes the abbreviated sūtra on the trikāya called the 'phags-pa sku-gsum shes-bya-ba theg-pa chen-po'i mdo. Rockhill's translation reads as follows:

Once I heard the following discourse (said Ānanda), while the Blessed One was stopping at Rāja griha, on the Vulture's Peak, together with an innumerable number of bodhisattvas, devas, and nāgas who were doing him homage. Then from out this company, the Bodhisattva Kshitigarbha (Sa'i-snying-po), who was (also) there, arose from his seat and spoke as follows:
to the Blessed One: 'Has the Blessed One a body?' The Blessed One said, 'Kshitigarbha, the Blessed One, the Tathāgata, has three bodies: the body of the law (Dharmakāya), the body of perfect enjoyment (Sambhogakāya), the apparitional body (Nirmanakāya). Noble sir (Kulaputra), of the three bodies of the Tathāgata, the Dharmakāya is a perfectly pure nature (svabhāva), the Sambhogakāya is a perfectly pure samādhi; a perfectly pure life is the Nirmanakāya of all Buddhas. Noble sir, the Dharmakāya of the Tathāgata is the prerogative of being without svabhāva like space; the Sambhogakāya is the prerogative of being visible like a cloud; the Nirmanakāya being the object of all Buddhas, is the prerogative of permeating all things as does a rain.'

The Bodhisattva Kshitigarbha said to the Blessed One, 'Make visible these definitions of the true bodies of the Blessed One.' Then the Blessed One said to the Bodhisattva Kshitigarbha: 'Noble sir, the three bodies of the Tathāgata will be discerned thus: the Dharmakāya is discernible in the whole air of the Tathāgata; the Sambhogakāya is discernible in the whole air of a bodhisattva; the Nirmanakāya is discernible in the air of different pious men. Noble sir, the Dharmakāya is the nature inherent to all buddhas; the Sambhogakāya is the samādhi inherent to all buddhas; the Nirmanakāya is the object of all buddhas. Noble sir, purity in the abode of the soul, the science like a mirror (ādaṛśadājñāna), is the Dharmakāya; purity in the abode of the sinful mind is the science of equality (samatādājñāna); purity in the perceptions of the mind, the science of thoroughly analysing, is the Sambhogakāya; purity in the abode of the perceptions of the five doors, the science of the achievement of what must be done, is the Nirmanakāya' (pp. 200-202).

While Rockhill made no attempt to explain this little passage, later references show that it provided a succinct statement of the doctrine which enabled everyone to discuss the same thing, no small matter in the early days of widespread confusion about Mahāyāna texts and doctrines.


This begins:
Kern begins by asking how "la suprême vérité" (paramârtha) beyond the realm of thought, can clothe itself in a triple body for the salvation of the world. He proposes (somewhat doubtfully) that the three are conventional (sâmvrti) bodies as is the world which they save. Hence the ultimate does not really become or assume form.

What really interests Kern is the place of this doctrine in Indian thought. Is it merely a Buddhist version of the Hindu trimûrti? He notes that the trimûrti refers to both: past-present-future, and the manifestation of the supreme being through the three gunas. For the trikâya to be related to these, it would have to exhibit a similar meaning. To determine whether or not such a relationship exists, he defines the terms dharma, sambhoga and nirmâna. His definitions, and consequent identification of the trikâya theory with the Sâmkhya, are simply too ill-informed to be seriously considered. However, his major conclusion still stands, although we might question why he chose the horizontal trimûrti rather than a vertical triad such as Brahma-Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa:

De ce qui précède, il suit qu'entre la Trimûrti et le Trikâya il y a seulement ceci de commun qu'ils disposent en triades la série des phénomènes.

Finally, Kern asks,

Pour quelle raison les Mahâyânistes ont-ils introduit dans leur système idéaliste, et y ont-ils adapté, talîter
Although there is little valid information in this article, Kern's approach is very interesting. He does not simply quote definitions from a sāstra, but bases his investigation on the following considerations:

— As Buddhism developed vis-à-vis other Indian systems, a doctrine should be explained in its Indian context.

— Certain logical problems are obvious to the European scholar. An attempt to resolve them will shed light on the theory.

— Finally, the raison d'être of the theory must be considered.

Kern's article is the last of the "remarks" by the older scholars. A more informed debate was initiated in the same year by two dissimilar and aggressive young men: Louis de La Vallée Poussin and D. T. Suzuki.


M. La Vallée Poussin connects the trikāya with the "Mahāyāna school," paying little attention to possible differences between actual schools in India, China, Japan and Tibet. He distinguishes three phases:

— an early speculative doctrine of Buddhahood drawn from Śūnyavādin sources.

— a broadening of this early doctrine to cover the entire field of dogmatics
(the Yogācāra doctrine—although La Vallée Poussin understands Yogācāra as
the system of Asvaghosa), \footnote{1}

— a concluding tantric phase.

He is interested only in the first two phases. He knew, and wished to
know, nothing whatsoever about the tantras:

The Tantric authors . . . are more obscure and abstruse
the more vulgar and obscene are the facts that they have made
the starting-point of their insane or frantic lucubrations . . .

Using the above divisions, La Vallée Poussin examines each of the three
kāyas in turn. Unfortunately, his understanding of Mahāyāna theory was incom­
plete and few of his comments are acceptable. It will be sufficient to quote
his summary:

I. The doctrine of the Trikāya as Buddhology, after its com­
pletion, but yet free from the 'ontological' and cosmogonic
speculations.

(A) The very nature of a Buddha is the Bodhi (Enlightenment),
of Prajñāpāramitā (Perfect Wisdom), or knowledge of the
Law (Dharma), i.e., of the absolute Truth. By acquiring
this knowledge, nirvāṇa is realized in potentia or in
actu. The Dharmakāya, Body of the Law, of a Buddha is
the Buddha in nirvāṇa or in nirvāṇa-like rapture
(samādhikāya = dharmākāya).
(B) A Buddha, as long as he is not yet merged into nirvāṇa,
possesses and enjoys, for his own sake and for others'
welfare, the fruit of his charitable behavior as a
Bodhisattva. The second body is the Body of Enjoyment
or Beatific Body (sambhogakāya).
(C) Human beings known as Buddhas are magical contrivances
(nirmāṇakāya) created at random by real Buddhas, i.e., by
Buddhas possessed of beatific bodies, sovereigns of celest­
tial worlds, Tuṣita-heavens or 'Paradises' (Sukhāvatīs).

II. The doctrine of Trikāya as an ontologic and cosmologic
system.

(A) By Body of Law one has to understand the void and perma­
nent reality that underlies every phenomenon (dharma),
or the store of the 'dharmas,' or more exactly the uncharacterized Intellect (vijñāna).

(B) Body of Enjoyment is the Dharmakāya evolved as Being, Bliss, Charity, Radiance, or the Intellect as far as it is individualized as Buddha or Bodhisattva.

(C) Magical or rather Transformation Body is the same Intellect when defiled, when individualized as 'common people' (prthagjana), infernal being, etc. (pp. 945-946).

While this pioneering study helped to open the subject to Western scholarship, it contains little acceptable information. In this early phase of his career La Vallée Poussin was acquainted with only a few Buddhist texts, and lacked the overview of Mahāyāna Buddhism necessary to make historical and doctrinal distinctions within the "Mahāyāna school." His three-stage model is confused and, should the reader supply more accurate distinctions, the argument disintegrates.

Above all, the author is not dealing with the trikāya doctrine but with a doctrine of three separate kāyas, each studied in an historical-developmental manner.


The sole similarity between the approaches of La Vallée Poussin and Suzuki is the fact that both describe a Mahāyāna school irrespective of time and culture. La Vallée Poussin was the European scholar for whom Buddhism was an extension (via Sanskrit) of classical studies—a complex textual puzzle. He seems not to have entertained the slightest suspicion that a continuing Mahāyāna tradition might be extant, or that adherents to it could throw light on their own scriptures.³

Suzuki's apologetic is a breath of life amidst this arid arrogance. His Mahāyāna is not a philological game but a developing faith:
It is naught but an idle talk to question the historical value of an organism, which is now full of vitality and active in all its functions, and to treat it like an archeological object, dug out from the depths of the earth, or like a piece of bric-à-brac, discovered in the ruins of an ancient royal palace. Mahāyānism is not an object of historical curiosity. Its vitality and activity concern us in our daily life. It is a great spiritual organism; its moral and religious forces are still exercising an enormous power over millions of souls; and its further development is sure to be a very valuable contribution to the world-progress of the religious consciousness. What does it matter, then, whether or not Mahāyānism is the genuine teaching of the Buddha? (p. 15).

This attitude underlies the entire book. Suzuki accepts the Japanese tradition, as it reached him, as "Mahāyāna." He shows comparatively little interest in its history, preferring to present a doctrine palatable to Western tastes. The fact that this will necessarily be a modified form of the doctrine he himself has received bothers him not at all. After all, it has been continuously adapting for more than two millennia—why stop now? In brief, Suzuki is a missionary.

From his Western contacts (e.g., Paul Carus), Suzuki seems to have concluded that the modern consciousness is philosophically Hegelian and devoutly Christian, and has presented Buddhism in terms drawn from both.

Two chapters of the *Outlines* are especially relevant: chapter IX, "The Dharmakāya," and chapter X, "The Doctrine of Trikāya." Suzuki views the Dharmakāya as the cornerstone of his Mahāyāna-Hegelian-Christianity (with some Vedānta thrown in for universality):

The Dharmakāya may be compared in one sense to the God of Christianity and in another sense to the Brahman or Parātman of Vedāntism. It is different, however, from the former in that it does not stand transcendentally above the universe, which, according to the Christian view, was created by God, but which is, according to Mahāyānism, a manifestation of the Dharmakāya himself. It is also different from Brahman in that it is not absolutely impersonal, nor is it
a mere being. The Dharmakāya, on the contrary, is capable of willing and reflecting, or, to use Buddhist phraseology, it is Karunā (love) and Bodhi (intelligence), and not the mere state of being.

This pantheistic and at the same time entheistic Dharmakāya is working in every sentient being, for sentient beings are nothing but a self-manifestation of the Dharmakāya. Individuals are not isolated existences, as imagined by most people. If isolated, they are nothing, they are so many soap-bubbles which vanish one after another in the vacuity of space. All particular existences acquire their meaning only when they are thought of in their oneness in the Dharmakāya. The veil of Māya, i.e., subjective ignorance, may temporally throw an obstacle to our perceiving the universal light of Dharmakāya, in which we are all one. But when our Bodhi or intellect, which is by the way a reflection of the Dharmakāya in the human mind, is so fully enlightened, we no more build the artificial barrier of egoism before our spiritual eye; the distinction between the meum and teum is obliterated, no dualism throws the nets of entanglement over us; I recognise myself in you and you recognise yourself in me; tat tvam asi . . .

This state of enlightenment may be called the spiritual expansion of the ego, or, negatively, the ideal annihilation of the ego. A never-dying stream of sympathy and love which is the life of religion will now spontaneously flow out of the fountainhead of Dharmakāya (pp. 46-47).

Suzuki sees the "Doctrine of Trikāya" as a somewhat different doctrine, which he does not really understand. He quotes from the Suvarnaprabhāsa but does not seem to utilize its ideas. Suzuki has no difficulty with the two-kāya model, into which he quickly slips. The Dharmakāya is God or Being, which is manifested in the phenomenal earthly Nirmānakāya. Suzuki realizes, with some embarrassment, that this does not really touch the three kāya doctrine, and tries to explain away the Sambhogakāya as an interloper:

But the conception of Sambhogakāya is altogether too mysterious to be fathomed by a limited consciousness. . . . the most plausible conclusion that suggests itself to modern sceptical minds is that the Sambhogakāya must be a mere creation of an intelligent, finite mind, which is intently bent on reaching the highest reality, but, not being . . .
on account of its limitations, to grasp the object in its absoluteness, the finite mind fabricates all its ideals after its own fashion into a spiritual-material being, which is logically a contradiction, but religiously an object deserving veneration and worship. And this being is no more than the Body of Bliss. It lies halfway between the pure being of Dharmakāya and the earthly form of Nirmāṇakāya, the Body of Transformation. It does not belong to either, but partakes something of both. It is in a sense spiritual like the Dharmakāya, and yet it cannot go beyond material limitations, for it has a form, definite and determinate. When the human soul is thirsty after a pure being or an absolute which cannot be comprehended in a palpable form, it creates a hybrid, an imitation, or a reflection, and tries to be satisfied with it, just as a little girl has her innate and not yet fully developed maternity satisfied by tenderly embracing and nursing the doll, an inanimate imitation of a real living baby. And the Mahāyānists seem to have made most of this childish humanness. They produced as many sūtras as their spiritual yearnings demanded, quite regardless of historical facts, and made the Body of Bliss of the Tathāgata the author of all these works... (pp. 267-268).

Modern Mahāyānists in full accordance with this interpretation of the Doctrine of Trikāya do not place much importance on the objective aspects of the Body of Bliss (Sambhogakāya). They consider them at best the fictitious products of an imaginative mind... modern Buddhists look with disdain on these egotistic materialistic conceptions of religious life (pp. 268-269).

In brief, Suzuki shifts to a two-kāya theory interpreted ontologically. A final attempt to deal with the trikāya by homologizing it to the Christian trinity founders on the fact that he understands the Holy Spirit no better than the Sambhogakāya.


M. Masson-Oursel had the following materials at his disposal: two inscriptions, Stael-Holstein's Tibetan version of the Trikāyastava, Rockhill's text, La Vallée Poussin's 1906 article, Suzuki's Outlines, the text of the
Abhisamayālaṃkāra (which he had read with S. Lévi), and a related portion of an unidentified manuscript. He proposes a tentative interpretation of these materials, especially of the data offered by La Vallée Poussin and Suzuki. The article is in three parts:

— an examination of each kāya.
— a discussion of the historical and philosophical roots of the doctrine.
— extracts from the Abhisamayālaṃkāra and the unidentified manuscript.

He begins by defining kāya as "organism" or "system" rather than "body," pointing out that in Buddhist theory, the only stability is to be found in the relationships which occur between phenomena: "Kāya désigne une loi de ce genre, par opposition à la fixité rigide d'une substance ou d'une personnalité."

The author maintains that "dharma" in "Dharmakāya" has a dual significance: the sense of a moral rule or law (as in the Pali dhammakāya), and the sense of essential quality, reality, true nature. As the prototype of morality it is the first religious principle. As the supreme abstraction it is the first metaphysical principle.

While La Vallée Poussin has criticized Suzuki for accepting the former, Masson-Oursel castigates him for ignoring the latter. Further, he points out the inconsistency between La Vallée Poussin's rejection of the Dharmakāya as ontological substrate and the ontologically oriented explanation in his 1906 article.

Masson-Oursel goes on to identify the tathāgatagarbha with the Ālayavijñāna and tackles the problem which to La Vallée Poussin had presented a "cosmic" dimension:

Il peut sans doute sembler étrange que le Dharmakāya
d'un Bouddha (car tous les Bouddhas possibles possèdent, théoriquement, les trois kāya) soit proclamé la matrice des autres Bienheureux; mais c'est simplement une façon d'indiquer que le Dharmakāya appartient en commun à tous les Tathāgatas, c'est-à-dire d'affirmer l'unité du bouddhisme, l'identité de sa philosophie et de sa morale à travers l'infinie multiplicité des Bouddhas concevables (pp. 584-585).

He also mentions the mythical identification of the Dharmakāya with such figures as Vairocana. He concludes that, "en raison de ses attributs à la fois métaphysiques et moraux, est proprement la conception Mahāyānist de l'absolu." As such, it is somehow "above" the other two—they are aspects of it.

The author translates "Sambhogakāya" literally as "body of beatitude," or "body of sympathy," but admits that this helps very little. He begins with La Vallée Poussin's observation that, "un Bouddha, tant qu'il n'est pas encore plongé dans le Nirvāṇa, jouit, pour son propre avantage et pour l'avantage d'autrui, du fruit de sa conduite charitable comme Bodhisattva."

But, objects Masson-Oursel, if the Sambhogakāya is a stage prior to full Buddhahood, how can it be a body of the Buddha? La Vallée Poussin's second explanation was that "le Dharmakāya évolué à l'état d'être, de béatitude, de charité, d'éclat lumineux ou l'intellect (vijnāna) en tant qu'il est individué comme Bouddha ou Bodhisattva." To this Masson-Oursel asks, "Nous aimerais savoir quel est le rapport entre la jouissance qu'a le Dharmakāya lui-même, et son extériorisation en d'autres êtres." Presumably this is an honest question and not a rhetorical refutation like the last. Certainly it has been a key question for the Buddhists themselves.

Masson-Oursel's own understanding is that the Sambhogakāya is an intermediate kāya, sharing the natures of both Dharmakāya and Nirmāṇakāya. It is
manifested for the benefit of the Bodhisattvas, whose nature explains the
class of the manifestation. To this idea he ties an explanation of the
samādhikāya, the vipākakāya or puṇya-sambhāra, and of the marks of the Buddha.

But all of this does not explain how or why the totally transcendent
Dharmakāya manifests itself. Masson-Oursel notes La Vallée Poussin's dual
explanation:

— that the Buddha's store of merit automatically gives rise to a Sambhogakāya
for the salvation of all beings.

— that the Sambhogakāya represents a compassionate response on the part of
the Buddha.

But, Masson-Oursel asks, if the manifestation is mechanical or automatic,
why is the concept of compassion necessary? These two are, he feels, contra-
dictory. We may remark here that Masson-Oursel seems to be unacquainted with
the Bodhisattva vow and is probably trapped by Western connotations of
"compassion."

To answer the question of how a Buddha may possess a Sambhogakāya, the
author refers to a passage of the Suvarṇaprabhāsa quoted by Suzuki: the simile
of moon, water and visual patch, all three of which are required to constitute
an image. The moon represents the Dharmakāya, the water the Bodhisattva, the
visual patch the Sambhogakāya which unites them. This tapers off into an
obscure argument from Spinoza. Finally, he says:

La principale difficulté que nous éprouvons à nous faire
une idée du Sambhogakāya réside dans son caractère à la fois
objectif, comme manifestation, et subjectif, comme béatitude.
Mais toute métaphysique a été forcée, bon gré, mal gré, de
reconnaître à l'absolu ces deux caractères; le Dharmakāya
n'était-il pas déjà être et bodhi? Nous ne nous flattons
pas, d'ailleurs de dissiper les incertitudes qui flottent
autour du concept de Sambhogakāya: le rendre pleinement intelligible serait se méprendre sur sa signification authentique, puisqu'il faudrait être Bodhisattva pour pénétrer véritablement son sens, de même que le Dharmakāya n'est compréhensible—à supposer qu'on ait encore le droit—d'employer ce mot—qu'aux seuls Bouddhas (p. 590).

Although this explanation is certainly unsatisfactory, Masson-Oursel has brought out two important points:

— the close relationship between Sambhogakāya and Bodhisattva.
— the intermediate, relational character of the Sambhogakāya.

Both of these must be retained in any future discussion.

The author is much more certain about the Nirmānakāya:

Dans le Dharmakāya l'essence du Bouddha était tellement intérieure à elle-même, qu'elle se renfermait en une indivisible unité, supérieure à toute conscience; dans le Sambhogakāya cette essence se rend accessible, sans toutefois se diviser, aux êtres devenus les plus proches d'elle-même; dans le Nirmānakāya elle s'exteriorise en apparences imparfaites, individuelles, multiples...

Nirmānakāya désigne avant tout les Bouddhas sous la forme où ils ont apparu ou apparaîtront sur cette terre. Au lieu de rester indifférents dans l'éternité, ils envoient en ce monde de misère des reflets (pratibimba) d'eux-mêmes...

(p. 591).

This seems reasonable. However, he continues:

Le nom de Nirmānakāya s'applique en outre, en un sens plus large, à toutes apparences sensibles, aux phénomènes du monde du désir (kāmaloka). Aussi ce kāya est-il présent partout (sarvatraga); il est le créateur (nirmātar) de cet univers, théâtre de notre vie (p. 591).

The author accounts for these two ideas (Nirmānakāya as Śākyamuni and Nirmānakāya as saṃsāra) by suggesting that they refer to opposite views of the
same reality, that the **Nirmānakāya** is an ambiguous concept, "La même idée se retrouve ici sous une forme plus imagée, dans cette identité du créateur et du saveur ausein du Nirmānakāya." Should this suggestion really hold up, it would provide an alternative to La Vallée Poussin's historical stages separating the Buddhological from the cosmological.

After his review of each kāya, the author surveys the historical and philosophical significance of the doctrine. He says frankly,

*Il est regrettable que l'insuffisance des documents dont nous disposons nous ait contraint de restituer cette abstruse théorie des trois corps au moyen de textes des provenances et des époques les plus disparates. Le sens de la doctrine ne sera vraiment connu que lorsque nous pourrons déterminer dans quelles circonstances elle est née, dans quelle mesure elle a varié (p. 592).*

After a brief historical sketch of the Lokottara idea, Masson-Oursel summarizes:

*Ainsi, le problème des trois corps naquit d'un effort spéculatif pour concilier les traits contradictoires de la personnalité du Bouddha: la valeur absolue de son enseignement et les contingences de sa vie humaine. La solution consiste à poser dans l'éternel un Dharmakāya absolu, et à projeter dans le temps, dans l'espace, dans le monde, une ombre de ce dieu, le Nirmānakāya. . . . la doctrine prend une forme métaphysique bien plus abstraite chez Asaṅga. . . . Elle revêt aussi la forme d'un culte populaire; des exvoto sont consacrés au Sambhogakāya ou au Nirmānakāya comme chez nous au Sacré-Coeur. Le dogme nouveau s'étend au Tibet, à la Chine, à la Mongolie, au Japon, il s'y perpétue jusqu'à nos jours. Au cours du moyen âge, le tantrisme multiplia selon sa fantaisie les corps du Bouddha, qui furent quatre, cinq, ou plus nombreux encore (p. 594).*

This, of course, does not really explain the **trikāya** system, only a two-kāya idea, plus an added popular cult. Masson-Oursel also speaks of the influence of popular Hinduism: *"Le trikāya fait en quelque sorte pendant à la trimūrti,*
but does not go so far as to suggest that the triadic pattern was simply a cultural given which could account for the \textit{trikāya} independently of any logic internal to the doctrine.

Two Sanskrit texts and translations dealing with the \textit{kāyas} are appended to this article. The first is an extract from the \textit{Abhisamayālaṅkāra}. The second is an untitled \textit{Vijñānavādin} manuscript. From these he reaches the following conclusions:

Pour conclure, en ce qui concerne la théorie des corps, la contribution principale que les textes cités apportent à notre enquête, c'est que le Svabhāvikakāya et le Dharmakāya sont des systèmes d'idéaux \textit{(dharma, dharmatā)}, conditions abstraites de la connaissance suprême, sans dualité, sans multiplicité, sans développement; que le Sambhogakāya est un système de signes \textit{(laksana, anulaksana)} par lesquels un Bouddha se manifeste aux Bodhisattvas; enfin que le Nairnāṇikakāya est un système d'actions \textit{(karmāṇi)} par lequel un Bouddha se révèle d'une façon phénoménale aux Āryavakas, etc.

Quant à fixer le sens précis de la multitude de concepts auxquels il est fait allusion dans ces textes, c'est pour l'instant une entreprise peu abordable, car nous n'avons guère pour la plupart d'entre eux d'autre point de comparaison que le \textit{Mahāyāna-Sūtrālaṅkāra} d'Asaṅga. . . (pp. 617-618).


La Vallée-Poussin rejoins the discussion with a flourish:

Pour se faire une idée exacte des Corps du Bouddha, c'est-à-dire d'un chapitre important de la "bouddhologie," il faut embrasser toute l'histoire du Bouddhisme, depuis les origines jusqu'aux mythologies et aux théosophies si pénétrées de Civaïsme qu'elles méritent à peine le nom de bouddhiques. Il faut aussi passer en revue diverses philosophies. . . . Et c'est là notre ambition (p. 257).

Although the notes which follow fall short of this grand intention, they reveal the author's growing awareness of the complexity of Buddhist doctrine.
He maintains his earlier perspective but subdivides his three stages and interprets them in a more sophisticated manner. He first discusses "Archaic Buddhism," which recognized a visible form (rūpakāya), and the living embodiment of the doctrine (Dharmakāya). He does not explain his rejection of the notion that the "kāya" in Dharmakāya indicates that the doctrine was the later representative of the charismatic Buddha.

He then turns to "Scholasticism," in which the Buddhists retained the word "Dharmakāya" but shifted the significance of "dharma" to an Abhidharmic sense. Hence, Dharmakāya came to mean:

... le Bouddha lui-même, c'est la collection, l'aggré-gat et la série des éléments psychiques et matériels qui constituent l'individu qu'on appelle un Bouddha, son âme et son corps, dans notre langage occidental. — Mais dharmakāya s'entendra au propre des "éléments" qui font que cet individu est un Bouddha.

Le Bouddha, en tant qu'il est visible, le rūpakāya, "corps visible," collection des dharmas visibles ou matériels, n'est qu'une portion du Bouddha. Ces dharmas visibles, plus les dharmas invisibles, sensations, pensées, etc., sont tout le Bouddha (p. 258).

However, he realizes that finer distinctions must be made:

3. Mais il faut distinguer trois écoles.

A. L'école d'Abhidharma ou du Petit Véhicule. ... Cette école croit à la réalité substantielle des dharmas, et sa critique s'arrête à la négation de l'individu (pudgalanairatmya).

B.-C. L'école Mādhyamika ou nihilist (premier siècle de notre ère?) et l'école Vijñānavādin ou idéaliste (un peu postérieure?) nient l'existence en soi des dharmas: c'est la
thèse du dharma-nairatmya, qui caractérise les philosophies du Grand Véhicule. Ces deux écoles tiennent que tous les corps et toutes les pensées sont "vides" (śūnya). La réelle nature (tathāta) des choses comme des individus, des Bouddhas comme de tous les êtres, c'est la "vacuité" (śūnyatā); et l'expression dharmakāya peut être comprise dans le sens de "récèlle nature," "corps essentiel" (svabhāvika kāya) (pp. 258-259).

The author now shifts to the trikāya. He examines each in the light of each of the two Madhyamika perspectives. From the conventional perspective they appear mythological:

... les Bouddhas sont de grands personnages divins, entourés de grands saints qui sont de futurs Bouddhas; tous les êtres doivent, pour parvenir au Nirvāṇa, passer d'abord par l'état de Bouddha.

On distinguerait donc trois corps du Bouddha.

1. Le Dharmakāya, dont la définition se superpose à peu près à celle de l'Abhidharma. C'est l'ensemble des connaissances et des qualités morales du Bouddha, aussi bien celles qui se rapportent au monde que celles qui sont productrices du Nirvāṇa: d'une part, la compassion, le pouvoir de détruire les passions de ceux qui voient le Bouddha; d'autre part, les méditations abstrus qui aboutissent à l'inconscience: telle par exemple la méditation du néant.

2. Le Sambhogakāya, corps glorieux, le Bouddha en tant que visible, "le corps orné des trente-deux marques": c'est le rūpakāya, la "forme visible" de la vieille tradition. Mais ce corps, comme nous allons le dire, est invisible aux simples mortels. Ceux-ci n'en aperçoivent que des doubles magiques, plus ou moins ressemblants à l'original.


Cākyamuni, dans le Bouddhisme du Petit Véhicule, est un homme. ... Cet homme obtint la qualité de Bouddha; révéla le chemin, et entra dans le Nirvāṇa, désormais invisible aux dieux et aux hommes: car il est délivré de l'existence.

La secte des Vetulyakas que la tradition place avant Aśoka, et que je crois très ancienne, conçoit une idée plus haute de Cākyamuni et du Bouddha. ... Cākyamuni est devenu Bouddha il y a très longtemps; il règne dans le ciel des dieux Tuṣitas d'où on crut faussement qu'il était
descendu pour s'incarner et conquérir ici la qualité de Bouddha; le Câkyamuni que les hommes ont vu n'est qu'un fantôme créé par le vrai Câkyamuni, un "corps magique" ou un "corps créé" (nirmāṇakāya).

Ce docétisme aboutit, dans le Grand Véhicule ..., à la conception de Bouddhas presque éternels, intervenant ici-bas par des apparitions magiques qui prêchent et donnent aux hommes le spectacle édifiant et instructif de toute la geste d'un Bouddha, de toute la genèse de la qualité de Bouddha. Les Bouddhas sont de grands dieux mythologiques, trônant dans quelque paradis où de grands saints les entourent. À la seule apparition magique dont parlaient les premiers docètes, du moins à en croire nos sources, beaucoup d'autres sont ajoutées: pendant la longue période de son règne, et dans l'univers qui est son "champ," un Bouddha est l'universelle providence: par son corps magique, divisé à l'infini, il "mûrit" les êtres pour le salut (pp. 277-278).

From the ultimate perspective:

Nous arriverons au Nirvāṇa en profitant de l'enseignement que donnent les corps magiques (nīrmāṇakāya), en contemplant le corps glorieux lorsque nous serons devenus des saints (bodhisattvas); en devenant nous-mêmes des Bouddhas, c'est-à-dire des dharmakāyas, collections de dharmas très purs qui constituent des êtres déjà illuminés (buddha) et très proches du Nirvāṇa. — Et il n'y a pas d'autre moyen d'arriver au Nirvāṇa.

Cependant, au point de vue métaphysique, la position des Nihilistes n'est pas exactement celle des Idéalistes.

Pour les Nihilistes, les deux premiers corps (dharma et sambhogakāya) forment un seul être, le Bouddha, être réel au point de vue de l'expérience, mais "vide" au point de vue métaphysique: car les dharmas qui le composent n'existent pas en soi.

Pour les Idéalistes, le dharmakāya est le Bouddha tel qu'il s'apparait à lui-même, tel qu'il a conscience de soi: connaissances productrices de Nirvāṇa et pensées mondaines, tournées vers le salut du monde: les premières, lorsqu'elles sont très pures, se confondent avec ce que nous avons appelé "la pensée sans plus" (p. 273); ce sont des connaissances d'où l'opposition de "connaissable" et "connaissance" est exclue et, par conséquent, des connaissances qui sont des non-connaissances; les secondes sont "imaginées" dans la mesure, très réduite, où elles comportent cette opposition: car la charité du saint est vide de l'idée de "donneur," de
don et de "receveur"; — le corps glorieux est le Bouddha tel qu'il apparaît aux saints (bodhisattvas), qui croient encore à l'existence de la matière (rupa); — le corps magique est le Bouddha tel qu'il apparaît aux êtres inférieurs (grâvakādi *) qui ne peuvent encore voir que des formes très particularisées. Les deux derniers corps apparaissent aux saints et aux êtres inférieurs par l'efficacité de la pensée mondaine qui est une partie du dharmakāya, par l'efficacité aussi du mérite acquis par les saints et les êtres inférieurs eux-mêmes.

On peut, enfin, considérer comme le vrai corps (kāya) du Bouddha, ce que le Bouddha est au point de vue de la vérité absolue. La nature vraie (dharmatā) d'un Bouddha sera appelée son dharmakāya, en termes plus clairs, son svābhāvikākāya ou dharmatākāya, son corps vrai. — Nous sommes renseignés sur la nature vraie des dharmas qui constituent le Bouddha: ces dharmas ne sont pas produits "en soi"; ils ne sont pas produits, au point de vue de la vérité absolue; ils sont "vides"; ils ont pour nature la "vacuité" (pañyatā).

On peut en dire autant de tous les dharmas, et de la foule des êtres que constituent les dharmas: tous les êtres ont donc le même vrai corps (svābhāvikākāya = dharmatākāya = dharmakāya) que les Bouddhas.

Toutefois, dans les Bouddhas prédominent les dharmas producteurs de Nirvāna (lokottara), à l'exclusion des dharmas mondains. Les Bouddhas ont donc, à peu près, purifié leur vrai corps: ils sont vides, ou à peu près, au point de vue même de la vérité d'apparence (pp. 279-281).

Finally, the author notes various theories, especially the tathāgatagarbha, which he considers to be part of the "immanentise" Buddhology of the Mantrayāna, and speculates on parallels between Mahāyāna Buddhism and Vedānta. He clearly wishes to see the trikāya within the general context of the development of Indian religious thought but does not have the necessary expertise to do more than draw attention to a few similarities.

This article has been quoted in detail because, despite shortcomings in the interpretation, it offers the first summary of the major features which later scholars came to consider their prime data.
This book is important because it establishes the position found in most later popular Indian works. Like Suzuki, Coomaraswamy sees the trikāya as an ontological doctrine, but draws parallels to Vedānta rather than Christianity.

The Mahāyāna is thus distinguished by its mystical Buddha theology. . . . The Mahāyāna Buddha theology, as remarked by Rhys Davids, "is the greatest possible contradiction to the Agnostic Atheism," which is the characteristic of Gautama's system of philosophy. But this opposition is simply the inevitable contrast of religion and philosophy, relative and absolute truth, and those who are interested in the science of theology, or are touched by art, will not be likely to agree in denouncing the Buddha gods as the inventions "of a sickly scholasticism, hollow abstractions without life or reality": in this contingent world we live every day by relative truths, and for all those who do not wish to avoid the world of Becoming at the earliest possible moment these relative truths are far from lacking in life or reality. The Mahāyāna as a theistic faith is so only to the same extent as the Vedānta, that is to say it has an esoteric aspect which speaks in negative terms of a Suchness and a Void which cannot be known, while on the other it has an exoteric and more elaborate part in which the Absolute is seen through the glass of time and space, contracted and identified into variety. This development appears in the doctrine of the Trikāya, the Three Bodies of the Buddha. These three are (1) the Dharma-kāya, or Essence-body; (2) its heavenly manifestations in the Sambhogakāya, or Body of Bliss; and (3) the emanation, transformation, or projection thereof, called Nirmānakāya, apparent as the visible individual Buddha on earth. This is a system which hardly differs from what is implied in the Christian doctrine of Incarnation. . . .

Thus the Dharma-kāya may be compared to the Father; the Sambhogakāya to the figure of Christ in glory; the Nirmānakāya to the visible Jesus who announces in human speech that 'I and my Father are One.' Or again with the Vedānta: the Dharma-kāya is the Brahman, timeless and unconditioned; the Sambhogakāya is realized in the forms of Īśvara; the Nirmānakāya in every avatār. The essence of all things, the one reality of which their fleeting shapes remind us, is the Dharma-kāya. The Dharma-kāya is not a personal being who reveals himself to us in a single incarnation, but it is the all-pervading and traceless ground of the soul, which does not in fact suffer any
modification but appears to us to assume a variety of forms: we read that though the Buddha (a term which we must here understand as impersonal) does not depart from his seat in the tower (state of Dharmakāya), yet he may assume all and every form, whether of a brahmā, a god, or a monk, or a physician, or a tradesman, or an artist; he may reveal himself in every form of art and industry, in cities or in villages: from the highest heaven to the lowest hell, there is the Dharmakāya, in which all sentient beings are one. The Dharmakāya is the personal ground of Buddhahood from which the personal will, thought and love of innumerable Buddhas and Bodhisattvas ever proceed in response to the needs of those in whom the perfect nature is not yet realized. In some of the later phases of the Mahāyāna, however, the Dharmakāya is personified as Ādi-Buddha (sometimes Vairocana) who is then to be regarded as the Supreme Being, above all other Buddhas, and whose sakti is Prījāpāramitā.

Dharmakāya is commonly translated 'Body of the Law,' but it must not be interpreted merely as equivalent to the sum of the scriptures (pp. 237-239).

It is hardly necessary to point out that these remarks, which are grounded in a thorough reduction of Buddhism to Vedānta, are an unsatisfactory tool for interpreting a Vijnānavādin theory to the modern Westerner. They are useful as a clear and elegant introduction of an unsatisfactory answer which is met many times in later writings, frequently in an obscured form.


Akanuma, like Suzuki, was a believer, but one with greater knowledge and less willingness to accept facile comparisons. He refers to a wide range of Indian Buddhist texts.

Akanuma believes that the Dharmakāya was the first aspect of the trikāya to appear. He sees the Dharmakāya doctrine as the result of three factors:

— The strong faith orientation of Buddhism.
There is no doubt that the rapid growth of Buddhism in India was chiefly due to the greatness of the Buddha's own personality which demanded faith and love in his disciples. They were unconsciously drawn towards their leader and took in all his words with absolute faith. . . . This attitude . . . naturally reflected itself in their conception of the personality of the Master, readily preparing the way for his deification by the later Buddhists (pp. 1-3).

--- Identification of Buddha and dharma.

By "Dharma," or "Dhamma" (in Pali), is meant first of all the doctrine of the Buddha. . . . And as the doctrine taught by the Buddha is the truth, universal and absolute, which was revealed in his inmost consciousness, the term naturally came to be identified with the Law; and then the Law and the Doctrine were conceived to have united themselves in the personality of the Buddha. The Buddha therefore was not a body which was only apparent to our physical eye, but a spirit or a moral person in whom the Dharma or Law was incarnated . . . the Doctrine is what constitutes the Body of the Buddha, and he who sees the Doctrine and the Truth as revealed in it is he who sees the Buddha. Buddhahood consists in his spirituality and not in his physical being, however majestic it may be. To interview him, therefore, means to understand the Truth through the teaching of the Buddha.

When this idea was further developed by the later Buddhists as one of their metaphysical problems the Buddha-Body came to be identified with the Law or Truth or Tathatâ (suchness) . . . (pp. 4; 6-7; 8-9).

--- The transcendental conception of the dharma.

If all the Buddhas and Bhikkhus and in fact any Buddhist followers were enabled to attain illumination by means of the one vehicle (ekayâna) of the Dharma, it was quite natural for Buddhists to assume the transcendental existence of one Truth, which was designated by them as Dharmatâ or Tathatâ meaning the essence or suchness of things. This it was that would exist for ever regardless of the appearance or disappearance of the Tathâgata, and the Dharmakâya which had been understood as meaning one who experienced or was in possession of the Dharma or Truth, came to mean one in whom the Truth itself was embodied or one whose body was the Dharma itself. The idea of the Buddha as the Dharmakâya thus came to be entertained by his disciples as time went on after his entrance into Parinirvana (p. 9).
These three strands converged around a devotionalistic core to form the mature Dharmakāya.

As years rolled on, the disciples grew more and more convinced of the eternity and supernatural personality of the Buddha. While he was walking among them on earth, the love and reverence they felt for him was readily satisfied, but with his passing their emotional life would not be pacified with empty intellectualism (p. 10).

Akanuma traces the rise of multi-body theories from this single numinous Dharmakāya. He sees the Jātaka stories, the tradition of the thirty-two marks, and the lokottara tendencies, as elements which were later systematized as the trikāya doctrine. He believes that this systematization first appeared in those Mahāyāna sūtras (especially the Prajñāpāramitā) which revealed a plurality of Buddhas and culminated in the "Nāgārjian" two-kāya system of the Ta Chih Tu Lun.

Akanuma realizes that the logical gap between the two and the three-kāya systems cannot be bridged by the supposition that the two just naturally developed into the three. Furthermore, he rejects the pious solution of supposing that Nāgārjuna himself formulated the trikāya. In doing so he is drawn into another important problem — Why didn't Nāgārjuna do so? He must have been acquainted with the figure of Amitābha in the Pure Land sūtras. Why did he not realize that Amitābha would not fit within a two-kāya system, a realization which would force him to some type of trikāya? Akanuma concludes that Nāgārjuna must never have grasped this difficulty because it is a historical fact that the trikāya, first appearing in such transitional sūtras as the Mahāparinirvāṇa and Saṃdhinirmocana, postdates Nāgārjuna. Akanuma maintains that the full trikāya doctrine was first stated by Asaṅga in the Mahāyānasamgraha. He paraphrases:
The Body of Self-nature (svabhāvakākāya) corresponding to the Dharmakāya, and the Body of Enjoyment (sambhogakāya) corresponding to the Vipākākāya (Recompense Body) together with the Body of Transformation (nīrmānakāya), have finally come to establish the dogma of the Triple Body of the Tathāgata. The basis and reason of the Triple Body is the Dharmakāya, through which the other two Bodies are capable of maintaining their existence, and consequently the three separate bodies are in fact the three aspects of one essence in which we conceive Tathāgatahood. The object of worship or faith has thus now been transferred from the historical and natural Buddha to the Vipākakāya Buddha or Recompense Body of Tathāgatahood.

In conclusion:

... the dogma of the Triple Body first started from the worshipful attitude of the earlier Buddhists towards their Master, which resulted in the conception of the Law Body (Dharmakāya), and how this latter conception, once finding an articulate expression both in the Sūtras and the śāstras, steadily grew up so as to make Nāgārjuna formulate his theory of the Two Bodies (dvikāya) of the Tathāgata, and finally how this Nāgārjuna doctrine developed into Asanga's Trinity where the third Body, the Vipākakāya or the Body of Recompense, came to find its legitimate place. The Trinity, thus complete as dogma, has now put the Vipākakāya Buddha in the place of the natural Buddha as the Buddhist object of faith, making its content ever deeper and ever more enhancing. This reconstruction of the theory of the Buddha-body marks one of the dividing lines between the Mahāyāna and Hinayāna (pp. 28-29).


This is an annotated translation of Hsüan-tsang's seventh-century compendium of Vijñānavādin thought, the Ch'eng Wei Shih Lun. The penultimate section deals with the trikāya, and the appendix contains La Vallée Poussin's mature study of the topic. Having translated both this text and the Abhidharmakośa and studied much of the related literature, he has replaced the vitriol of his earlier writings with concrete references. While no nearer to his
grand plan of 1913, he has a more realistic appreciation of the problem.

1. Ces notes sur les corps du Bouddha sont presque exclusivement d'ordre dogmatique. De toute évidence, la spéculazione et les inventions de l'école ont leurs causes lointaines ou proches dans les religion, culte, mythologie, iconographie. En plusieurs rencontres, la chronologie ne trouve d'appui que dans les monuments figurés. La description des théories abstraites n'est qu'une partie, non négligeable, d'histoire de la bouddhologie.

Ces notes ne sont pas même un śāstra. N'écrir pas un śāstra qui veut. De graves lacunes: le Sraddhotpāda délibérément exclu (voir p. 764, 768); les grands Sūtras, tels le Lotus, le Lankâvatāra, à peine examinés; les variantes des Śāstras fort imparfaitement résumées, et l'écheveau des sectes chinoises insoupçonné (voir Demieville, Sur l'authenticité...); sans parler de la théorie des corps appliqué au panthéon. Notre propos était d'étudier les antécédents des doctrines de la Siddhi, carrière du Bodhisattva, Tathātā et le reste. Il est atteint si nous avons montré qu'Asaṅga est au bout d'une ligne spéculative toute bouddhique.

2. Faut-il ajouter que cette ligne est, aussi bien, indienne? — Si Gauḍapāda emprunte des expressions bouddhiques, bien plus, s'empare des textes pris dans les Corbeilles, Mahâmati s'inquiète si le Bouddha du Lankâvatâra ne védantise pas. On pourrait dire que le Lokottaravāda krishnaisé.

La doctrine des trois corps nous apparaît comme exclusivement faite de matériaux bouddhiques: mais elle a été élaborée dans un pays où l'on adorait des Avatars, où l'on était anxieux de L'Absolu. Le cocher d'Arjuna est un nirmāṇakāya: le corps sublime qu'il montre à Arjuna, corps visible aux seuls Yogins, est le sambhogakāya qui est visible aux seuls Bodhisattvas; et l'ineffable Brahman correspond au svābhāvikakāya ou, mieux encore, à la tathātā. La comparaison des deux systèmes s'impose.

3. Je serai plus réservé en ce qui concerne les influences iraniennes, occidentales, judéo-chrétiennes qu'auraient subies le Bouddhisme (pp. 811-812).

La Vallée Poussin begins with an excellent bibliography (which has been incorporated into the present study) and then surveys the various kāya theories to be found in Buddhist texts. This survey may be summarized as follows:
a. Pali Canon theories

The Nikāyas distinguish three kāyas:

— cāturmahābhūmikāya: the corruptible body composed of the four elements.
— manomayakāya: the body in which the Buddha visits the Brahmā world or in
  which he appears as Mara in the Mara realm.
— dharmakāya: the body of teaching. Only metaphorically a "body."

b. Sarvāstivādin theories

The Abhidharmakośa mentions three kāyas:

— Dharmakāya: the collection of anāsrava but saṃskṛta dharmas which form a
  Buddha.
— Vipākakāya or Ṛūpakāya: the body born in Lumbini possessing the thirty-two
  lakṣaṇas.
— Nirmāṇakāya: the apparitional body created by the Buddha.

c. Lokottaravādin theory

The Lokottaravādins held the Buddha to be composed of dharmas unconnected
with the three dhātus (e.g., of tathatā and tathatājñāna) while appearing in
the world by an artificial body.

d. The Bodhisattva and Buddha of the Ta Chih Tu Lun

Although La Vallée Poussin was unable to extract a coherent system from
this text he has summarized the various ideas it contains. As we now have
Lamotte's translation and a systematic study it is clear that a two-kāya
model is basic to this text. However, it also contains, in a very disorganized
state, most of the elements which fed into the *trikâya* theory.

e. **Theories of Asaṅga-Dharmapâla**

These include the mature three and four-kâya theories of such texts as the *Yogaśāstra*, the *Abhisamayālaṅkāra* and the *Mahāyānasamgraha*. La Vallée Poussin thinks that all of these teach the same doctrine in different ways.

f. **Variant theories**

A number of texts introduce variations on Asaṅga's standard system. These include Vasubandhu's *Saddharmapundarīkaśāstra*, the *Suvarnaprabhāsa*, the *Laṅkâvatāra* and the *Avataṃsaka*. He surveys, very briefly the kâyas mentioned in each text.

g. **The Eternal Buddha**

This survey of various theories about the duration of a Buddha's existence raises points relevant to our study, but La Vallée Poussin fails to relate it to his other comments.

In brief, La Vallée Poussin retains the historical-developmental approach of his earliest writings. He continues to view the theory of the early Viśṇunātā masters as "the" *trikâya* doctrine and to consider later developments as new ideas or deviations from the basic doctrine. He does not review or repudiate his notes of 1913, so we may assume that these still represent his basic interpretations.
This exposition of the trikāya is very different from that in Suzuki's 1906 Outlines. Not only has he learned more about the doctrine, but he realized that a developmental study is a better presentation for Western readers than a simple Christianization. He quotes extensively from three sources: the Lankāvatārasūtra, the Suvarṇaprabhāsasūtra and the Mahāyāna-śraddhotpāda. In the first he finds many elements of the doctrine but no actual trikāya. In the second he finds the full trikāya, and in the third he finds the mature trikāya doctrine of the Sino-Japanese tradition.

Most of this passage is devoted to an investigation of the separate elements found in the Lankāvatāra. These are: a Dharmakāya and a Dharmatā-Buddha which were to become the Dharmakāya of the trikāya, a Nirmāṇa-Buddha which was to become the Nirmāṇakāya, and Nīgyāṇa-Buddhas and Vipāka-Buddhas which were the forerunners of the Sambhogakāya and the Nirmāṇakāya.

Suzuki takes very seriously the question of why each of these concepts arose, although his answers are naïve. The Dharmakāya derives from an "innate idea" that great men are immortal (p. 31k). A major reason for the Sambhogakāya is man's

... deep human longing for a body of transfiguration. We are not satisfied with our corporeal existence, we are all the time oppressed by the feeling of imprisonment, our spirit soars away from this world of physical limitations, we long forever for a manomayakāya (will-body). This physical body does not fully express the meaning of the spirit, it deranges, it tyrannises. In fact all the religious struggles and aspirations we experience in this life are centered on the control of this body (p. 331).

Suzuki's primary contribution here is his discussion of the mechanism
whereby the Sambhogakāya and Nirmanakāya (or equivalent Laṅkāvatāra terms) appear in the world. He understands that this discussion must remain focussed on the Bodhisattva vow (p. 233). He also realizes that this vow sets in motion a series of causally-related events within the world, rather than an irruption of sacred reality into the world.

The nature of a Vipāka-Buddha is that of a Nishyanda-Buddha when this is understood in the sense of a result flowing from an antecedent cause, that is, as one of the five effects (pañcasphala), and not in the sense of something secondary which issues out of a more primary substance; . . . (p. 330).

Suzuki does not explore all the implications of this point; he does mention the major one. The aspirant cannot be a passive recipient of the Buddha's aid but is himself necessarily involved in the appearance of the Buddha in the world. That is, the Nirmana-Buddha is a relational concept.

Thus, the existence of the Nirmana-Buddha can be understood in two ways: one from the standpoint of the Buddha himself, whose loving heart cannot help resorting to every possible means of salvation, and the other from the standpoint of sinful mortals who desire every possible help from a power higher than themselves. This mutuality has filled the world with Nirmita-nirmana Budhas. Wherever we turn we come across one of these transformations, and if we are earnest and sincere and longing from the depths of the heart, we can see even the real Buddha himself in and through them (p. 333).

Aside from this valuable insight, this work is still badly flawed by appeals to human nature, rather than to Vijnānavadin theory. For example,

The relation of the three Buddhas to one another may be understood in the analogy of an individual person. That there is something ultimate making up the reason of this individual existence is to be granted, because the very conception of individuality is impossible without postulating something behind it. . . . This corresponds to the conception of the Dharmatā, or when personified, to the Dharmatā-Buddha.
Now this individual person stands in every possible manner of relationship to his fellow-beings, human or otherwise. . . In the case of a living person this variability, temporal and constant, reaches its limits. The person himself has not apparently changed but he assumes or seems to assume different forms to his neighbours. May not this aspect of his being be called his Nirmâna value? In spite of all these external and relational mutations, the individual has not at all changed to his own consciousness. That he is himself he at all times knows and he enjoys his personality. This corresponds to the Vipâka-Buddha, or Sambhogakâya.

Every conscious being may thus figuratively or rather metaphysically be said to be the owner of the Triple Body. In the case of the Buddha, the doctrine is filled with religious significance and it has played a most important rôle in the development of Mahayana Buddhism. One thing we have to notice here is the replacing of the Buddha-trinity by that of the Body (kâya). That Buddhist philosophers have come to talk of the Trikâya instead of Buddhatraya. It is not a matter of mere change of terminology, it involves a deeper meaning. The reason is that Kâya has a more synthesis value, while Buddha suggests more of individuality. The three different kinds of Buddhahood make one think of three different, separate individuals, but the Trikâya means one personality with three aspects. In the conception of the Triple Body we trace a systematising thought (pp. 333-334).

This analogy is not only vague, but, as we shall see later, it is incompatible with Asanga's formulation of the trikâya doctrine.


This article is a wide-ranging examination of all Buddhakâya (Japanese: Busshin) theories including the trikâya. Most of the article is a survey of Buddhist texts which mention the various Buddhakâyas. A brief statement of the place of each text in the history of Buddhism is followed by a summary of relevant passages. This information has been incorporated into the bibliography of the present study.
In addition, in the "Aperçu Général," the author proposes a simple theory of the development of various Buddhakāyas. He suggests that the diverse connotations of "Buddhakāya" developed from an ambiguity in the term kāya. It meant both:

— an organized body or organism, in the sense of nikāya.
— a material or concrete mass.

The early Buddhist community, needing an object of worship, substituted the teaching (= Dharmakāya) for the departed Buddha.

Others developed more complex Buddhologies. The Mahāsaṃghikas held that the Buddha was entirely transcendent. Others said that the purely human Buddha disappeared at the parinirvāṇa, but that the "buddha elements" persisted. This division into a form-body and dharma-body harmonized with the two-truth idea and continued in the early Mahāyāna schools, based on the Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra and the Prajñāpāramitā sūtras. The Avatāmsaka, on the other hand, multiplied bodies unsystematically.

The Vijñānavādin master Asaṅga formulated the definitive trikāya doctrine on the basis of ideas contained in such sūtras as the Laṅkāvatāra. In the mid-sixth century, Paramārtha arrived in China and announced that India had fixed the doctrine. This was included in his translation of the Śraddhotpādaśāstra and in the chapter added to the Suvarnaprabhāsasūtra. The T'ien-T'ai and other groups built on this.

The author concludes with a warning that insufficient documentation is available for a proper history of the trikāya to be written.

This article is essentially a bibliographical essay on the primary textual sources. As such it is a primary reference work for this study, but contains few ideas which could be applied directly to the interpretation of the trikāya.

This introduction to the Vijnānavāda seems to represent contemporary Indian scholarship on the subject. Chatterjee sees the Tathāgata as the unifying Buddhological concept:

The Tathāgata occupies the same place in Buddhism as Īśvara does in Advaita Vedānta. He is the God of religion, an object of worship and veneration. He has also infinite compassion for the suffering mankind but for Whose grace their redemption would not be possible (p. 223).

Chatterjee discusses the necessity and the logical tenability of this concept, and then expounds his interpretation of the three kāyas of the Tathāgata. He draws all supporting references from the Mahāyānasūtrālāṅkāra:

The concept of the Tathāgata is constituted by different metaphysical principles. This fact is illustrated in the theory of the three kāyas of the Buddha. It is one of the most important doctrines in the whole of Mahāyāna religion and it is nothing peculiar to the Yogācāra who accepted the traditional doctrine.

There are three aspects of the God-head, technically known as the three kāyas of the Tathāgata. They are:
1. The Svabhāvika kāya. 2. The Sāmbhoga kāya and 3. The Nairmanika kāya.

1. The Svabhāvikakāya of the Buddha is the principle or pure Will (viśuddhā Tathatā) which is the ultimate reality. As such He is identical with the Absolute. It is also called dharma-kāya, being the dhammatā (essence) of things. Its essential character (lakṣaṇa) is Āśrayaparāvṛtti, i.e., the withdrawing or retracting of the Ālaya. When under the influence of Avidyā, the illusion of objectivity, the Ālaya is compelled into a forward movement. It goes on creating forms of objectivity which in their turn further replenish it. On the sublation of this disturbing illusion a retracting movement of this Ālaya is started. It no longer posits an other but rests in itself. This is the state of Vijnāpātmātratā, of consciousness as pure Act. It is the dharma-kāya of the Buddha and is His natural aspect.
Being essentially identical with the Absolute, the question of the number of Buddhas has no meaning. . . . The dharmakāya of all the Buddhas is identical, as all are identical with the Absolute. It is also beyond thought as this identity cannot be grasped with mere concepts.

2. The second aspect of the Buddha is His Sambhogika kāya — His body of Bliss. It is this body with which the Buddha enjoys His creation (dharmasambhoga). Strictly speaking, this is the concept of God par excellence. All the glorified descriptions of the Buddha found in the scriptures, e.g., rays emanating from the innumerable pores of His skin and penetrating to the remotest corners of the universe, pertain to this kāya. The Buddha dwells in the Akanisṭha Heaven, surrounded by a host of Bodhisattvas and other minor personages. Sambhoga kāya is the personality of the supreme God, associated with all powers and excellences. It is comparable to the concept of God in the Brāhmanical systems which finds the best illustration in the eleventh chapter of the Bhagavad Gītā.

3. The Nairmāṇika Kāya is the apparitional body of the Buddha. Hence one is explicitly warned that the human form which the Lord might temporarily assume should by no means be mistaken for His real body. This assumption is solely for the purpose of lending succour to mankind. The forms assumed can be infinite in number. . . . Whereas the body of Bliss characterises such qualities existing for the sake of others. . . .

In short, the human Buddha who is ordinarily seen in the various worlds and exemplified in different individuals is the nirmāṇakāya of the Buddha. It is of this kāya that any historicity can be ascribed. That body which is visible to some heavenly beings is His Sambhogakāya which obviously has no historicity. But both the Kāyas are His free assumptions. The utter indivisibility . . . of any form is His Dharmakāya. This is His real essence. The Sambhogakāya is the supreme God while the Nirmāṇa kāya is the Sākyamuni who actually took birth amongst us (pp. 230-232).

Chatterjee offers little more than did Coomaraswamy in 1916. The intervening developmental studies have been ignored and the doctrine treated as revealed dogma. Historical assertions, i.e., that the trikāya was a general Buddhist doctrine, not a Viśiṣṭadvaita development, are not justified. All information is drawn from a single early text which is not one seen as central
by other investigators. The great exegetical treatises in which such texts were discussed and clarified are ignored in favor of the blind assumption that the Vijnânâvâda is all but identical with the Vedânta. The resulting explanation is simple and predictable but useless as a basis for further studies.


This book is typical of modern popular works on Buddhism in English published from Japan. It promises to be particularly relevant to our enquiry as it takes a developmental approach, showing how certain doctrines became integrative centers around which new ideas coalesced as these doctrines developed and as Buddhism spread to China and Japan.

The book does not live up to its initial promise. While the passages on the history of the Buddhology are clear (although adding nothing to the Hobôgirin account), the interpretation which the authors derive from it is, at least to this writer, unintelligible. Each explanation involves an appeal to some ambiguous, undefined European term. While these terms may not be ambiguous within the modern Japanese academic community, the Western reader of a work written in English expects a shared terminology. For example, the _trikâya_ section opens:

_Historically, in Buddhism there have always been at least three points of view in considering the 'Buddha'; first, as a human being, second as a spiritual principle, and lastly, as something in between the two former views. The actual historical existence of Gotama (Skt. Gautama) Buddha has never had a tremendous significance in the Buddhist faith, as he has been primarily considered to be an archetype, and secondly a historical personage (p. 78)._"Spiritual principle"—surely the least meaningful term possible—is not
explained. The statement concerning the historical existence of Gautama would require an entire chapter of development before it would be accepted (or even rejected). What is meant by "archetype"? That term was popularized by C. G. Jung, but his use of it cannot be stretched to cover the manner in which ancient Buddhists regarded the Buddha. Even the notion that the tradition had a concept of a "historical" Buddha is questionable (Caroline Rhys-Davids notwithstanding). If it did, surely this individual was just that Gautama Buddha who, our author maintains, was primarily an archetype, not a historical individual. But more basically, in separating archetype and historical individual, is the author not dividing the essential from the existential, the one move which many other scholars agree is totally against the spirit of the trikāya doctrine?

The remainder of the exposition is in two parts: the trikāya as religious experience and the trikāya as philosophical doctrine. The distinction between these, or even the grounds for making the distinction, is not stated. Both seem to involve theory although the "philosophical" discussion seems to involve more Mādhyamika and the "religious experience" section seems to involve more Vijñānavāda.

The philosophical discussion opens as follows:

Philosophically, the Dharma-kāya is equivalent to śūnyatā, the universal truth declaring that all subject-object differentiation based upon discriminative knowledge is invalid. In more positive terms this can be equated with the essence of Enlightenment (nirvāṇa) which merely consists of an understanding of Pratītya samutpāda (relativity) or the ability to view that-what-is-as-it-is (tathatā). We can therefore say that the Dharma-kāya is also the system of cosmic unity or order that exists everywhere but is unable to be grasped by reasoning.

Since the Dharma-kāya functions as a universal truth, it cannot remain a mere philosophical principle, but constantly
appears in religious experience. Such an appearance or realization of this truth is the Sambhoga-kāya.

... In essence, the Sambhoga-kāya is also the experience of 'enjoyment' of the truth of śūnyatā, or the realization of Absolute Truth... the Sambhoga-kāya is not a static state. From this religious experience there comes the natural desire to enlighten others and hence the Nirmāna-kāya or system of the manifestation of the essence of Enlightenment (śūnyatā) issues forth to all sentient beings. This last function or aspect of Enlightenment is similar to the concept of śūnyatā artha or feature of recognizing the phenomenal world as based upon discriminative knowledge and using upāya to lead sentient beings from discriminative knowledge to Enlightenment (pp. 81-82).

Comment is hardly necessary. Every major problem is brushed aside. The relationship of the Dharmakāya to śūnyatā is one of "equivalence." The Sambhogakāya is the realization of the Absolute Truth, and the Nirmāna-kāya is due to a "natural desire." I can see only the slightest connection between all of this and the classical Vijnānavāda theory.

As religious experience, the trikāya is described by a confused scattering of Vijnānavāda ideas:

It was the Yogācārā with their conception of consciousness (vijñāna) as the basis of Enlightenment that gave a systematic form to the doctrine of the Trikāya, and it was this form that permeated all later Mahāyāna. The earliest stage of the Yogācāra conception can be found in the Lankāvatāra Sūtra. ...

In the final form of the Trikāya theory the Dharma-kāya became the aspect of Buddhahood as Absolute Truth or reality, while the Sambhoga-kāya and Nirmāna-kāya were upāya or manifestations of the Dharma-kāya tainted by degrees of illusion in relation to their participation in the phenomenal world, hence having form. We can compare both the Sambhoga-kāya and Nirmāna-kāya to mirrors reflecting the purity of light from the Unconditioned Dharma-kāya. The former is a light and glorious reflection, but it is still a mirror attempting to capture the rays of the infinite and indescribable at an ideal level of religious realization, it is far removed from its source. The latter tends to be a dark reflection, since it is clouded by its appearance in the phenomenal world that
can only faintly glimpse the dim reflection it carries of the Absolute Truth.

From the sphere of religious experience, the Yogācāra were able to teach that the Sambhoga-kāya and Nirmāṇa-kāya represented mind-made emanations from the Dharma-kāya or one eternal Buddha. Both these latter forms appearing in the illusive world were unreal, just as all phenomenal existence is unreal. From such a basis of religious understanding it is easy to comprehend the source of Mahāyāna mysticism. The Yogācāra emphasis upon the religious experience of Enlightenment symbolized as the Trikāya as well as the importance of consciousness as the basis for the movement towards Enlightenment naturally placed a higher value upon mystical experience than empirical knowledge (pp. 83-85).

Not only does all of this avoid the real questions but it leaves a suspicion that the authors may not be well acquainted with traditional Vijnānavādin theory. Was there ever a school which did not regard consciousness as the basis of enlightenment? Surely Suzuki is correct in saying that Vijnānavāda is distinguished by its theory of the mechanics of the enlightenment process (i.e., the āśraya-parāvrtti).

However, the most serious doubts arise from the constant use of ontological models. Such phrases as "tainted by degrees of illusion in relation to their participation in the phenomenal world" seem inconsistent with the trisvabhāva basis of the system. This question will be taken up later when examining Asaṅga's Mahāyānasamgraha.


The previous articles have been the work of scholars of Buddhism or Buddhist apologists. It might be argued that their primary task was not to produce an interpretation but to present the literature and construct a history.
of its development. The interpretation of these data might be considered a task for the generalist such as the student of comparative religion, history of religion, and so on.

Unfortunately, few generalists have dealt with the topic. The present work by Parrinder is the most promising treatment. As he begins the sixty-page section devoted to Buddhism by noting the apparent anomaly of a Nirmāṇakāya resembling an avatar or incarnation in this non-theistic religion, it is reasonable to expect him to speak directly to our concern — to derive a frame of reference broad enough to accommodate both Western theistic and Buddhist ideas. This would be the key to interpreting the trikāya.

No such derivation is forthcoming. The bulk of the relevant chapters is simply a synopsis of the Buddha myth from various sūtras. Parrinder seems unaware of the śāstras and badly informed about the trikāya doctrine—not one of the studies in this present survey of scholarship appears in his bibliography. With the exception of Lamotte's Histoire du bouddhisme indien, his secondary sources are the least reliable of all the popularizers. From them he has accepted a startling assortment of misunderstandings as simple data:

... the Buddha was actually all the Buddhas of the past.... The corporeal life of a Buddha was illusory anyway.... all the Buddhas have the same essence.... they can appear in various forms to many beings. These are acts of grace.... So the idea of Buddhahood was developed into a universal pantheism, or rather pan-Buddhism ... (p. 178).

These sources also supplied him with a very distorted version of the trikāya, or rather with the view that the trikāya was not important. Parrinder did not take the trikāya seriously at all: "The basic distinction was between the physical body and Dharma-body, it is these two that are usually compared
and contrasted" (p. 177).

From these ideas he draws a few general conclusions, the most important being that the Buddha theories are merely a "weak" (p. 240) form of the avatar doctrine and can be dismissed along with it.

All of this initially appears as a puzzling negligence on the part of such a respected scholar. The picture becomes clearer when, in chapters 17 and 19, Parrinder throws aside his scholarly guise and reveals the polemical theologian who, on the basis of the earlier conclusions, finds all alien religions wanting and exalts Christianity in a ringing altar call.

Although neither Matsunaga nor Parrinder helps us directly, their books have been included to demonstrate how little of the research which has been done has penetrated the popular level. As most other writers are far more naïve than these, no other popular works will be reviewed.


Professor Nagao approaches the *trikāya* with great sympathy, profound knowledge of the texts, and a cautious attitude.

In section one, he discusses the various ideas which fed into the *trikāya*. The section concludes:

It was in the philosophy of the Yogācāra school (or the Vijñāna-vāda school) represented by Asaṅga and Vasubandhu that the two-body theory developed until it was consummated into a three-body theory. The ideas and faiths that became the materials for the three-body theory must have been established in various forms before that time. There was already a tendency toward the universalization of the concept of Buddha. It was thought that Gautama Buddha was not the only Buddha; that there had been many Buddhas in the past, and there would be many Buddhas in the future; and
that actually there existed innumerable Buddhas in the
innumerable Buddha-lands in the ten directions. Thus, names
of Buddhas, such as Vairocana, Akṣobhya, Amitābha, Amitāyus,
Bhaïsañja-guru, and countless others had already been con-
ceived. It was the Yogācāra-vijñāna school that organized
the three-body (tri-kāya) theory by synthesizing these
conceptions of the Buddha (p. 30).

Section two deals with the Yogācāra trikāya. Nagao pays particular
attention to the Sambhogakāya and asks why the Sambhogakāya, sharing in the
natures of both Dharmakāya and Nirmānakāya, did not replace both of them:

The sāmbhoghika-kāya, through this double character, lies between the svabhāvikā-kāya and nairmanikā-kāya, serving as a link between the two. No, the sāmbhogika-kāya rather occupies the central position in the triple-body doctrine; especially, the soteriology in Buddhism is developed revolving around the axis of this double character of the sāmbhogika-kāya. In this sense, the sāmbhogika-kāya can be called the Buddha par excellence. However, if it is so, it might be possible to say that the one Buddha-body of sāmbhogika-kāya is sufficient, and neither the svabhāvikā-kāya nor the nairmanikā-kāya is necessary. In fact, such a position is possible, and it might have been supported especially from the standpoint of religious monotheistic demand. But the special characteristic of the Mahāyānic doctrine of Buddha-body lies in the persistent maintenance of the triangular position of the three Buddha-bodies. For in that respect there is something fundamentally different from either the one-body or the two-body theory. . . . The theoretic perfection of the doctrine of Buddha-body lies in the triangular concept of the three Buddha-bodies; the two-body theory would be insufficient, and the four-body and other many-body theories would be plethoric in principle (pp. 37, 38-39).

Nagao believes that this triadic scheme is the key to Vījñānavādin
Buddhology:

All the attributes and virtues of the Buddha were also
clarified in the system of the trikāya. As it is impossible
to describe them here one by one, I shall only give a few
examples: the Buddha's wisdom was regarded as an attribute
especially belonging to the svabhāvikā-kāya; his will
(āśaya, vow) was especially treated in the sāmbhogika-kāya;
and his acts (buddha kārman) especially in the nairmanikā-
kāya. But at the same time, since the three Buddha-bodies are not independent of each other but are in the relation of a basis and a thing based on it, these virtues are also considered transferable to each other. Similarly, the elucidation of such questions as whether there is only one Buddha or other Buddhas numerous in number, or for what reason the Buddha is said to be everlasting and always abiding, and so forth, has been attempted through the system of the trikāya. I will not go into these problems here, but I would say that, in short, these problems will not likely be answered thoroughly without the trikāya theory (p. 38).

In section three, Nagao develops his methodology through a critique of Coomaraswamy and Chatterjee's attempts to relate the trikāya to Christian and Hindu concepts. He concludes:

The trikāya doctrine developed as a system with a background of these Mahāyāna concepts, which in their turn became ever more solidified by having recourse to the trikāya doctrine. Therefore, we must say that the trikāya doctrine is fairly different from the Trinity of Christianity or the trimūrti of Hinduism (p. 42).

Finally Nagao points out that while the trikāya doctrine may explain a Buddha's characteristics, it does not explain how a Buddha comes into existence:

It is true that by this trikāya theory the nature of the Buddha and all his virtues has been delineated. But as for how Gautama, a human being, was able to become a Buddha possessing virtues equal to those of a divine being, almost nothing has been said in these theories. How can a leap from the relative world to the absolute world be made? Since Gautama was an exceptional person, as his disciples thought, it might have been possible for him to become a Buddha by dint of his innumerable virtuous deeds accumulated in the past. But if only that, Gautama would have only been a divine existence from the beginning, and not a human being. Moreover, that would be a unique case for Gautama alone, and would not explain anything about the existence of all the Buddhas in the ten directions. In Mahāyāna Buddhism, it is specifically told that all living beings are expected to attain Buddhahood, but then, it must be asked: In what way is it possible for a common living being to become a Buddha?
The possibility of all living beings attaining Buddhahood is a problem that seems to have been answered from two sides. One is the idea that is mainly advocated by the tathāgata-garbha (tathāgata-matrix) theory. The other is the introduction of āsraya-parāvṛtti (the revolving of the basis) . . . (p. 44).

The description of these theories constitutes the bulk of the article.

While this short article only touches upon each issue, it establishes a reasonable model for a study. Nagao's insistence that the trikāya is an integrative scheme within the Vijñānavāda, and hence should be interpreted by reference to the ideas it incorporates, will prevent much premature comparative religion. His separation of questions about the structure and function of the trikāya from questions about its origin should prevent the historical questions from obscuring the functional ones.

The bibliographic information on Chinese texts contained in his footnotes has been incorporated into the bibliography of the present study.

SUMMARY OF SCHOLARSHIP

The interpretation of the trikāya by the remaining important scholar, H. V. Guenther, will be examined later in light of the following summary. As the contributions made by these divers scholars over nearly a century are still very difficult to compare, I will now summarize the previous articles to obtain a basis for planning future research.

La Vallée Poussin's 1906 article, with its division of the trikāya into a Buddhohistorical and an ontological doctrine, began to reveal the complexity of the concept and marked the end of reductionistic treatments. Later workers generally treated it as a symbolic or open-ended scheme for organizing a
variety of ideas rather than as a tightly circumscribed dogma.

By 1913 he had extended his understanding to the realization that the *trikāya* could not be understood in isolation from the history of Indian Buddhism (tantric developments exempted) and made some progress toward seeing it in that perspective. To do this he revived Kern's use of the distinction between conventional and absolute truth to resolve apparently contradictory notions within the doctrine. While this idea will be discussed later, it is safe to say that La Vallée Poussin's 1913 understanding of the distinction between Mādhyamika and Vijnānavaṇḍa was so incomplete that it should not be taken seriously.

La Vallée Poussin's final contribution in the *Vijnāptimatrattasiddhi* (1928) contains little interpretation. It is an expanded selection of Indian textual sources (still avoiding the tantric) and a bibliography of scholarship. Both are still useful.

In the 1913 article Masson-Oursel consolidates the previous conclusions and examines a classical Vijnānavaṇḍin text, from which he is able to formulate two advances. First, he states explicitly what La Vallée Poussin has recognized implicitly—that the term *kāya* in the *trikāya* is only metaphorically a "body" but actually designates a set of organically-related facts about Buddhahood. The prefix (e.g., *Dharma*) identifies the particular cluster of facts.

Second, he clarifies the characteristics of the *Sambhogakāya*, although he fails to explain its relationship to the other two *kāyas*. It is clear that Masson-Oursel could have resolved his dilemma regarding the *Sambhogakāya* as compassionate response, had he possessed sufficient general knowledge of the Vijnānavaṇḍa to realize the role of the Bodhisattva vow.
While Suzuki's intention may not have altered between the *Outlines* (1906) and the *Studies* (1930), his knowledge increased and his interpretation (or presentation) changed almost beyond recognition. While the *Outlines* contains few useful ideas, the ease with which Suzuki, as a believer, modifies the concept of *kāya* supports La Vallée Poussin's and Masson-Oursel's idea that it is not a fixed "body." The works of these three writers appear to have discouraged others from wasting effort on a search for the "real" or "original pure" *trikāya* doctrine. Most concentrated on the ideas that it systematizes in any particular text or system.

Suzuki's major contribution in the *Studies* is the insistence that the *Nirmāṇa-Buddha* of the *Laṅkāvatāra* (and by implication, all three of the kāyas that emerged from the tri-Buddha system of that text) is a relational concept. While I doubt that the idea should be pushed as far as Suzuki does, it will be a key to the interpretation of the *Mahāyānasaṃgraha*.

Akanuma (1922) and Nagao (1973) have adopted similar approaches. As Nagao has the advantage of the intervening half-century, his article may be regarded as the culmination of Akanuma's work. Their approach is distinguished by a primary loyalty to the Buddhist sources rather than to the Western or Indian analogs. This loyalty leads to more applicable categories and more relevant primary questions.

The basic message of Nagao's article appears in the portions quoted. Although it may be unfair to call these preliminary results "conclusions," they are the most sophisticated preliminary results in this set of articles.

The other studies may be set aside just as were those of Parrinder and Matsunaga. Coomaraswamy and Chatterjee both ignore any historical development or variation of the doctrine which they simply regard as a theism. They have not used their knowledge of the Indian milieu. Their sources are restricted,
their methods uncritical and their interpretations reductionistic. Rockhill's little sūtra and the Hönbögin article have been important sources but neither suggests an interpretation.

The bulk of these studies actually constitutes data for a history of the Vijñānavāda, i.e., information about texts and contents, comments on their history, and insights into the structure of the system. Incorporation of these data into a historical account is a straightforward process. Interpretation of them is more difficult. A few general interpretative principles can be derived from these studies.

The first is that the word "kāya" is not a simple object but an open concept which has attracted a variety of interpretations. I would suggest that this notion can be maintained by regarding kāya as a symbolic rather than a denotative concept.

The general Buddhakāya, in particular, has been found to contain several general categories of characteristics. It is obviously the result of religious practice, i.e., it is something obtained by following the prescriptive message. I.e., the Buddha is, in some sense, a reoriented aspirant. The logical possibility of this transformation is accounted for by the tathāgatagarbha theory, and the abstract mechanical question of how it occurs is answered by the āśrayaparāvrtti theory. This aspect of Buddhahood does not appear to raise any problems whose answer is not touched upon in the articles.

However, the Buddha is also what La Vallée Poussin calls an "ontological or cosmological" concept which, as a form of the "dharma" or universal norm, transcends the personal and accidental. When seen anthropomorphically as an object of religious devotion, this may be the aspect which Masson-Coursel understood as the cosmogonic Buddha.

The clearest agreement is on the historical development of the trikāya.
An original doctrine centered on Śākyamuni quickly developed into a two-kāya form as the need was felt to distinguish between Śākyamuni the teacher and other ways of viewing him (especially after the parinirvāṇa). The two-kāya model was the essential pattern underlying many of the multi-Buddha or multi-kāya theories of the early sects, especially those based on the prajñāpāramitā-sūtras.

The trikāya was an innovation of the early Vijnānavādin masters Maitreya-Asaṅga-Vasubandhu. It became the basis for later multi-kāya tantric developments in Indian and for various Sino-Japanese elaborations. The detailed history of the appearance of the trikāya in the writings of the Vijnānavādin masters is more obscure and the history of the later Indo-Tibetan and Sino-Japanese developments has attracted even less attention.

Kern's desideratum, that the trikāya should be understood in relation to the general development of Indian religious thought, is still impractical. Scholars became more diffident as they became better acquainted with the problem. The great modern surveys of Indian intellectual history (i.e., Renou and Filliozat's L'Inde classique and Dasgupta's History of Indian Philosophy) have simply drawn attention to the magnitude of the remaining task and paucity of reliable sources. At present no scholar of Buddhism can be expected to produce a detailed history of the relevant area of Indian thought and then fit the trikāya into it.

While incorporation of a general intellectual history is still a long-term desideratum, the fact that our authors have produced significant results based only on the internal structure of the trikāya doctrine suggests that such a history is not indispensable.

For our purposes, the more important question is why each of these developments occurred. Suggested reasons for the shift from one to two-kāya models
include: need to differentiate the human from the abstract Buddha; need for a
cult focus after the parinirvāṇa; need to apply the Mādhyamika two-truth model
to the Buddhology, etc. At least some of these sound reasonable.

The difficult question is why the two kāyas (which could actually accom­
modate varying numbers of kāyas under a two-term model) were turned into a
trikāya. Since only a few of our authors have noted the force of this question
and none has produced a satisfactory answer, this is one of the basic questions
for further study.

An answer to the above question will provide the context for considering
the central one: What is the trikāya doctrine? While all writers agree that
the three kāyas provide a framework by which apparently diverse aspects of
Buddhahood may be affirmed simultaneously, there is little agreement on how
the divisions should be understood. Kern's suggestion that they represent the
ultimate and conventional standpoints is expanded by Masson-Oursel and the
others to encompass an idea of three truths, i.e., that the three are the same
Buddha seen from three different perspectives.

However, this notion is obviously inadequate as it throws all the respon­
sibility on the aspirant and ignores the mechanics of his Bodhisattva vow.
Suzuki's relational explanation seems more satisfactory.

Once the fundamental nature of the three divisions is settled, the final
two questions can be raised: What is each kāya, and what are the relationships
among the three? Since each is an open-ended symbolic concept, the "What" can
be answered only by a tabulation of the aspects attributed to each. While a
certain number of these are found in the articles reviewed, a glance at a
major trikāya text (e.g., chapter X of the Mahāyānasamgraha) reveals many more.
The study of these should be straightforward.

The question of the relationships among the three should be answered
last, as it will be largely determined by the answers to the previous questions. We need only note the tremendous variety of ideas in the articles. Those who saw the basic pattern as a two-reality model had treat trouble finding any room for the Sambhogakāya, let alone deciding how it was related to the others. Nagao, however, seriously wonders why any kāya other than the Sambhogakāya is necessary!

Many of the basic but elusive characteristics of Buddhahood, such as tathatā and tathatājñāna, the characteristics of the Buddhaland, and the actions of the Nirmānakāya, also seem to be bound up with the question of relationships; and have been dealt with as such.

Although none of the preceding works contains a broad, solid framework within which any reasonable version of the trikāya may be understood, we must consider one final scholar who appears to offer just that. H. V. Guenther's understanding of the doctrine is the most promising, and most idiosyncratic, of any examined so far.

Although he has published only short articles on the trikāya, this doctrine is central to his vision of Buddhism and is mentioned in most of his numerous publications. Particularly useful passages can be found in The Jewel Ornament of Liberation, 1959 (chapters 20 and 21); The Life and Teaching of Nāropa, 1963 (pp. 47-50, 141-145); Tibetan Buddhism Without Mystification, 1966 (pp. 57-59); and Kindly Bent to Ease Us, 1975 (chapter 13). The most extensive development of his ideas on the trikāya is probably "The Experience of Being: The Trikāya Idea in Its Tibetan Interpretation" (in Roy C. Amore, ed., Developments in Buddhist Thought, 1979).

Guenther's approach to the trikāya is unique in that he works from the later Tibetan texts which others have set aside as "tantric" and therefore non-Vijñānavādin. Guenther sees these texts as containing the culmination of
the Vijnānavāda doctrine begun fifteen hundred years ago in the writings of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu. His interpretation of the trikāya is inseparable from his understanding of this mature tantric Vijnānavāda. This understanding is summarized in many of his books. A typical passage occurs in The Tantric View of Life (Berkeley: Shambhala, 1972):

Tantrism begins with the concrete human situation of man's lived existence, and it tries to clarify the values that are already implicit in it. . . . it attempts to study the finite existence of man as lived from within. . . . the world of man is his horizon of meaning without which there can neither be a world nor an understanding of it so that man can live. This horizon of meaning is not something fixed once and for ever, but it expands as man grows and growth is the actuality of man's lived existence. Meanings do not constitute another world, but provide another dimension to the one world which is the locus of our actions. . . . There is thus no escape from Being, and what Tantra is telling us is that we have to face up to Being; to find meaning in life is to become Buddha —'enlightened,' but what this meaning is cannot be said without falsifying it. . . . the problem is not man's essence or nature, but what man can make of his life in this world so as to realize the supreme values that life affords. . . .

In the pursuit of Being there is a joyousness and directness which appears elsewhere to be found only in Zen, that is, the culmination of Sino-Japanese Buddhism. . . . Tantrism can be said to be the culmination of Indo-Tibetan Buddhism (pp. 2-5).

In short, Buddhism points to a meaningful present by a theory which concentrates on concrete existence rather than on abstract essence. This value-charged life is referred to as "Buddha" and described by means of the trikāya.

Guenther makes much of the fact that "kāya" was understood to be ambiguous by the Tibetans who translated it (according to context) by either "lus" (the ordinary body) or "sku" (the kāya of the Buddha). While he is content to translate lus as "body" he maintains that sku is a dynamic, organizational concept for which "body" is inappropriate. He writes:
This single reality has significant ramifications within the life of man. It is these ramifications that are referred to by the technical term trikāya (sku gsun), commonly, though quite ludicrously, translated as the 'Three Bodies of the Buddha,' due to the fact that the early translators and their later copyist failed to understand or to note the purely descriptive character of the word buddha (sangs-rgyas). The word buddha is a past participle of the verb budh "to wake up," and its exclusively adjectival use describes the experience a person has had, but not the person. This alone should suffice to show that it is meaningless to speak of "bodies." An experience tends to get expressed, but it is neither fact nor bare ideas that get expressed but "values": how it feels to be; and the meaning of fullness of being is apprehended as embodied (p. 55).

And again:

The human being has his house and family, and also his homeland to which he becomes attached. His very life depends on the interaction between his existence conditioning this vital field and the field conditioning his existence. This explains why the world he inhabits is called a Nirmanakāya just as he himself is a Nirmanakāya (p. 55).

This fullness of being presents itself in two ways which may be considered epistemological and ontological:

Fullness of Being and the feeling of happiness which is at the same time the awareness of this fullness, are not two contrasting entities, but the two aspects of a single reality. Awareness carries with it the certainty that awareness is and Being is in so far as there is awareness of it. The one is the other and the distinction is a matter of emphasis rather than of difference. . . .

The trikāya doctrine is so complex because it may be described from both standpoints:

kLong-chen rab-'byams-pa interprets the technical term sku, which I have rendered as "existential value pattern," in two different ways which are nevertheless intimately related to each other. The one may be called "epistemological" and the other "ontological." The "epistemological value-
pattern" is "intrinsic awareness with its object-appearance." It is

"That which appears before our senses (in its immediacy) without being in need of being asserted or denied, and that which can be analyzed into (i) the senses (as controlling powers), (ii) the psycho-physical constituents, and (iii) the (complex of the) objective situation and the owner of the objective situation."

To term this complex a "value-pattern" is justified by the fact that value does not reside in one aspect alone, but in the totality of what constitutes the pattern.

The "ontological value-pattern" as a "form of creativity" is represented as two patterns, the one holding to what it is on the unerring path, the other just being the being-there as pure existence. Of the former, kLong-chen rab 'byams-pa says:

"As it holds to what it is in its triad of facticity, actuality, and cognitive responsiveness and leads to fullness of being as goal, it is known (by such terms) as 'great playful fascination pattern,' 'crown-jewel pattern,' 'lifestyle supporting pattern.'"

The pure existence pattern is said to be

"The triad of the ground, path, and goal. The ground is the presence of absolute original awareness; the path is the invariableness of an outward appearance in radiancy and as an (aesthetic) field pattern. The goal is the absoluteness of the three existential patterns in effortless presence."

The existential value-patterns which are both intrinsic and extrinsic, are by no means to be considered as static entities to which man has to submit. Rather are they man's very life, pulsating with wondrous experiences. The manifestation of these value-patterns holds a fascination which is felt as pure playfulness, . . . (pp. 42-43).

A simplified summary of Guenther's trikāya is found in Tibetan Buddhism Without Mystification (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1966):

. . . certain norms are revealed, which are always active and dynamic. They have become known by their Indian names, Dharmakāya, Sambhogakāya, and Nirmanakāya, but never have been understood properly, within the framework of traditional Western semantics, because of the essentialist premises of Western philosophies. Essence is that which marks a thing off
and separates it from other entities of a different kind. From such a point of view all of man's actions spring from that which is considered to be his intrinsic nature. Its fallacy is that it makes us overlook man's relational being; the actual person always lives in a world with others. And, in human life, essence tells man that he is already what he can be, so there is no need to set out on a path of spiritual development.

Seen as existential norms these three patterns reveal their significance. Dharmakāya indicates the intentional structure of the noetic in man. It is the merit of Buddhism that it has always recognized this feature of awareness: I cannot know without knowing something, just as I cannot do without doing something. But in ordinary knowledge whatever I know is overshadowed by beliefs, presuppositions, likes and dislikes. However, the more I succeed in removing myself from self-centred concerns and situations and free myself from all bias, the more I am enabled to apprehend things as they are. This happens in disciplined philosophical enquiry through which one gradually approaches nothingness and indeterminacy, from the vantage point of which one can achieve a view of reality without internal warping. This cognitive indeterminacy which underlies the whole noetic enterprise of man is richer in contents and broader in its horizons than any other awareness because it is an unrestricted perspective from which nothing is screened or excluded. If anything can be predicated about it, it is pure potency which, when actualized, enables us to see ourselves and things as we and they really are. In order to gain this capacity we have to develop our intelligence, our critical acumen, which is the main theme of the Pāramitāyāna and without which Mantrayāna is impossible. But all the information we receive through such sustained analysis is not merely for the sake of pure awareness or contemplation, but in order that we may act. Every insight is barren if it does not find expression in action, and every action is futile if it is not supported by sound insight. Only when we succeed in understanding ourselves, our projects and our world from a point of view which is no point of view, will a sound direction of human action be possible, because it is no longer subordinated to petty, self-centred concerns. This active mode of being is realized through the two operational patterns or norms, the Sambhogakāya and the Nirmāṇakāya, both of which have their raison d'être in the cognitive-spiritual mode. Strictly speaking, only the Nirmāṇakāya is perceptible, although it would be wrong to assume that it is of a physical nature.

... Nirmāṇakāya signifies being in the world, not so much as a being among things and artifacts, but as an active being in relation to a vast field of surrounding entities
which are equally vibrating with life, all of them ordered in a world structure. As an active mode of being Nirmānakāya is the implementation of man's whole being, the ordering of his world in the light of his ultimate possibilities. . . . Real being with others must spring up on the spur of the moment and arouse us to our possibilities. That which does so is the Sambhogakāya. Grounded in unrestricted and unbiased cognition it can establish contact with others and stir them to authentic action (pp. 57-59).

From this, Guenther develops a complex interpretation of the tantric writers' multi-kāya theories. However, as these represent a stage beyond this study I will simply point out that the ability of his interpretation to deal with extensions of the basic doctrine indicates that it will be a serious contender in a broader study. Here we will discuss only the interpretation outlined in the preceding quotations.

An evaluation of this interpretation involves two questions:

— that of the validity of his view of tantric Buddhism
— that of the validity of his interpretation of the trikāya.

The latter question can be answered only after a positive answer to the former. I shall assume such an answer. In particular, I shall assume:

— Guenther's acquaintance with a wide variety of relevant Buddhist sources
— his familiarity with European philosophy
— the legitimacy of a hermeneutic which expresses Buddhist ideas in terms and thought-patterns drawn from contemporary philosophy and psychology.

Furthermore, I must insist that this discussion does not turn upon the peripheral issue (which Bharati, in his "Tibetan Buddhism in America," Tibet Journal 4, no. 3, p. 8, calls one of the "red flags he keeps hoisting for his critics and detractors") of whether Guenther's replacement of "standard"
mistranslations by more accurate English terms is justified.

I will discuss only the second question, i.e.: Is Guenther's interpretation of the doctrine sufficiently clear and general to be applied to any major Indo-Tibetan version of the trikāya, and to any major doctrine based on it? This can be divided into sub-questions: that of the generality, and that of the clarity.

The concern of generality is the more important. It is usually phrased somewhat as follows: Even granting that Tibetan tantric Buddhism (e.g., that of Klong-chhen-pa, 14th century A.D.) is the logical culmination of the Indian Vijñānavāda, can an interpretation derived from it be applied to much earlier statements of the Indian masters (e.g., Vasubandhu, 4th century A.D.)? I suggest that the answer depends primarily upon the interpreter's intent. If he is primarily an apologist, it is mandatory that he interpret the earlier writings by reference to later authorities. For example, a Christian will interpret Genesis in light of the Adam of the New Testament, understood through theologians such as Aquinas or Luther, who will themselves be understood via the writings of modern theologians or popularizers.

Since Guenther obviously is such an apologist, and since the present study is not an apologetic work, this approach is suspect. If we regard his work as a more disinterested study containing factual assertions, a logical problem appears. If something should be found in the earlier literature to which his interpretation would not apply, the latter would not be sufficiently general. However, this can be determined only after all major instances have been examined. Hence his interpretation cannot, on principle, be judged without further investigation. This is simply an instance of the truism that, while a theological interpretation may yield a priori knowledge, an investigation by an outsider can deal only in a posteriori facts.
This simple point is frequently obscured by Guenther's ex cathedra affirmations that his is the correct understanding "of Buddhism." As it is obvious that his work is more apologetic than disinterested, we must stand back and realize that the judgement of whether or not his understanding can fit the doctrine in other texts and cultures can be made only after that doctrine is examined. One obvious focus for this further study would seem to be the doctrine in the writings of the early Vijnānavādin masters.

Of course, a completely new study of each Vijnānavādin text would be ludicrous. The actual procedure would be that of any other piece of research. One would devise and administer to each a test of the theoretical applicability of Guenther's interpretation. Unfortunately, the dissimilarity among the previous articles prevents us from shortening the process still further by simply using their data. It will be necessary to examine each text ourselves.

The second consideration within the question of validity, that of clarity, calls for a more subjective judgement. As we have seen, Guenther frequently quotes very abstract formulations of the trikāya which he interprets in an equally abstract manner. Do these illuminate the very concrete phenomena to which the scheme is applied? Again, a thorough answer should involve an examination of both his work and the trikāya texts. However, as Guenther himself often seems unable to bridge the gap between the abstract and the actual, the answer is probably no. For example, his explanation of the trikāya in Tilopa's attunement instructions (Nāropa pp. 47-48, 141-155) reads, ". . . [attunement] . . . is ninefold: attunement to the three existential patterns or norms, while dying, sleeping, and becoming awake" (p. 48).

Guenther explains:

The aim of the various practices outlined in the instructions given to Nāropa is to arrive at stable structures of
authentic being. Stability is achieved by shedding whatever there is of constructions, by dismantling the maze of dead and deadening concepts, and by penetrating to a spaciousness that is pulsating with life. The first step is to experience one's being-in-the-world as a god or goddess in a mansion which has the character of a magic spell. It is the magic that is important, not the spell itself or its content (p. 149).

The problem is obvious. Guenther feels that the actual details of the ritual are trivial compared to the meaning. It is difficult to realize that he is discussing certain very specific, complex meditation rituals. This denigration of the ritual is not the Tibetan view. The Tibetan masters usually follow the liturgical axiom pratique d'abord. They stress that the ritual performance ("the spell and its content") is the situation from which the magic or meaning will emerge.

It is at the specific level that important differences (e.g., differences of meaning determined by which Bodhisattvas are involved) are present. I do not find Guenther's interpretation to be helpful for such questions.

In short, although Guenther's interpretation of the trikāya is valid and useful for general discussions of many aspects of Tibetan Buddhism, it does not necessarily cover the theory in all Buddhist sects and is not sufficiently specific to clarify details of practice and theory. Therefore, although his interpretation is the best available, further research is justified, especially on the older texts, to reach a more useful understanding.

CONCLUSION

We now possess a fair idea of the development of the surviving Indian Buddhist literature and can reconstruct the outlines of the development of the concept of Buddhahood. It is obvious that various clusters of ideas about
Buddhahood became each of the kāyas. Many of these ideas have been examined and clarified. However, it is also clear that the trikāya is more than the sum total of three strands—it is a unique scheme defined by the relationships among the three terms.

What is still lacking is a general understanding of the patterns in this relationship, specifically an understanding expressed as a heuristic model capable of interpreting various versions of the doctrine. Guenther offers a developed model but its generality and clarity are both in doubt. Nagao has made a modest beginning but has not developed it.

Therefore, I suggest that the need for further research is self-evident. Also evident is the fact that this cannot be a simple continuation of any previous study but must involve a fresh start and a wider scope. As none of the previous studies has actually analyzed in detail the doctrine in one authoritative text, I suggest that the first step should be a detailed study of such a text. This study should be informed by the findings of earlier scholars but should not be bound by them.

The choice of a text is critical. It cannot be just any available text which deals with the trikāya but should be one which is seen as authoritative by as many branches of the tradition as possible. This limits the choice to the early Vijnānavādin writings in which that tradition was first defined. A summary of these writings follows.

As the traditions regarding the early Vijnānavāda have been summarized many times, and as little agreement exists on their historical value, this will merely be a survey of the major texts. More details on those which are most useful for a trikāya study will be found in Appendix B, "Bibliography of Selected Primary Sources."
The Vijnanavāda arose as a systematic interpretation of those Mahāyāna sūtras which appeared in India during the first centuries of our era. Although we do not know which sūtras were adopted by any specific Vijnanavadin master, a small group is clearly central to the tradition. It includes: the prajñā- pāramitā (most likely the Aṣṭasāhasrika-prajñāpāramitā), the Lankavatāra, the Daśabhūmika, some of the Ratnakūta group (especially the Śrīmaladevi), and above all, the Samdhinirmocana.

All traditions credit three figures—Maitreya, Asaṅga and Vasubandhu—with the basic formulation of new doctrine. Their major sāstras are discussed below.

1. MAITREYA

Maitreya is either an earthly teacher or the Bodhisattva Maitreya in the Tuṣita heaven. He is generally regarded as the author of the following works:

The Yogācārabhūmi, which is one of the longest, earliest and loosest of the sāstras. Although it contains doctrines about Buddhahood, it does not seem to be an important source for the trikāya. It may represent a stage prior to the full systematization of the Vijnānavāda. Only a few chapters have been translated into Western languages.

The Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra, an elegant verse summary of the Vijnānavāda, which would be nearly incomprehensible without the commentaries by Vasubandhu, Asvabhāva and Sthiramati. Asaṅga has incorporated practically all of the relevant passages on the Buddha into his own Mahāyānasāṅgṛaha. The fact that this text is one of the few Vijnānavadin works still extant in Sanskrit may account for its popularity with modern Indian scholars.
The *Madhyāntavibhāga* is again a work which would be incomprehensible without the commentaries by Vasubandhu and Sthiramati. This text, whose title might be translated as "Discrimination between the middle and extremes," defines the orthodox ("middle") Viśīnakaravādin metaphysical stance. It does not offer a Buddhology *per se* and only a few chapters are available in Western languages.

The *Dharmadharmanātha-vibhāga* is a further treatment of the metaphysical stance, centered on the *trisvabhāva*. It also carries a commentary by Vasubandhu. It has received little study in modern times outside Japan.

The *Abhisamayālaṅkaśra* is a *prajñāpāramitā* text with commentaries by Vasubandhu's pupil Āryavimuktisena and later writers, contains a short passage on the *trikāya* but is not a central Buddhological text. It is basically a systematization of the Mahāyāna from a Mādhyamika standpoint which has been placed within the Viśīnakaravāda. It provides a vivid demonstration that the Viśīnakaravāda masters were attempting to include rather than replace the other schools.

The *Uttaratantra* (or *Ratnagotravibhāga*) includes an important passage on the *trikāya*, but is best known as the source of the *tathāgatagarbha* theory. Asaṅga has written a commentary to it.

2. ASAṅGA

Tradition holds that either Asaṅga was the pupil of a teacher named Maitreya, or he was taken to the Tuṣita heaven where the Bodhisattva Maitreya dictated to him the *Yogacārabhūmi* and other texts. In addition to the commentaries on the Maitreya treatises, he is credited with:
The Abidharmaśamucayā, a Viśñavādīn abhidharma which, like the Viśñavādīn prajñāpāramitā of the Abhisamayālaṅkāra, shows how the earlier ideas were integrated within the Viśñavādīna. It contains no direct discussions of the trikāya.

The Mahāyānasāṅgara, a systematic work which, including the commentaries on it by Vasubandhu and Asvabhāva, establishes the broad outlines of the Viśñavādīn system. Asaṅga arranged all the individual elements (i.e., the abhidharma, the vijnaptimātra, the trisvabhāva, the prajñāpāramitā, and the trikāya) in a new perspective. As this text is the focus of the present study it will be discussed in detail later.

3. VASUBANDHU

The rich and enigmatic traditional figure Vasubandhu is usually considered to have written the brilliant Abhidharmakośa before being converted to Mahāyāna by his brother Asaṅga. In addition to the commentaries already noted, Vasubandhu is credited with several important primary texts. These include:

The Karmasiddhiprakaraṇa, in which the abhidharma reasoning of the Abhidharmakośa is developed in a Viśñavādīn direction. Little of it is directly applicable to the trikāya question.

The Viṃśīkā and Trimsīkā are cryptic verse summaries—the first of the arguments for the mind-only thesis, the second of the entire Viśñavādīn system. The importance of the Trimsīkā derives from its use by the Chinese pilgrim scholar Hsūan-tsang as the backbone for his Ch'eng Wei Shih Lun, his grand summary of the Viśñavādīn ideas current in seventh-century India. In
this work the opinions of various Indian masters are placed as commentaries to appropriate verses of the Trimsikā. As later Chinese and Japanese masters regarded the Ch'eng Wei Shih Lun as the authoritative exposition of the Vijnānavādin system, the Trimsikā came to be regarded as the basis of the Indian Vijnānavādin traditions.

These are merely the central śāstras. Each of the three masters is credited with additional minor works, and their disciples produced a flood of writings during the following centuries. Moreover, their influence was not confined to any one sect—most subsequent Mahāyāna Buddhist thinkers adopted many of their ideas. Some attempted to form a Vijnānavādin-Mādhyamika. Many later popularizers, such as Śāntideva, obviously saw their basic ideas as simply "Mahāyāna Buddhism."

In China, the Ch‘eng Wei Shih Lun became the textual basis for the Fa-hsiang school which has continued to develop in both China and Japan. The Vijnānavāda, as well as the various Vijnānavāda-Mādhyamika systems, was the basis for indigenous Tibetan developments. Tantric thought of India, Tibet and Japan developed directly from the Vijnānavāda.

After reaching this point (i.e., having read the preceding studies and become acquainted with the literature), I had the opportunity, in July 1976, to discuss the choice of a textual focus with Professor Nagao.

In response to a query about scriptural authority for the trikāya doctrine, he said that a search for such authority in the early Mahāyāna sūtras was unlikely to be fruitful. Instead, he suggested that the voluminous Yogācārabhūmi might yield the earliest details. He did mention one sūtra passage—the chapter added to the Chinese Suvarṇaprabhāsasūtra—but only as a later culmination of the doctrine rather than an early authority for it.
He suggested focusing first on the *Mahāyānasamgraha* and *Mahāyānasūtra-laṅkāra* and, to a lesser extent, on the *Abhisamayālaṅkāra*. He also felt that the *Ratnagotra-vibhāga* should not be a primary text, but agreed that its *tathāgatagarbha* theory could not be ignored.

The major Chinese sources which he recommended were Hsūan-tsang's *Ch'eng Wei Shih Lun* and Hui-yūn's *Ta-Sū-heng I Chang* (T. 1851), a sixth-century survey of Buddha-body theories.

After a discussion of his 1973 article (above), Professor Nagao stated that he still agreed with the methods and sources but felt that he had not sufficiently emphasized the *Mahāyānasamgraha*.

At this point the best approach to the *trikāya* doctrine appeared to be through an intensive study of the *Mahāyānasamgraha*. The choice of this text was dictated by the fact that it is the most systematic of the early texts. It contains more detailed arguments than do the others, and it locates them within the context of Asaṅga's complete system. Each of the other early *sūstras* explains some particular idea: the *Abhidharmasamuccaya* outlines the dharmakāya theory; the *Madhyāntavibhāga* defines the logical viewpoint of the school and differentiates it from that of the Madhyamika; and the *Ratnagotra-vibhāga* develops the *tathāgatagarbha*. Only the *Mahāyānasamgraha* and the *Mahāyānasūtra-laṅkāra* integrate these into an inclusive system. The importance of such doctrinal context cannot be overstressed. A study of any specific notion must be guided by an understanding of the wider net of theory in which it functions.

The *Mahāyānasūtra-laṅkāra* was eliminated from consideration after a careful reading of both it and the *Mahāyānasamgraha* revealed that the Buddhological verses of the former were incorporated and explained in the latter. Therefore, the next section of this study is an examination of the Buddhological passages of the *Mahāyānasamgraha*. 
NOTES


2 Rockhill’s text was some version of the *'phags-pa sku gsum shes-bya-ba theg-pa chen-po'i mdo* (Suzuki reprint edition No. 949: v. 37, p. 108-2-2). The central portion reads as follows:

/rigs-kyi-bu de-bzhin-gshegs-pa'i sku gsum ni rang-bzhin
rnam-par-dag-pa ni chos-kyi sku'o/ /ting-nge-'dzin rnam-par-
dag-pa ni long-spyod-rdzogs-pa'i sku'o/ /spyod-pa rnam-par-
dag-pa ni sangs-rgyas thams-cad-kyi sprul-pa'i sku'o/

/rigs-kyi-bu de-bzhin-gshegs-pa'i cho-skyi sku ni nam-
mkha' ltar rang-bzhin med-pa'i don-no/ /longs-spyod-rdzogs-
pa'i sku ni sbrin ltar 'byung-ba'i don-no/ sprul-pa'i sku
ni sangs-rgyas thams-cad-kyi 'phrin-las te/ char-ba lta-bu
ste thams-cad bdas-pa'i don-no/ /bcom-ldan-'das la byang-
chub-sems-dpa' sa'i snying-pos 'di skad ces gsol-to/ /bcom-
ldan-'das-kyi sku gsum-gyi bshad-pa ji-ltar bltar-bar bgyi/
bcom-ldan-'das-kyis byang-chub-sems-dpa' sa'i snying-po-la
bka'-stsal-pa/

/rigs-kyi-bu de-bzhin-gshegs-pa'i sku gsum ni 'di ltar
blta-bar bya'o/ /chos-kyi sku ni de-bzhin-gshegs-pa'i ngo-
gang la blta-bar bya'o/ /longs-spyod-rdzogs-pa'i sku ni
byang-chub-sems-dpa' i ngo-gang la blta-bar bya'o/ sprul-pa'i
sku ni mos-pas spyod-pa'i so-so skye-bo'i ngo-gang la blta-
bar bya'o

/rigs-kyi-buchos-kyi sku ni sangs rgyas thams-cad dang
rang-bzhin mthun-par gnas-so/ /longs-spyod-rdzogs-pa'i sku
ni sangs-rgyas thams-cad dang ting-nge-'dzin mthun-par gnas-
so/ /sprul-pa'i sku ni sangs-rgyas thams-cad dang 'phrin-las
mthun-par gnas-so/

/rigs-kyi-bu kun-gzhi gnas-su dag-pa ni me-long lta-bu'i
ye-shes te chos-kyi sku'o/ nyon-mongs-pa'i yid gnas-su dag-pa
ni mnyam-par-nyid-kyi ye-shes-so/ /yid-kyi rnam-par shes-pa
This point is evident in La Vallée Poussin's review of Suzuki's Outlines in the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, 1908, 885-891. While he is willing to extend all due courtesy to Suzuki the scholar, he is outraged at Suzuki the theologian's manipulations of the doctrines of his own faith. Of course, a good part of his pique is caused by Suzuki's penchant for "nourishing himself with the vapours of the German philosophic alembics," and making "absurd comparisons" between Christianity and the Buddhist "mysticism of sophistic nihilism"!

Etienne Lamotte, Le Traité de la grande vertu de sagesse (Louvain: Institut Orientaliste, tomes 1-4, 1949-76).


The article is unsigned. However, La Vallée Poussin, in a bibliographical note in Mélanges chinois et bouddhiques, 1 (1932), p. 399, identifies Paul Demiéville as the author.

For details see Appendix A—Bibliography of Primary Texts. Note that the Mahāyānasūtrašāṅkāra is a curious choice for the sole source of information. It is an early Maitreyan text which is hardly comprehensible without commentary. Asaṅga incorporated its Buddhological statements into chapter X of his Mahāyānasamgraha, where they appear as only one strand feeding into his trikāya. It was Asaṅga's trikāya rather than the more primitive versions which appears to have been accepted by the Vijnānavādin traditions. As the Mahāyānasūtrašāṅkāra is one of the few early Vijnānavādin texts still extant in Sanskrit, it is tempting to wonder if the author has chosen it for any more serious reason than an inability to read the more relevant texts which are available only in Chinese or Tibetan.

Note that Ruegg, in his *Tathāgatagarbha* (pp. 6-7) says that he was led by similar reasoning to base his study of the *Tathāgatagarbha* concept on a detailed analysis of the *Ratnagotravibhāga*.

There is little reliable historical information on the early development of the Vijnānavāda. Most accounts are based on a few Chinese and Tibetan summaries of the traditional legends. The most important of these summaries are contained in Paramārtha's sixth-century Chinese biography of Vasubandhu, Bu-ston's fourteenth-century Tibetan history of Buddhism, and Tāranātha's sixteenth-century history of Buddhism in India.

The traditions summarized in these works disagree on the basic historical questions, e.g.: Was Maitreya a man or a great Bodhisattva? How many Vasubandhus were there? What is the basic chronology? These questions have been the focus of heated discussions by such scholars as Takakusu, Obermiller, Lamotte, Johnston, Frauwallner, Schmithausen, Wayman, and Anacker. Summaries of these controversies and bibliographies may be found in:


— Walpola Rahula's article "Asaṅga" in Malalasekera's *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism*, vol. 2:1, pp. 133-146.

— Jacques May's "La philosophie bouddhique idéaliste."

— Anacker's "Vasubandhu: Three Aspects," pp. 1-33. This contains an excellent summary and discussion of the traditions and recent studies concerning the life of Vasubandhu.

Janice D. Willis arrived at a similar view in her "Chapter on Reality." She says, "Asaṅga authored both the *Yogācārabhūmi* and the *Mahāyānasaṅgraha* (among other works). Of these two, the latter is the most representative as a whole of his Mahāyāna views" (p. 3).
CHAPTER II
THE TRIKĀYA DOCTRINE IN THE MAHĀYĀNASAMGRAHA
A. SOURCES

The Mahāyānasamgraha is the most accessible of the early texts. It is available in both the Taishō (Chinese) and Peking (Tibetan) collections. In addition, a multtextual comparative edition of four Chinese translations (T. 1594 by Hsūn-tsang, T. 1596 by Dharmagupta, T. 1593 by Paramārtha, and T. 1592 by Buddhasānta) has been published by Sasaki Gessho (Kan'yaku Shihon-taishō Shōdaijōron. Tōkyō: Nakayama Shobō, 1959).

The edited Tibetan text and a French translation of the basic text, together with translations of selected portions of the commentaries by Vasubandhu and Asvabhava, has been published by Étienne Lamotte as La Somme du grand véhicule d'Asaṅga (Mahāyānasamgraha), tome 1: versions Tibétaine et Chinoise (Hiuan-Tsang); tome 2: traduction et commentaire. Louvain: Institut Orientaliste, 1973.

The present study is based upon two versions of the Mahāyānasamgraha:

— Hsūn-tsang's Chinese translation, ca. 648 A.D. (Taishō 1594; vol. 31, pp. 132-152), referred to as "H" and cited by Taishō page, register and line.

— The ninth-century Tibetan translation by Jinamitra, Śīleṇdrabodhi and Ye-shes sde (Ōtani 5549; vol. 112), referred to as "T" and cited by Peking folio numbering.
While I have attempted to interpret the Buddhology of the Mahāyānasāṃgraha in terms of its own internal logic with minimal reliance on the opinions of later commentators, this has frequently proved impossible. In such cases I have consulted Vasubandhu's Bhāṣya, which is available in two versions:

— Hsūan-tsang's Chinese translation (Taishō 1597; vol. 31, pp. 321-380), referred to as "Bh" and cited by Taishō page, register and line.

— The eleventh-century Tibetan translation by Atiśa and Tshul-khrims (Otani 5551; vol. 112, pp. 272-307), referred to as "bh" and cited by Peking folio number and line.

As the Bhāṣya's glosses are, by the very nature of that genre of commentary, terse (often no more than clarifications of the grammar of the lost Sanskrit), I have frequently been forced to consult Asvabhāva's Upānībandhana, which is also available in two versions:

— Hsūan-tsang's translation (Taishō 1598; vol. 31, pp. 385-449), referred to as "U" and cited by Taishō page, register and line.

— The Tibetan translation by Jinamitra, Śīlendrabodhi and Ye-shes sde (Otani 5552; vol. 113, pp. 1-43), referred to as "u" and cited by Peking folio number and line.

While Asvabhāva undoubtedly postdated Asaṅga, I have felt justified in consulting him because his comments seem to be grounded in the logic of this particular text rather than in the orthodoxy of some later school. At any rate, since his is the first unambiguous level of commentary on many passages, there is little alternative. Lamotte also relied heavily on the Upānībandhana.
In this study, references to the *Mahāyānasamgraha* itself are cited according to Lamotte's divisions, while Taishō references are reserved for drawing attention to some feature of Hsüan-tsang's Chinese text. Readers of the Chinese should note that, while Lamotte divided the text into a *prastāvanā* (foreword) followed by ten "chapters," Hsüan-tsang numbered each section consecutively, beginning with the *prastāvanā*. Hence, Lamotte's chapter one will be Hsüan-tsang's section two, and so on.

**B. WHAT IS THE VIJÑĀNAVĀDA?**

The most striking feature of the system of which the *trikāya* is the culmination is its inclusiveness. G. Tucci wrote:

... we cannot fail to notice a general and fundamental characteristic common to all. I mean the attempt for the conciliation of the various tendencies existent in Buddhism.

... it was certainly difficult to combine in a logical way all practical, dogmatical, mystical and theological tenets representing the main characteristic of the two schools. This was attempted by Maitreya[nātha] in the *Sūtrālaṅkāra* and chiefly in the *Abhisamaya-laṅkāra*, where the Hinayāna as well as the *Mahāyāna-caryā* are combined in the *abhisamaya*.

The *Mahāyānasamgraha* is also an inclusive work, incorporating nearly every familiar abhidharma concept, snippets of *prajñāpāramitā*, and the major theories usually identified with a wide variety of Mahāyāna sutras. Asaṅga's innovation consists of the way in which these are arranged to form a harmonious system. This system can be described as a hierarchy of nested concerns and theories each contained within, and oriented by, its superior. An understanding of the relative importance and role of each level of the hierarchy will prevent either
under- or over-evaluation of any sub-theory (such as the *trikāya*), and thus is
the fundamental prerequisite for more detailed research.

After a careful reading of the *Mahāyānasamgraha* and associated literature,
I have concluded that the overall structure of its system is as follows: The
primary concern is soteriological — the entire text is a guidebook for a
spiritual career. Within this, the secondary concern is epistemological
Asaṅga wishes to elucidate the mechanism which will allow the aspirant to
progress toward the ultimate goal of enlightenment (or "omniscience"). Finally,
at a tertiary level of concern, Asaṅga is attempting to integrate the various
theories into a metaphysics. As this conclusion is both crucial to my approach
to the *trikāya* and directly opposed to the usual view, I shall summarize the
considerations that led to it.

Any discussion of this topic must begin with the simple fact that the
majority of contemporary scholars consider the Vijnānavāda to be an idealism.
Should we accept this designation for the doctrine of the *Mahāyānasamgraha*, we
must explain exactly what type of an idealism it is, and why certain non-
idealist ideas have been included. Should we reject it, we must demonstrate
why so many competent scholars have been mistaken.

For the purposes of this investigation, B. K. Matilal’s is the best and
certainly one of the broadest definitions of idealism: ". . . a denial of the
common-sense view that material/external objects exist independently of the
mind, i.e., independently of their being perceived."²

At first glance, this seems to describe the doctrine of the *Mahāyāna-
samgraha*. For example, Asaṅga (*I:21*) says:

In short, the *ālayavijñāna* is a resulting-vijñāna
[i.e., resulting from previous experience] whose nature
is all the seeds [of future experience]. It embraces
\((\text{samgrhita}; \text{badus}; \text{\dagger})\) all bodies in the three worlds
and all stations of rebirth.\(^3\)

Obviously, the \(\text{\dhyayavijn\=ana}\) (which is frequently translated as some sort
of "mind") contains the entire perceived world. However, this one idea does
not comprise a metaphysic. More details are required, e.g.: How does this
relate to ordinary experience? What guidance does it give in fulfilling
religious aspirations? What does it really mean? It is clear that the various
investigators have reached widely varying conclusions.

P. T. Raju, in *Idealist Thought in India*, sees the \(\text{Vijn\=anav\=a}\)da as a minor
variation of the \(\text{Advaita Ved\=anta}\). Therefore, the idealism label frees him from
the necessity of dealing with these problems at all. The \(\text{Vijn\=anav\=a}\)da texts are
all footnotes to the history of \(\text{Ved\=anta}\)c thought.

Jacques May in "La Philosophie bouddhique id\=ealiste" takes the idealistic
nature of the doctrine as an \textit{a priori} fact. It is simply part of the general
Western discussion of idealistic philosophy. As he explicitly disregards any
ideas which he is unable to integrate within his idealistic interpretation, no
problems (or fresh insights) can arise.\(^4\)

B. K. Matilal in his "Critique of Buddhist Idealism" has taken the textual
evidence (chiefly from surviving Sanskrit texts) much more seriously.\(^5\) He has
seen that as an idealism the doctrine is a failure, and is forced to note the
religious (i.e., soteriological) ideas necessary to make sense of it.

The best known modern interpreter is probably A. K. Chatterjee who, in
*Yog\=ac\=ara Idealism*, has also worked from the surviving Sanskrit texts. He re-
gards the fundamental projects of Hegelian philosophers and the \(\text{Vijn\=anav\=a}\)da
thinkers as very similar. The major difference is that Hegel retained both subject and object, while the Vijnānavāda masters have rejected the object to establish a pure Absolute. He sees this notion as the logical culmination of the critical and subjectivist trends present throughout all Buddhist philosophy. Soteriological ideas are unconnected with the essential philosophical concepts. These premises are refined and restated but not changed in his Readings on Yogācāra Buddhism.

While reviewing Yogācāra Idealism Alex Wayman severely criticizes Chatterjee's presupposition that the fundamental Yogācāra position is that consciousness is the sole reality. He suggests that, in forcing the doctrine into such a mold, Chatterjee has produced an inadequate and misleading interpretation.

While Wayman does not develop his own view, it is clear that he would place greater emphasis on the demands of soteriological practices (especially meditation), on the Abhidharma portion, and on the trisvabhāva. Above all, Wayman insists that those passages which describe the genesis of the perceived world from mind must be read in the light of similar Sāmkhya doctrines which he sees as their prototype.

A later essay by Chatterjee, contained in Facets of Buddhist Thought, is more closely reasoned and meets some of Wayman's criticism, but does not show any fundamental change in stance.

Although others have written on the subject, these scholars are among the most respected. Their work shows that interpreting the Vijnānavāda as an idealism raises problems which are almost impossible to solve without ignoring portions of the texts. A fresh approach is indicated.

A second major reason for questioning the applicability of their notions is that they have drawn their ideas from a very narrow selection of the early
Vijnanavāda works, chiefly the few surviving in Sanskrit. This is clear, for example, in Chatterjee's comment that "... canonical literature, pertaining exclusively to the Yogācārā, is not plentiful." This statement becomes comprehensible, if incredible, when we realize that he is ignoring the immense corpus of Tibetan and Chinese translations and basing his research on the Mahāyānasūtrałaṅkāra with some reference to the Mādhyāntavibhāga and Vasubandhu's Viṃśatika and Trimsikā.

If the author's primary concern is not idealistic, what may it be? There are two possibilities: soteriological or philosophical. If the former, the text will present a doctrine which will primarily advance the aspirant's spiritual progress. Although we should expect most of the doctrine to be logically consistent, if some aspect does not seem to fit, our question would be, "Does it, or does it not, further the aspirant's progress?" and not, "Is it logically consistent with the rest of the text?"

If the text is basically philosophical, it may be either epistemological or metaphysical. If the former, we should expect a description of the causes of the various experiences open to man. There would be no necessity for an explanation of the logical status of the experiences. Only if it is primarily metaphysical should we expect all other considerations to be subordinated to an account of the logical status of such experience.

Some comments by H. V. Guenther will help us to see possible alternatives to idealism. In "Mentalism and Beyond in Buddhist Philosophy" and in Buddhist Philosophy in Theory and Practice, he implicitly rejects any possibility of separating soteriology from philosophy — both are aspects of true philosophy.

What, then, do we have to understand by 'philosophy'? Certainly, it can never be an achievement; it remains a movement, a continual striving for truth by pre-eminently
intellectual means. In this quest for truth philosophy brings about a change in ourselves by opening our eyes to wider horizons. Such a vision is directly related to the desire to cultivate and refine the personality. Moreover, philosophy as an encompassing vision wants to know all that is knowable; unlimited cognition is its basic characteristic. Any limitation imposed on it will inevitably kill it. But the most decisive point is that in this striving for truth, truth itself is the primal source of our thinking. Yet it becomes perverted easily by positing as absolute something which is valid from certain points of view and in certain respects and at a particular level of thinking. It also becomes false by considering the particular knowledge of something within Being as the knowledge of Being as such and as a whole. Philosophy as a quest for truth born out of truth is therefore constantly struggling against its two foes: absolutization and concretization. This is the theme of Buddhist philosophy in particular. It begins with a vision of what there is, and then progressively enlarges this vision. Its rejection of the non-Buddhist systems, all of which in some way succumb to anti-philosophical tendencies, as well as its trenchant critique of its own digressions into this dangerous territory, are due to, and reflect, the endeavour to keep the philosophical spirit alive.¹

This notion that the Vijnānavāda maintains the congruence of philosophy and soteriology is attractive to an interpreter of the Mahāyānamsāgraha. The two are not separated in the text and, if its message can be understood without introducing such a separation, the result is likely to be faithful to the original. The problem that arises is that Western interpreters, like Guenther, are apt to respect such a philosophy only insofar as it embodies a search for the truth by "pre-eminently intellectual means." However, the text contains much more than intellectual means. It authorizes meditational and even mantric techniques (V:2.10). How can these possibly fall within any Western concept of philosophy?

Guenther's answer is that such a 'philosophy' includes both epistemological and metaphysical components. The former, comprising the 'mind-only' doctrine, can certainly involve the various psychological techniques for understanding
the operation of the perceptual mechanism. But this can never be a metaphysical doctrine of any kind, let alone an idealism.

The metaphysical doctrines are not the 'mind-only' ones, but the trisvabhāva and the trikāya, which Guenther describes in Buddhist Philosophy.8

However, such a clear distinction between epistemology and metaphysics does not occur in the early Vijñānavadā texts. Guenther attributes this absence to a confusion on the part of the early thinkers:

It is also obvious that the Indian Buddhist idealists whose thought is reflected by the bKa'-brgyud-pas, were above all concerned with epistemology, the relation between the psychic event of the moment with its objective duplicate. Only secondarily were they metaphysically interested, as when they reduced the whole of reality to the one particular existent of sems (mind). It seems that the bKa'-brgyud-pas, just as their Indian prototypes, due to their preoccupation with epistemological problems, misunderstood the logical character of the metaphysical premise. They saw sems 'mind' as a starting-point on which other assertions were to be based, in a word, as the basic premise, summed up in the words: "The whole of reality is mental."

However, epistemology is one fact of philosophy, metaphysics another. What distinguishes a metaphysician from other philosophers is not the premise he starts from but the principle of interpretation he brings to bear. He certainly does not claim to reveal truths about a world which lies beyond the realm of the senses. His concern is with how to take what happens here and now or how to get the things of this world into perspective....

Later, while summarizing the Dk doctrine, I shall show that this comment is directly applicable to the Mahāyānasāṃgraha, and argue that the task of interpreting its doctrine involves deriving a metaphysics which will harmonize with the stated epistemology.
Our study must begin with Asaṅga's foreword (prastāvanā) with its concise apologhetic for "the Mahāyāna" (i.e., the Vijaṇavāda). While this appears to constitute a clear statement of the primary concern of the text, it is almost impossible to force into an idealistic mold. If the body of the text contains an idealistic system, this foreword is an embarrassing appendage. If, however, the possibility that the contents are not an idealism is allowed, then this foreword becomes a key to the author's intent.

Asaṅga states that the Mahāyāna message consists of the contents of the ten chapters of the Mahāyānasamgraha arranged in the order necessary for the aspirant's spiritual development. They chart a credible, logical path to great enlightenment (mahābodhi). That is, his primary intent is soteriological, and within this orientation he has arranged and integrated the teachings into a coherent system. His aim is fundamentally soteriological and secondarily philosophical.

This viewpoint will affect the interpretation of every element of the system. If the Mahāyānasamgraha were regarded as a philosophical text, the unifying principle would have to be philosophical. As there are several major philosophical ideas contained in the text, one would have to be elevated to a primary position. As we have seen, the usual candidate has been the cluster of idealistic notions. However, this means that those other ideas that will not fit must be explained away or set aside.

If however, the unifying viewpoint is soteriological, there is no need to assert the primacy of any one of the philosophical theories so long as their interrelationships can be shown. Freed from the necessity to elevate the
content of one of the chapters to the status of "the" core of the system, we can examine the secondary level of concern with fewer preconceptions. Asaṅga lays out the structure of this secondary level in his foreword.

[The actual content of each chapter of the Mahāyānasamgraha is:]

I. The ālayavijñāna is called the support of the knowable (jñeyāśraya; shes-by'i gnas; 所知依).

II. The trisvabhāva: i.e., the paratantrasvabhāva, the parikalpitasvabhāva, and the parinispattavabhāva, are the characteristics of the knowable (jñeyalaksana; shes-by'i mtshan-nyid; 所知相).

III. Ideation-only (vijñaptimātrata) is the entry into the characteristics of the knowable (jñeyalaksanapravesa; shes-by'i mtshan-nyid-la'jug-pa; 入所知相).

IV. The six paramitās are the cause and the result of this entry.

V. The ten bodhisattvakaramīs are the various ways in which the cause and result of this entry are cultivated.

VI. The Bodhisattvavas are the cause and the result of this entry.

VII. The samādhis ... are the higher mentation (adhicitta) involved in this.

VIII. Non-discriminating awareness (nirvikalpajñāna) is the higher awareness (adhiprajñā) involved in this.

IX. Non-staying nirvāṇa is the severance-result (phalaprahāṇa) of this.

X. The trikāya ... is the awareness-result (phalajñāna) of this.
The key notion is obviously "the knowable" and the basic soteriological act is the "entry" (praveśa; 'jug-pa; जूग-पा) to the knowable.

The term "the knowable" is not a focus of interest by itself. Vasubandhu (Bh 322b29-c1; bh145a) glosses it as "that which may be [or "should be"] known," and identifies it with the soiled and purified dharmas, or with the trisvabhāva. Furthermore, he says (Bh322c7-8; bh145a) that the entry can be equated with vijñaptimātratā in the sense that this specified the manner or means of entry.

Asaṅga is not positing some new transcendent entity called "the knowable." Had he wished to do this, he already had a quasi-ontological tathatā at hand. I can only conclude that this term throws the entire theory into an epistemological form. That is, within this primary soteriological structure, Asaṅga has chosen to order the individual ideas in an epistemological perspective indicated by "the knowable." He is less concerned with describing how the world looks from a liberated viewpoint than with explaining the mechanism whereby the aspirant can acquire such a viewpoint.

Only at a tertiary level of emphasis does Asaṅga introduce the individual theories, such as that of the ślayavijñāna or vijñaptimātratā, which might be termed idealist were they presented on the primary level. However, they are not. They are on the same level as, and elaborately interconnected with, the trisvabhāva, pāramitās, bhūmis, saṁvara, samādhi, nirvikalpa-jñāna, apratīśṭhita-nirvāṇa and trikāya. The trap for the unwary interpreter is the fact that any of these, in the hands of a determined reductionist, could be made to contain all the others and thus become "the essential" doctrine. Only by some sensitivity to Asaṅga's stated aim can we appreciate the importance of each, and hence be in a position to investigate his use of any one theory.
The view of chapters I-II can be summarized as follows: Asaṅga, like a Western phenomenologist, wishes to begin his project with the raw facts of experience. To him, reality is composed of a beginningless series of these experiences which, because they make themselves known directly to the mind, are cast in mentalistic terms. The ground for the entire experiential process is called the ālayavijñāna and each experience is termed vijnapti. Questions about the relation of this mentalistic language to ordinary uses of these terms are difficult and complex. I will only point out that the ālayavijñāna is not some supermind. It belongs to a level of discourse in which interpretations of the events, such as the notion that they pertain to a "mind" (in any common sense) have been set aside.

The vijnapti are not simply raw sense-data but, because of the organizing effect of past experiences, present themselves as full-blown perceptions. These include the perception of oneself as a perceiver with body and mind; the perception of a sensory apparatus; the perception of an object of perception, and the perception of interpretative schema (II:2). As these have no independent reality but are merely moments in the activity of the ālayavijñāna, they are said to be dependent on the ālayavijñāna.

The common man may adopt one of two possible attitudes toward these perceptions. He usually hypostatizes them into concrete things, thus strengthening the notion that he is a person surrounded by an environment of objects. Asaṅga terms such objects "totally imaginary" (II:3). On the other hand, under the influence of Mahāyāna teachings, he may begin to see through the apparent substantiality of these perceptions. As he does so, he becomes free from the ideas that he and his surroundings are immutable objects. His perceptions are "brought to perfection" (II:4).
In either case the perceiver, object and interpretation are mutually dependent and co-variable. None of them remains constant while the others change. There is no room in this theory for a single observer who sees things differently or who sees different things; there is no notion of a real world which appears different to common man and Buddha. There is no need to hold any of these terms constant, since continuity is provided by the ālayavijñāna: the perceptual activity from which the common man and his world, and the Buddha and his world, may emerge. The way in which these ideas apply to the individual on the religious path is worked out in detail throughout the text.

Finally, we should note an interesting extension of the Abhidharmic term dharma to generate terms which apply to the Buddha. Asaṅga easily finds terms for the ordinary perceiver, the object of his perception and the seizing perceptions he employs, but a problem arises when speaking of the Buddha, the environment which he perceives and the way in which he perceives it. Asaṅga's solution is to adopt a terminology based on the word dharma. Whereas the common man sees himself as a special sort of object surrounded by other objects at which he grasps, the Buddha sees himself as a group of dharmas (Dharmakāya), surrounded by dharmas over which he exercises sovereignty. The field within which this interaction occurs is called the "dharma-realm" (dharmadhātu). The interpretative scheme that has led him to this vision is called the "Mahāyāna dharma." As it has been given to him by others who have previously attained such a vision, it is called an "outflow" of the dharmadhātu.
As we have seen, Asaṅga has cited a great number of traditional "facts" about Buddhahood from the authoritative sūtras and śāstras. He does not appear to have selected these for compatibility since even the most contradictory notions (e.g., there is one Buddha/there are many Buddhas) are reproduced. As the history and development of many of these have been studied elsewhere, I have examined an individual notion in detail only when such information is necessary to understand the use of it in this text.

The present study will be principally concerned with those doctrines by which Asaṅga attempts to resolve contradictions between the individual ideas.

The general procedure was as follows: All statements about Buddhahood were located. Where they occurred in clusters, the degree of relationship between contiguous elements was assessed and a decision made on whether each could stand alone or whether the cluster should be retained intact. That is, each statement was isolated as far as logically possible. In most cases, this judgement proved easier than expected. For example, as the twenty-one gunas of the Buddha at II:33 are obviously lifted en bloc from the Samdhinirmocanasūtra and are separated from the other Buddhology and interpreted in a different manner by Asaṅga, they should be kept together. The same reasoning applies to the "associated" gunas at X:9-27. On the other hand, many statements are clearly discrete or are embedded in a discussion of some other topic. In either case, they may be removed from context and regrouped to illustrate features of the basic framework, e.g., to bring together all statements referring to the Dharmaśāya.

The ease with which this regrouping is possible reflects the early state
of this text. Although the chapters are in a logical order, many blocks of doctrine within the chapters (especially in chapter X) are in no obviously meaningful order, and may be rearranged. These passages fell into three categories, each of which required a different treatment:

1. The list of *gunas* at II:33 stands by itself. As it is not really integrated with the rest of the text, it received only a cursory examination.

2. The passages dealing with the *Dharmakāya* showed that Asaṅga had used this term as a synonym for Buddhahood in general. These passages contain most of the traditional ideas with which he deals, but contribute directly to his systematic project only by answering the question of how Buddhahood is obtained. Therefore, I have structured the examination of these around that question.

3. Those passages (mainly from chapter X) which show Asaṅga's attempts to systematize the Buddhological ideas by the *trikāya* scheme. These are the primary focus of this study.

Before beginning, a possible source of confusion must be noted. The Buddhology of the *Mahāyānasāṃgraha* hinges on the term "body." Lamotte has translated a variety of Tibetan and Chinese terms by "le corps" ("body"), and regarded them all as equivalent to the Sanskrit "kāya." Examining the texts, I found that he has used "le corps" for the following terms:

1. T: *sku*, H: *身* for any aspect of a Buddha (e.g., *Nirmāṇakāya*, *Sambhogakāya*, *Dharmakāya*, *Svabhāvikakāya*). These were undoubtedly *kāya* in the Sanskrit.

2. T: *lus* and H: *體* for the physical bodies of ordinary beings,
of Śrāvakas and of Pratyekabuddhas (e.g., I:48; I:50; II:2.2; II:11, etc.).

3. T: lus and H: [自體] for "category or "class" (I:11, I:21).

Thus, by taking both Tibetan and Chinese translations into account, it is always possible to determine which of the three senses of "body" is intended.

1. II:33 THE TWENTY-ONE GUNAS OF THE BUDDHA

II:33 contains a short, and apparently separate, Buddhology based on the following list of qualities (gunas) of a Buddha. This list is drawn from a prominent passage of the Saññhinirmocanasūtra.17

The Buddha:

0. Has a very pure intelligence
   shin-tu rnam-par dag-pa'i blo mnga'-ba

1. Acts in non-duality
   kun-tu spyod-pa'i gnyis mi-mnga'-ba

2. Enters the characteristicless dharma
   mtshan-nyid med-pa'i chos-la mchog-tu gzhol-bar mdzad-pa
3. Resides in the Buddha-residence
   sangs-rgyas-kyi gnas-pas gnas-pa

4. Obtains an equality with all Buddhas
   sangs-rgyas thams-cad dang mnyam-pa-nyid brnyes-pa

5. Having no obstacles, reaches an understanding
   sgrib-pa mi-mnga'-bas rtogs-par thugs-su chud-pa

6. Has a dharma which cannot be overturned
   phyir mi-zlog-pa'i chos dang-ldan-pa

7. Is not diminished by his sphere of action
   spyod-yul-gyis mi-'phrogs-pa

8. Has a system which is inconceivable
   rnam-par bzhag-pa bsam-gyis mi-khyab-pa

9. Has reached the equality of the three times
   dus-gsum mnyam-pa-nyid-du thugs-su chud-pa
10. Has a body that extends over all areas of the universe.
   'jig-rten-gyi khams thams-cad-du khyab-pa'i sku dang-ldan-pa
   其身流布一切世界

11. Has a veridical awareness of things
   chos-thams-cad-la the-tshom med-pa'i ye-shes mnga'-ba
   於一切法智無疑滌

12. Has a mind containing all practices
   spyod-pa thams-cad dang-ldan-pa'i blo mnga'-ba
   於一切行成就大覺

13. Has an errorless knowledge of things
   chos mkhyen-pa-la nem-nur med-pa
   於諸法智無有疑惑

14. Has a body [H: "as perceived by ordinary beings"] which is not imaginary
   rnam-par ma-brtags-pa'i sku mnga'-ba
   凡所現身不可分別

15. Has an awareness which is the goal of the vows of all Bodhisattvas
   ye-shes byang-chub sems-dpa' thams-cad-kyis yang-dag-par mnos-pa [sic]
   一切菩薩等所求智

16. Has truly reached the perfection of the non-dual Buddha-residence
   sangs-rgyas-kyi gnas-pa gnyis-su med-pa dam-pa'i pha-rol-tu phyin-pa
   得佛無二住勝彼岸
17. Has arrived at the culmination of the Tathāgata's undefiled liberating awareness
de-bzhin gshegs-pa'i ma-'dres-pa'i rnam-par thar-par mdzad-pa'i ye-shes-kyi mthar phyin-pa
不相間雜如來解脫妙智究竟證

18. Has reached the equal Buddhaland which has neither center nor outlying areas
mtha'-dangdbus med-pa'i sangs-rgyas-kyi sa mnyam-pa nyid-du thugs-su chud-pa
無中邊佛地平等

19. Has reached the dharmadhātu
chos-kyi dbyings-kyis klas-pa
極於法界

20. Has reached the limit of open space
nam-mkha'i khams-kyi mtha' gtugs-pa
盡虛空性

21. Completely reaches the final limits
phyi-ma'i mtha'i mur thug-pa
窮未來際

Asaṅga's reason for grafting this passage tenuously onto the end of the trisvabhāva chapter, rather than integrating it within the trikāya, is obscure.¹⁸ However, as he has kept it separate and interpreted it differently, almost to the point of developing an alternate Buddhology, I have maintained his division
and placed a short study of it in the following section.

The most obvious characteristic of the above list is its imagery. It evokes a mythopoeic image of a virtually omniscient and omnipotent Buddha of cosmic dimensions inhabiting a Buddha-residence, within a Buddhaland, in a state of perfect knowledge. The remainder of II:33 shows us the existential interpretation to which Asanga subjected this list as well as Vasubandhu's and Asvabhāva's expansion of this interpretation.

I must repeat that the subject under investigation here is not the traditional image but the manner in which Asanga has interpreted it. Unfortunately, his only explicit principle is extremely puzzling. He says, "The phrase, 'The Buddha has a very pure intelligence (buddhi)' is clarified by the other phrases." All versions add, "Thus, the X is properly explained." "X" is variously, धर्मतात् (Tibetan and H), 法體 (Dharmagupta and Buddha-sānta) or 法義 (Paramārtha), or "la nature du Buddha" (Lamotte). The author obviously wishes to subsume all other gunas under the undefined concept of "pure buddhi." Neither Vasubandhu nor Asvabhāva offers substantial commentary, and the idea is not a major focus elsewhere in the Mahāyānasamgraha. I can only suggest that it may refer to the doctrine which D. S. Ruegg has called "la luminosité naturelle de la pensée," but its importance here is impossible to determine.

Asanga's comments reveal a consistent and comprehensible interpretation. He sees each guna—even those ostensibly describing the Buddha's residence, etc.—as a reference to some quality of the Buddha's personality. These may be generally divided into those gunas which he regards as references to the Buddha's noetic abilities, and those which he regards as references to the Buddha's effective abilities.
a. The Noetic Abilities

Strangely enough, Asaṅga interprets the two gunas which ostensibly inform us of the way in which the Buddha "acts" or "moves" as references to his noetic rather than his effective abilities:

1. "[The Buddha] acts in non-duality" is glossed as "the quality of absolutely unimpeded entrance to the knowable." "Entering the knowable" refers to obtaining an accurate comprehension of the ontological status of perceived reality, a comprehension which will itself ensure accurate perception. This comprehension is described in the trisvabhāva doctrine (II:9). Asvabhāva supports this interpretation by defining "non-duality" as "not sometimes encountering obstacles and sometimes not encountering them," thus steering the reader away from the obvious conclusion that the "non-duality" could refer to a non-dichotomizing conceptual process, a notion not in accord with the trisvabhāva.

2. "He enters the characteristicless dharma" is interpreted as "he has gone to the supremely pure tathatā which is characterized by a non-duality of being and non-being." Asvabhāva refers this concept to the trisvabhāva doctrine which in the Mahāyānasamgraha is invoked to explain all such assertions.

Thus, "Buddha action" is interpreted as an unhampered noetic act which, together with "entry," refers to gaining a proper understanding of reality, i.e., an understanding by the trisvabhāva.

b. The Effective Abilities

The remainder of the gunas are references to the Buddha's altruistic activity. These may be subdivided into those which ostensibly describe the
domain or place inhabited by the Buddha, and those which describe the Buddha himself.

1. The Domain of the Buddha

5. "Having no obstacles, he reaches an understanding." (The Chinese says, "He has reached the non-impeded place (141b26").) Asaṅga explains this as the quality of having cultivated the antidote to all obstacles. Asvabhāva adds that this "cultivation" is the practice of the noble path.

This point is closely related to 1. and 2., but stresses the state achieved rather than the action of achieving it.

3. "He resides in the Buddha-residence (vihāra)" is interpreted as showing "the quality of residing in unceasing, spontaneous Buddha-activity." By various examples of "residence" (Devavihāra, the four Brahmavihāras, the dhyānas, sūnyatā, animatta, etc), Asvabhāva (U410c27-29) explains "residence" to be any fundamental stance or principle in which an individual is grounded and from which he acts. Asvabhāva identifies the Buddhavihāra with the spontaneity with which a Buddha takes any appropriate stance to aid sentient beings, not by some particular Buddha-stance.

Here also, a statement ascribing a determinate state is interpreted as a reference to activity. Asaṅga is not only interpreting a spatial myth in active terms but is also affirming that the manner of the Buddha's acts cannot be exhaustively specified, but only labelled "unceasing spontaneous Buddha actions."

This phrase reveals the three parameters governing the Buddha's action in specific circumstances. "Unceasing" will be dealt with in number 21 below.
"Spontaneity" reveals the Buddha's freedom to respond to the needs of others. The third, "Buddha-activity," is determined by the pattern of actions set up during the graded practice of the paramitas which led to Buddhahood. This pattern is the subject of the next guna.

16. "He has truly reached the perfection (paramita) of the non-dual Buddha-residence." Asaṅga says that this is "the quality of having attained the paramitas in the equal Dharmakāya." To Asvabhāva this means that all the paramitas have been developed to the highest degree and are "equal" or "non-dual" insofar as they cannot be quantified (as they could while the Buddha was still on the bhūmis). Again, the Buddha-residence is more than a determinate pattern of action. It is the terminus of the development by which the Bodhisattva became a Buddha, and as such defines the manner in which the Buddha will act.

18. "He has reached the equal Buddhaland which has neither center nor outlying areas." Asaṅga says that this reveals the quality of non-limitation of the sphere of the three Buddha-kayas. Asvabhāva adds a series of comments, only two of which are of interest here: "the Dharmakāya, etc. living in this universe because there is no place else" and "the Dharmakāya, etc. penetrates everywhere in order to procure the welfare of sentient beings . . ."

While the Buddha-residence was the fact of the Buddha's altruistic action, the Buddhaland is the place of the action. Asvabhāva concludes that this place cannot be other than the universe filled with the beings for whose sake the action is performed.

19. "He has reached the dharmadhātu" shows the quality of having devoted himself to the welfare and happiness of all sentient beings until the end of samsāra. Asvabhāva says that the dharmadhātu can give rise to outflows such
as sūtras and teachings. Therefore, the Buddha who reaches the dharmadhātu devotes himself to the welfare and happiness of all sentient beings. Here the spatial language is interpreted as revealing the altruism of the Buddha's actions.

20. "He has reached the limits of open space" reveals the quality of indestructibility (or "inexhaustibility"). Asvabhāva adds that "open space" is a metaphor for the Dharmakāya which, without itself altering or imposing limits, works for the welfare and happiness of sentient beings.

21. "He completely reaches the final limits." There is no comment by Asaṅga and Asvabhāva makes this a part of number 20., but also suggests that the "final limits" refer to a perpetual non-interruption of the Buddha-activity, since there will never be an end to beings to be trained. Thus, the spatial limits are interpreted as the limitlessness of the action.

7. "He is not diminished by his sphere of action [H: "His actions are unimpeded"])." Asaṅga explains this as "the quality of not being diminished by worldly things although born in the world."

ii. The Buddha-body

Only two gunas deal explicitly with the body of the Buddha:

10. "His body extends over all areas of the universe" means to Asaṅga that he manifests a Sambhogakāya and Nirmāṇakāya in all areas of the universe. Asvabhāva adds that this is for the welfare and happiness of all beings to be disciplined.

11. "His body [H: "as perceived by ordinary beings"] is not imaginary." Asaṅga says that "he manifests himself according to the expectations [of those whom he teaches]." Asvabhāva adds that although he may manifest himself with
a gold color, etc., his body is not imaginary.

Note that the term "is not imaginary" means that the object perceived has not been generated by conceptualizing activity of the subject, as is the case with ordinary perception of another's body.

4. "He obtains an equality with all Buddhas." Asaṅga explains that there is no divergence between Buddhas as far as the support, intention and action of their Dharmakāya are concerned. Asvabhāva adds that the support is the viśuddhajñāna; intentions are the intention to work for the welfare of others, and activities refer to the resulting actions which all accomplish through Nirmāṇakāya and Sambhogakāya.

iii. The Buddha-mind

The remainder of the guṇas deal with the Buddha's awareness—the way in which he sees, knows and understands.

11. "He has a veridical awareness of things." Asaṅga calls this "the quality of cutting off doubts," and Asvabhāva explains that, lacking doubt himself, he is able to cut off the doubts of others.

15. "His awareness is the goal of the vows of all Bodhisattvas." Asaṅga explains that "by incalculable numbers of bodies [H: "of supports"] he undertakes the training of sentient beings." Asvabhāva explains that the "bodies" belong to the Bodhisattvas whom the Buddha trains. The other Bodhisattvas transmit this teaching and so obtain the awareness which is the object of the vows of all Bodhisattvas.

13. "His knowledge of the dharma is free from error." Asaṅga says that he knows the future arising of dharma. According to Vasubandhu and Asvabhāva, the Buddha, unlike the Śrāvaka, is able to perceive the subtlest seeds of
future Buddhahood in some apparently incorrigible individual, and so to encourage him.

9. "He has reached the equality of the three times." Asaṅga adds that he "instructs" (or "predicts," vyākaraṇa). Asvabhāva adds that this means the Buddha can know and explain things in the past or future as if they were current events.

8. "His system is inconceivable." To Asaṅga this is "the quality of systematizing the dharma." Asvabhāva adds that the system cannot be comprehended by fools or worldlings in general.

6. "His dharma cannot be overturned." To Asaṅga this means "he is not overcome by any tīrthikas."

17. "He has arrived at the culmination of the Tathāgata's undefiled liberating awareness." Asaṅga interprets this as the quality of manifesting undefiled (H: "various") Buddhalands in accord with the aspirations of beings. Asvabhāva interprets "liberating awareness" as "awareness of aspiration (vimokṣa)." That is, Asvabhāva interprets this guna as the Buddha's ability to be aware of the aspirations of each sentient being.

12. "His mind contains all practices." Asaṅga says that this is "the quality of causing [those whom he teaches] to enter all sorts of practices."

The Buddha who emerges from II:33 is certainly not irreconcilable with the figure found later in chapter X. However, apart from his explanation of the tenth guna, Asaṅga has simply not reconciled them. While this curious omission should make us very wary of simply reading II:33 and chapter X together, one common element is obvious. Both are permeated by the idea of being-in-control, an idea which the Mahāyāna labels "mastery" (vaśīta, see note 42 below). That is, experiences do not simply impinge upon the Buddha;
he takes an active role in properly understanding his world. From this understand­ing he is able to act, spontaneously and creatively, in order to transmit this understanding to others.

2. THE DHARMAKĀYA

The second major Buddhology is found in passages describing the Dharmakāya. It depicts Buddhahood as a single entity and provides the opportunity for the questions, "How is it obtained?" and "What is it?" The former elicits a description of the relationship of the aspirant to his goal. The latter provides the occasion for developing a metaphysical description of the Buddha.

a. Obtaining the Dharmakāya

While the entire Mahāyānasamgraha is one long prescription for obtaining the Dharmakāya, a few passages give a synopsis of the process. These may be divided into three groups according to the style of explanation in each:

— a highly abstract epistemological explanation involving re-orientation of the Ālayavijñāna
— a very concrete epistemological one, stressing meditation and illustrating the perceptual attitude of the Dk
— an active answer which involves the action of the Dk in the world.

i. I:46-48 Re-orientation of the Ālayavijñāna

The author has raised the question of how the seed-filled Ālayavijñāna, the cause of emotional involvement in the world, can also be the seed of ways
of thinking which counteract such involvement. He answers that the seed of world-transcending thought is the impression formed in the ālayavijñāna by hearing the dharma (śrutavāsanā). The initial small impression gives rise to a greater one as the subject is thought out, and to a still greater one as it is meditated upon, until it completely takes over the ālayavijñāna and dispels all seeds of emotivity. The description of this process shows the beginnings of the Dk:

I:48. "This small, medium or great seed implanted by hearing is also the seed of the Dharmakāya. It counteracts the ālayavijñāna—it is not the ālayavijñāna. Although it is worldly, as it is an outflow of the transworldly and very pure dharmadhātu, it is the seed of world-transcending thought. Even before world-transcending thought arises, it [the seed implanted by hearing] counteracts the snare of the klesas, [the possibility of rebirth in] a realm of suffering, and all bad actions. It helps one to meet Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

"It is involved with the Dharmakāya of the neophyte Bodhisattvas and it is also involved with the Vimuktikāyas of the Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas. Although it is not the ālayavijñāna, it is involved with the Dharmakāya and Vimuktikāya.

"As it develops through the stages of small, medium and large, the vipākavijñāna will become devoid of seeds and all its aspects will be cut off."

Here the Dk is presented as a reoriented ālayavijñāna. The perceptions (vijñāna) of ordinary man establish in him the tendency to have similar ones in the future. The total set of such tendencies (ālaya-vijñāna) is the basic
substratum of his personality. According to this passage, the dharma which a man hears acts in an analogous way but establishes a new substratum, the body-of-dharma (Dharmakāya) which eventually replaces the ālayavijñāna as the foundation of his existence. This is confirmed by X:7.1: "by reorienting the ālayavijñāna, the Dharmakāya is obtained."

This dharma, which comes from those who have already reached enlightenment, is clearly the Mahāyāna teaching, as the neophyte (ādikarmika) Bodhisattvas have the Dk but the Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas have a Vimuktikāya instead.

Asvabhāva (U 395bl-9) explains that the Vimuktikāya is free only from the kleśāvarana, whereas the Dk is free from both kleśāvarana and jñeyāvarana. However, he then attempts to explain how a Bodhisattva can, at the very onset of his career, be said to be free from both. He likens this Bodhisattva to a prince who has been imprisoned immediately after receiving abhiṣeka. When he is finally freed from prison, he will immediately regain his prerogatives. This seems to suggest that a potential Dk is obtained at the moment of setting out on the Bodhisattva career, but is actualized only later. This notion of acquiring a potential Dk seems to overlap with that of being born in the Tathāgata's gotra.

ii. Obtaining the Dharmakāya: The Epistemic Explanation

X:4  "How is the Dharmakāya initially obtained [T: 'by contact']?"

Both Vasubandhu and Asvabhāva agree that the term "obtained" indicates that the Dk is not something "produced" because the body is perpetual.
By Non-Conceptual and Subsequent Awareness

The first answer to the question of how the Dk is initially obtained is:

X:4.1 "... by non-conceptual awareness (nirvikalpaññāna) and subsequent awareness (prsthahabdhaññāna) which take as their object the common Mahāyāna dharmas."

Vasubandhu does not comment, while Asvabhava (U 437b28) says only, "the meaning is easy to understand," probably because these terms have already been defined in earlier passages which will now be examined.

Chapter II has described the way in which the practitioner begins to understand the view of reality set out in the first chapters and hence enters the Bodhisattva path. III:12 describes the progress on the path:

By a calm and insightful world-transcending awareness which takes as its object the common dharmas, and by subsequent multiple-vijñapti awareness, he has attenuated all the image-producing seeds belonging to the Ālayavijñāna and strengthened the seed of contact with the Dharmakāya. After reorienting the base, by perfecting all the Buddhadharmas he acquires omniscient awareness...

The subsequent awareness, which sees everything arising from the Ālayavijñāna and merely mental appearances to be like an illusion, arises by its very nature free from misapprehensions. Thus, just as a magician is free from misapprehensions about the reality of things he has created, so the Bodhisattva, although speaking of cause and effect, is always free from misapprehensions about them.
This is repeated at III:14:

In the ten Bodhisattva bhūmis . . . because [the Bodhisattva] practices, for many millions of kalpas, the calm and insightful world-transcending awareness which takes as its object the common dharma and the subsequent awareness, he reorients his bases. In order to obtain the three aspects of the Buddha-kāya, he has practiced in this way.

Finally, in the description of the Bodhisattva bhūmis at V:2.10:

Why is the tenth bhūmi called the dharma-cloud? Because its awareness of all dharmas which takes as its object the common [dharmas] contains the entire [group of] means to liberation involving dharanīs and samādhi [just as a cloud contains water], because it obliterates major impediments as a cloud obliterates the sky, and because it fills the Dharmakāya.

The commentaries to all three passages are similar. Despite minor differences in terminology, they all deal with the same two types of "awareness" (jñāna), a term never used for ordinary common-sense "awareness-of-something" (vijñāna) but reserved for awareness exercised by the Buddha and Bodhisattva.

The two types of jñāna are "calm and insightful world-transcending awareness which takes as its object the common dharma" and "subsequent awareness." As Asvabhāva (U 416c5-6) identifies the first with the nirvikalpa-jñāna, these are the same ideas as in the original passage at X:4.

In the phrase "calm and insightful world-transcending awareness which takes as its object the common dharma," Asvabhāva (U 416c6) glosses the terms
"calm" and "insightful" respectively as "in a state of meditative concentration" (samāhita) and "free from misapprehensions." That is, they are to be understood in their usual sense as meditational terms where "calm" (samatha) refers to the untroubled state of mind gained through one-pointed meditation, and "insight" (vipaśyanā) refers to the accurate view gained by a mind in this state.

This awareness is also "world-transcending" (lokottara), glossed by Asvabhava (U 416c5) as "leading to enlightenment" (anāsrava) and "free from concepts" (nirvikalpa). That is, it aids the Bodhisattva in his progress along the path but should not be misunderstood as an awareness "of" a transcendent reality, or a class of mental operations yielding knowledge about such a reality.

Finally, this awareness takes as its object the "common (samsrsta) dharmas.

This is the most puzzling aspect of the term. How can a non-conceptual awareness have an object? Asvabhava (U 416c2) explains that "common (経緯) dharmas" means that the awareness bears upon (経緯) the manifest characteristics "common" (経緯) to all things, i.e., tathātā. While a very similar passage (VIII:5) contains no mention of tathatā, that term occurs in the glosses to both III:12 and VIII:5. As the use of tathatā in this literature has not been properly studied, and as it seldom appears in this text, the few passages which mention it have been set aside. In other words, this is awareness of the reality common to all perception, a reality normally misapprehended and concretized into various isolated concepts.

While the "subsequent" of "subsequent awareness" (prsthālabdha) can merely mean "coming after," here it refers to the state subsequent to meditation when the calm and insightful mental attitude is carried over into perception of the ordinary world. As III:12 says, it
sees everything arising from the Ālayavijñāna and all merely mental appearances to be like an illusion, arising by its very nature free from misapprehensions.

In terms of the trisvabhāva view of this text, by subsequent awareness one sees the vijñapti, which are paratantra, but appreciates the fact that their nature is "like an illusion." Therefore, they are not misapprehended, i.e., are not parikalpita. "Misapprehension" is a widely-used term explained in the Abhidharmakośa, V:9: "Taking the impermanent as permanent, the suffering-filled as satisfying, the impure as pure, and that which has no Ātman as having an Ātman." Here, Asvabhāva (U 416c19-20) identifies misapprehensions as erroneous interpretations of paratantra, i.e., interpretations whose acceptance gives rise to parikalpita and whose rejection gives rise to parinispāṇa.

In III:12, the non-conceptual and subsequent awareness are said to:

... attentuate all the image-producing seeds belonging to the Ālayavijñāna, and strengthen the seeds of contact with the Dharmakāya.

The practice of non-conceptualization weakens the inveterate tendencies to reify experience. Asvabhāva (U 416c11-12) glosses "seeds of contact with the Dharmakāya" as "the influence of having heard much Mahāyāna [teaching]," thus identifying it as a development of the influence which originally set the practitioner on the path. This may also explain the phrase "by contact" in the Tibetan version of the original question at X:4.

The end of this process is described respectively as "omniscience" (at III:12), "triple Buddhakāya" (III:14) and "filling the Dharmakāya"
(V:2.10). As the passages are very similar, it is reasonable to see these as synonymous terms. The fact that one speaks of "Buddhakāya" while the other speaks of all three kāyas suggests that the Dk is not merely one of the three but can stand for all three. They are also synonymous with "omniscient awareness"—not an infinite extension of the ordinary epistemic process but, as Asvabhāva (U416c15-16) glosses, "a stainless and unimpeded jhāna."

By the Five-fold Practice

The second answer to the question of how the Dharmakāya is first acquired is:

X:4.2 "By the five-fold practice."

Vasubandhu does not comment. Asvabhāva (U437b28-c5) quotes the explanation from V:4 and also says that the five aspects are no birth, no destruction, primordial calm, essential peace, and no self-nature. These two explanations are apparently alternatives.

The explanation at V:4 is embedded in a discussion of the ten Bodhisattva bhūmis. The relevant portion is as follows:

How should we understand the practice of these bhūmis? The Bodhisattva who, on bhūmi after bhūmi, practises samatha and vipaśyanā does so by a five-fold practice. The five aspects of it are:

1. common practice
2. characteristicless practice
3. spontaneous practice
4. intensive practice
5. insatiable practice

By this five-fold practice the Bodhisattva achieves five types of result:

1. In each instant all the supports of affliction are destroyed.
2. He is freed from various notions and obtains the pleasures of the garden of the dharma.
3. Accurate awareness of the incommensurable multiplicity of appearances of the dharma and the truly endless manifestations of its aspects.
4. The signs which accompany purity, and are not just imagined, are manifested in him.
5. In order that he may fulfill (paripuñja) and perfect (parinispatti) the Dharmakāya, he seizes upon the most perfect cause.

Asvabhava (U 424c28-425a29) shows that these are all meditative techniques and that each element of the second list is the respective result of each practice in the first.

Asvabhava and Vasubandhu (Bh359b21-24) substantially agree that "the most perfect cause" is the "insatiable practice," i.e., the totality of his practices up to that time, and that "fulfillment" refers to the Dk on the tenth bhūmi, while "perfection" refers to residence in the Buddhaland.

This passage strengthens the previous evidence that the Dk is something gained earlier but fulfilled at the highest stage. It also shows that the Dk, not just the Sbk, can live in (在) a Buddhaland.
By Amassing the Accumulation of Equipment on All Bhūmis

The third way in which the Dharmakāya is obtained is:

X:4:3 By amassing the accumulation of equipment (saṁbhārasaṁcaya) on all bhūmis.

There is no commentary here, but at III:15 and 18 (U 417b26-28 and U 418b16-20) Asvabhāva defines it as the stabilized practice of the six pāramitās resulting from having practiced them throughout innumerable past ages. This is in accord with the normal use of the term. 37

By the Vajropamasamādhi

X:4.4 By the Vajropamasamādhi which breaks the difficult-to-break āvaraṇas. Immediately after this samādhi they are separated from all the āvaraṇas.

"Vajropamasamādhi" designates the final state of meditation in which the last difficulties are overcome and full enlightenment achieved. 38 These final obstacles to enlightenment (āvaraṇas) are "subtle and difficult to break." Asvabhāva (U 437c7-8) glosses this as "unemotional non-awareness." 39 Ting defines these as the last and most difficult obstacles severed by the Buddha but not by the Arhat. Hence the Buddha achieves omniscience.

That is, the āvaraṇas are commonly divided into kleśāvaraṇas (obstacles consisting of blind emotional reaction) and jñeyāvaraṇas (obstacles consisting of unawareness). The former are more easily overcome than are the latter. The "subtle difficult-to-break āvaraṇas" are the last and most difficult of the jñeyāvaraṇas.
This is the way in which reorientation of the support is obtained.

This closing line virtually identifies obtaining the Dharmakāya with reorientation of the support. That this "support" is each of the five skandhas is implicit in T and explicit in H's translation.

iii. The Dharmakāya as Reorientation of the Skandhas

While the preceding passage has described the alteration in the basic perceptual stance of the aspirant who moves from common man to Dharmakāya, we may legitimately request a more detailed account of the changes in this individual. Such an account is found at X:5. The explanation at X:5 rests upon two key terms: "reorientation" (parāvṛtti) and "sovereignty" (vibhūtva).

To say that some aspect of the aspirant has been reoriented means that it has not been abolished but has been put to a new use within the new personality.

Asvabhāva (U 437c18-22) explains that the Srāvaka, etc., attempts to abolish his misery by destroying the skandhas just as a foolish leper commits suicide. The Bodhisattva attempts to reorient each skandha just as a wise leper will seek a cure which will transform his diseased body into a healthy one.

Actions which have been reoriented are termed "sovereignties." Ordinary non-reoriented existence is composed of skandhas which are forced into a determinate form by the effects of past action (karma). The individual is trapped into existence in a certain type of world by what appear to be powerful
external forces.

The Buddha is not trapped but is himself in control—he exercises "sovereignty." While ordinary man perceives a situation forced upon him, the Buddha creates or manifests a situation in response to the needs of others. Hsuan-tsang certainly understood "sovereignty" in this sense, as he repeatedly translates Asvabhāva's commentary by: "He obtains the sovereign power of manifesting..."

X:1 By how many sovereignties does the Dharmakāya obtain sovereignty? The answer is, in short, by five of them.

X:5.1 By a reorientation of the rūpaskandha it obtains sovereignty over the Buddhafield, the body, the laksānas, the minor marks, the infinity of phonemes, and the invisible cranial mark.

A possible misunderstanding of X:5 can be avoided by bearing in mind that the skandhas are not five groups of factors comprising an individual. They are the factors comprising a moment of relational existence—including the epistemic subject, the epistemic object, the schemata of interpretation, and the final perceptions. Therefore, when the text speaks of the rūpaskandha becoming Buddhafields etc., it is not portraying the conversion of the individual's physical form into a cosmic Buddha. It is simply saying that the ordinary world (included in the rūpaskandha) is transformed into a Buddhaland.

The statement at X:5.1 says that the Buddhaland replaces the former physical world. Asvabhāva says they may be gold or silver according to the desires of sentient beings.

The Buddha also obtains the ability to manifest a body which, according to
Asvabhāva, corresponds to the capacities of beings to be taught, i.e., the Nirmānakāya and Sambhogakāya. While this will be dealt with later, let us note that "Dharmakāya" is here used as a general term for Buddhahood, while the rūpakāya is the specific way in which it appears.

The laksānas and minor marks are the 32 major and the 80 minor marks of a great man. The infinity of phonemes refers to the Buddha's ability to speak to any sentient being in any situation.

The invisible (to gods and men) cranial mark is the usnīsa or fleshy protuberance on the crown of the head. The author's reason for mentioning it here is obscure.

X:5.2 By a reorientation of the vedanāskandha it obtains sovereignty over the irreproachable, immeasurable, vast happy residences.

The vedanāskandha is the second logical moment in perception. When sense object and faculty are juxtaposed, the immediate result if vedanā—"sensation"—the feeling of pleasure, pain or indifference which is inherent in any normal perception, and over which one has no control. These sensations are the basis of involvement in saṁsāra.

The text is saying that, for the Dk, reoriented vedanā is a sovereignty called "residence." Asvabhāva explains that "irreproachable" means that there are no kleśas, "immense" that they are replete with gunas, and "vast" that they surpass all the pleasures of the triple world.

It is not clear if this is one residence or several, or if sukha vihāra is synonymous with brahma vihāra (of X:10). However, it is clear that feeling-toned reactions (kleśas) based on past encounters with a certain class of
object have been replaced by "bliss" (sukha)—a transcendent pleasure grounded in the attitude of the Buddha rather than the appearance of the object.

X:5.3 By reorientation of the samjñâskandha it obtains sovereignty over explaining groups of names, of statements, and of phonemes.

The samjñâskandha is the aspect of the perceptual process in which the perception, having acquired the feeling-tone of vedanâ, is identified as a certain characteristic by the affixation of a verbal label. In Buddhist thought such labels are discussed under the theory of "names, statements and phonemes." When reoriented the samjñâskandha becomes the ability to master this verbalization. As there are various theories, and Vasubandhu and Asvabhâva disagree on the exact import of this passage, it is probably unwise to push interpretation much further.

X:5.4 By a reorientation of the saṁskâraskandha it obtains sovereignty over creation (nirmanâ), transformation, convening the great assemblies, and collecting white dharmas.

The saṁskâraskandha is the collection of personal predispositions which have been built up through past experience in this and former lives. They are the forces driving the individual into certain types of action which lead him to certain types of perception. Asvabhâva (U 438a8) says that here the author is really speaking about cetanâ, "motivation," the all-inclusive saṁskâra.

In the Dk this has been reoriented to yield the sovereignty of creating appearances and of transforming things as desired, of bringing together great assemblies of those who wish to learn, and of bringing together white dharmas.
Again, the basic idea is a switch from being driven into situations (cetanā), to being able to create appropriate ones.

X:5.5 By a reorientation of the vijñānaskandha it obtains sovereignty over the mirror-like jñāna, the selfsame jñāna, the contemplative jñāna, and the action-accomplishing jñāna.

In abhidharmic thought the vijñānaskandha is the fifth skandha, the fullfledged feeling-toned recognition of an object arising from the preceding process. In the Vijnānavāda, vijñāna retains this sense but is also elevated to an overarching framework within which the other skandhas find their place. While this was not entirely absent in earlier schools insofar as each skandha could be described only as an aspect of a process including all, its detailed development became a major concern of the Vijnānavādins, who posited four strata of vijñāna. First, the ālayavijñāna which stores the bijas and serves as the ground for the others. Second, the kliṣṭamanas as the locus of Ātma-dṛṣṭi (the idea of the self as a discrete entity), which discriminates and divides. Third, arising from the kliṣṭamanas, the manovijñāna, the central synthesizing-discriminating consciousness where concepts are formed from sense data. Finally, the sense data from each of the five sense faculties are called a vijñāna and the five together are called pravṛttivijñāna—"active vijñāna."

As each of these four classes of vijñāna is reoriented, an "accurate awareness" (jñāna) results.

The sense in which this jñāna is an "accurate" awareness is explained by the trisvabhāva theory of chapter II. The jñāna is not an awareness of the real thing, nor is it some amorphous mystical experience. Both common man and
Buddha find themselves engaged in a perceptual situation (paratantra). The common man reifies his perceptions and mistakes them for objects (parikalpita). The Buddha sees through this reification and so understands the perceptions to be just that (parinispanna). The former type of perception is vi-jñāna, "awareness of certain things," while the latter is jñāna, "accurate awareness."

The reorientation of the ālayavijñāna gives the "Mirror-like jñāna" which provides an accurate reflection unhindered by spatial or temporal barriers. The reorientation of the kliṣṭamanas yields the self-same jñāna which is aware of the lack of difference between oneself and others and so is able to manifest images of the Buddha as required.

The reorientation of the manovijñāna yields the "Contemplation-jñāna" which is the reasoning aspect of the Buddha.

Finally, the five sensory vijñānas are reoriented to obtain the "Action-accomplishing jñāna" which comprises the various activities of a Buddha. Thus, the entire Dk—perception and activity—is included in X:5.

b. The Dharmakāya — What Is It?

In the preceding sections we have seen that, in the Mahāyānasaṅgraha, the Dharmakāya, having both effective and noetic aspects, is a synonym for Buddhahood. These sections have shown the continuity of common man and Dk by limiting their description to those sets of concepts applicable to both, and by stressing the practices, especially the meditative ones, which effect the transition from one to the other.

However, the Dk is not simply the terminus of the praxis but is also a new reality. We may legitimately ask, "What is it?" as well as "What was it?" As there is no meta-language in which a "true" description of the
Dharmakāya may be framed (see X:3.5: "inconceivability"), Asaṅga is limited to the Abhidharmic concepts which were the standard tools of Buddhist reasoning. He attacks from a variety of angles with various questions, each yielding a different type of answer.

Interpreting these reductionistic answers presents a formidable challenge. First, the Abhidharmic language, which is itself mysterious to us, must be translated into contemporary concepts. The more serious problem arises from the fact that Asaṅga has done only part of the task. Chapter X of the Mahāyāna-saṅgraha is not a systematic treatise on Buddhahood, but is more like a collection of materials toward such a work. Even with the commentator's opinions, this doctrine is merely nascent. Implications are not worked out, minor inconsistencies remain unresolved, loose ends abound, and nowhere has a simple theory of the Dk been separated from the confusing mass of details.

Since Asaṅga's approaches follow no discernible pattern, they will simply be taken as they occur.

i. Characteristics (laksanas) of the Dharmakāya

The Dharmakāya has five characteristics:

X:3.1 Reorientation: because it is reoriented toward the destruction of all obstacles belonging to the samklesa aspect of the paratantra svabhāva and [it is reoriented] toward obtaining liberation from all the obstacles to sovereignty over the dharmas; and because it is reoriented toward the presence of the pure aspect of paratantra.

This passage is very concise because "reorientation" has already been
Described in detail at IX:1-2, where the notion that the world is renounced upon reaching enlightenment is integrated within the Viśnunāvāda. The key passage (IX:1) reads: "Renunciation is the Bodhisattva's non-abiding nirvāṇa. Its laksana is the reorientation of the double support, i.e., rejecting the saṃklesas while not rejecting saṃsāra." That is, "renunciation" does not imply an escape from the world, but only from those disturbing emotions (saṃklesa) which are continually driving man into improper, misery-inducing perceptions and reactions. This in-the-world-but-not-of-it state, called "non-abiding" (apratisthita) nirvāṇa, is characterized by "reorientation."

Here, at X:3.1, Asaṅga places this idea within the structure of the Mahāyānasamgraha by relating it to the trisvabhāva doctrine. The "double support" whose reorientation constitutes renunciation is simply the paratantra-svabhāva, the "given-ness" of a perceptual situation. The term "double" points to the ambiguity of this situation, which may be experienced either as a determinate world or as an occasion for enlightened action. The first of these possibilities is explained in chapter III. An individual becomes more deeply enmeshed in saṃsāra when the emotional reactions attached to his belief in his own ultimate reality force him to ascribe a false ultimate reality to the given (paratantra) perceptual situation, thus transforming it into a totally imaginary (parikalpita) perception. On the other hand, there is also the possibility of correctly appreciating (parinispāna) the true nature of the perceptual situation and, rather then reifying it, simply acting properly upon it. This is the perceptual process of the enlightened individual.

Therefore, Asaṅga is saying that when the sūtras apply the term "renunciation" to a Buddha they do not mean that he has become cut off from experience.
They mean that his reaction in a perceptual situation is an accurate appreciation rather than a reification.

Furthermore, at IX:2.5-6, Asaṅga distinguishes the Hinayāna reorientation from the Mahāyāna reorientation, and lists the "advantages" (anusāṃsā) of the latter. This provides yet another capsule definition of Buddhahood. IX:2.6 reads: "... The Bodhisattvas understand dharmanairatmya, and, considering samsāra to be peaceful, they sever all the disturbing emotions but do not abandon [the world]...." The advantages of this are: "Being grounded in their own reorientation of the base, they obtain sovereignty over all samsaric things. By manifesting appropriate sentient bodies to the different classes of living beings, they use their proselytizing skills to aid the converted beings to obtain the highest births and to set out on the three spiritual careers (yānas)."

That is, a reoriented, accurate appreciation of the true nature of the perceived world automatically entails a compassionate involvement with helping others in it.

This brings us to the second characteristic of the Dk, its true nature.

X:3.2 Having white dharmas as its real nature (svabhāva), because the ten masteries (vasitā) are obtained through the fulfillment of the six pāramitās.

To the direct question, "What really is the nature of the Dk?" Asaṅga replies that it is not a stuff (vastu) of any kind—it is ability. Nor is it simply an indiscriminate omnipotence, but a specific set of abilities which have been developed by long practice on the Bodhisattva stages. These abilities are indicated by the term "white dharmas," which are here synonymous
with the "masteries."\(^{49}\)

It is difficult to imagine a stronger possible affirmation of the continuity between the individual who has set out on the Mahâyâna path and the Dk which is the eventual result. The true nature of the latter is simply the developed abilities which have been cultivated by the former.

Each of the ten masteries is described. Asvabhâva's explanations (U 436b14-18) are in square brackets.

(1) By fulfilling the dānapâramitā the Bodhisattva obtains the āyurvasitā [ability to abandon life of one's own free will], the cittaśaṅkati [ability to undergo transmigration without being soiled] and the parîkṣāra (sambhāra) vaśitā [ability to accumulate food, drink, etc., as one wishes].

(2) By fulfilling the śīlapâramitā the Bodhisattva obtains the karmavaśitā [ability to do only good acts] and the upapattivaśitā [ability to be born in whichever destiny one wishes].

(3) By fulfilling the ksântipâramitā the Bodhisattva obtains the adhimuktivaśitā [ability to change a land to gold, etc., simply by forming as aspiration to do so].

(4) By fulfilling the vîryapâramitā the Bodhisattva obtains the pranidhânavasitā [ability to realize one's vows].

(5) By fulfilling the dhyānapâramitā the Bodhisattva obtains the râddhisvaśitā [ability to accomplish all types of miraculous deeds] that goes along with the five abhiññā.
By fulfilling the *prajñāpāramitā* the Bodhisattva obtains the *jñānaviśeṣitā* [roughly—ability truly to understand teaching], and the *dharma viśeṣitā* [ability to preach as one wishes].

In each case the forces which drive an ordinary man through *samsāra* have been mastered and can now be used by the Dk for the benefit of others. Therefore, the true nature of the *Dharmakāya* is mastery.

A closely related passage appears at X:1.1: "The *Svabhāvikakāya* is the Tathāgata's *Dharmakāya* because it is the support for sovereignty (*vibhūtva*) over all the *dharmas.*" *Avabhāva* (U 436al-5) suggests two explanations of the term *Dharmakāya*. Either, "It is called *Dharmakāya* because the nature of the *dharma* (*dharmatā*) is to be a body," or, "It is called *Dharmakāya* because it is the support for all *dharmas*." The phrase, "... because it is the support for sovereignty over all *dharmas*," is glossed as "... because it is the support for obtaining sovereignty over all *dharmas*.

That is, *kāya* implies both a coherent organic unit, and a support or occasion for something, just as a human body supports human activities.

**X:3.3 Non-duality (*advaya*):**

(a) Of Being and Non-Being, because [on the one hand] none of the *dharmas* exists, [but on the other hand] their characteristic, *sūnyatā*, really does exist.

(b) Of *sāṃskṛta* and *asaṃskṛta* because [on the one hand] it is not caused by *karma* or *kleśas*, [but on the other hand] it does possess the sovereignty of being able to appear as conditioned.
(c) Of plurality and unity, because [on the one hand] the support of all the Buddhas is not differentiable, [while on the other] innumerable streams of existence are enlightened.

This passage presents two difficulties: that caused by the three sets of unfamiliar concepts, and the fundamental one of grasping the sense of advaya.

The three sets are unexplained simply because Asaṅga presupposes an understanding of them. The first, existence/non-existence of the dharmas, harks back to the dichotomizing analyses of the early Buddhist schools, especially of the Vaibhāṣikas. They began with experiences. These were first divided into those which were believed to represent existent things ("being"), and those which were illusory ("non-being"), the outcome of the interplay of the true existence. The existents were further divided into saṃskṛta, which participate in the interaction which engenders the illusory, and the asaṃskṛta which do not, and which thus become the key to the eventual destruction of the illusory. This reduction of the existent continued until a certain set of fundamental things (dharmas) were posited. In addition, the process by which the illusory non-existents gain credence was also analyzed. Near the basis of this process was found the tendency to divide experiences into "mine" and "others," a tendency virtually synonymous with the "unity/plurality" of our passage (U437a7-8).

This passage emphasizes the inadequacy of the old analysis in the face of Mahāyāna ideas. First, the distinction between the concretely existent and the illusory fails when one takes the Mahāyāna position (developed at great length in the Prajñāpāramitā literature) that none of the dharmas are concrete realities. This does not simply mean that everything is shifted to the non-being category. These dharmas do have one truly existent aspect—the fact that they
are characterized by śūnyatā, which, on a purely predicative level, implies a complete absence of characteristics. While this has shifted the sense of the term "existing" from "being a concrete thing" to "being an absolutely true fact," the latter is merely a wider definition of the same type, not a new line of thought. We must remember that even the Vaibhāṣikas did not regard the dharmas as real in the common Western sense of being self-existent entities.

Secondly, the distinction between samskṛta and asamskṛta fails. In Abhidharma thought samskṛta ("put together") refers to the factors composing a moment in the relational existence of an ordinary being. They are brought together in this moment by past action (karma) and automatic reactions established by past experience (kleśa). The activities of this assemblage set up the conditions for future combination. The asamskṛta, on the other hand, arise from a certain few actions such as meditation, but do not engender future combinations of dharmas. Hence, their production breaks down saṃsāra, and leads to nirvāṇa. The Mahāyāna concept of Dharmakāya does not submit to such an analysis. It is not brought about by karma or kleśa but by the various practices already outlined. While this might be said of the traditional asamskṛta, the Dk cannot simply be asamskṛta since it leads not simply to nirvāṇa but to future appearances in saṃsāra.

Finally, the unity/plurality category also fails. This point is very important to Asaṅga since it becomes virtually synonymous with the question of how many Buddhas are in existence. His denial of unity is easily understood. Insofar as many individuals obtain Dharmakāyas upon reaching enlightenment, there are many Dharmakāyas. His further contention, that the concept of multiple Dharmakāyas is also unsatisfactory, is more complex. He says that the Dk cannot be entirely plural because "the support of all Buddhas is not
differentiable (T: 'not multiple')." To this Asaṅga has appended two stanzas which have been commented upon by Asvabhāva.

The second stanza (X:3.3b) gives a variety of reasons for which the idea of either one Buddha or many is unacceptable. Its place here suggests that Asaṅga did not differentiate between "Buddha" and "Dharmakāya." Asvabhāva's commentary to the first stanza (U437a6-13) says that the concept of plurality does not apply to the Dharmakāya because this concept is based on a division of the world into "I" and "others," a division not made by a Dharmakāya. This curious reasoning brings us to the heart of the problem. By appealing to the public, observable fact that many individuals have reached enlightenment, Asaṅga has proven that the Dk cannot be unitary. That is, the ordinary man has made a common sense and (to the believer) verifiable observation. Now, to support his denial of the entire truth of the conclusions drawn from that observation, Asaṅga appeals to a purely internal, private fact about the Dk's perceptions. Suddenly he is no longer speaking about how the Dk appears to the observer, but about how the observer appears to the Dk! Our task in understanding this section now becomes one of finding a hermeneutical framework which will resolve the apparent confusion.

At this point it will be helpful to distinguish the general Buddhist use of the term advaya from the Vedantic advaita which is also often translated by "non-dual." The Buddhist term never stands for an undifferentiated reality underlying appearances, while the Vedantic one may. As T. R. V. Murti says:

Advaya is knowledge free from the duality of the extremes of 'Is' and 'Is not,' Being and Becoming, etc. It is knowledge freed of conceptual distinctions. Advaita is knowledge of differentiationless entity. . . . 'Advaya' is a purely epistemological approach, the advaita is ontological.51
In the present instance, this should warn against an overly literal understanding of the English translation of *advaya laksana* as a "non-dual characteristic of the Dharmakāya." Asaṅga is not ascribing a quality to an existent thing. Such a quality would be a *svabhāva* and would belong in the previous passage (X:3.2). Asaṅga is not making any assertions about the ontological status of either Dk or perceiver of it. Once we "go behind" the division into "I" and "other," our question about "Whose perception?" must be dropped, as it is an ontologically based one which simply cannot occur within this system. If the characteristic "non-dual" describes the process of perception rather than either subject or object, the problem becomes, "What does it reveal about this process?" I can see no alternative to concluding that "non-dual" defines the viewpoint or stance of the perceiver. That is, a stance from which one simultaneously perceives, on a conventional level, the Bodhisattvas reaching Buddhahood, and on an ultimate level, the lack of differentiation between Buddhas. This bifocal view is developed earlier in this text (III, the *trisvabhāva*) and is the subject of the entire *Madhyāntavibhāga*. This definition would also apply to the earlier points (a) and (b) of the above-quoted passage.

X:3.4 Perpetuity, because it is characterized by the purification of the true nature, it is the outcome of a former vow, and its activity is never completed.

It would seem natural to extend the reasoning of the preceding section on non-duality to the transitory/eternal dichotomy which, for schools like the Vaibhāṣikas, was virtually synonymous with the *saṃskṛta/asaṃskṛta* categories. Asaṅga's clear statement to the contrary warns us that the subject is much more
complex. He is not merely establishing a method for avoiding any extremes, but is making assertions about specific cases.

He takes the same bifocal view as in the previous section, seeing the Dharmakāya in both an ultimate and a relative sense. But he now finds the characteristic "perpetuity" applicable to both views. The argument that from a worldly standpoint the Dk is perpetual, because its activity is never completed, is easily understood. Note that this unceasing activity is not an essential characteristic, but an observable fact about the Dk. Note also that again the Dk itself is capable of action with no reference to a Sambhogakāya or a Nirmānakāya.

The former-vow argument is much the same. The Bodhisattva on the way to acquiring this Dharmakāya has vowed to continue acting in the world so long as sentient beings require his aid; and, since many have still not reached nirvāṇa, the Dharmakāya continues to act. Again, its continuation is grounded in the common world: first, through a vow taken by the Bodhisattva; second, through the activities of others. The logic of this will be worked out in detail by use of the trikāya at X:37-39.

Finally, the Dk is also perpetual in the ultimate sense because it is characterized by a pure true nature (tathatā), which Asvabhāva (U437b7-8) says is perpetual and immutable.

This raises a major problem of Vijnānavāda scholarship. Asaṅga makes statements—such as "the Dharmakāya is eternal"—which appear to attach the same predicate to an object from both the ultimate and the conventional viewpoints, and by these to explain the way in which the two interact. For example, the fact that the Dk is eternally present is the basis for its constant work for the welfare of all sentient beings. To be able to do this, Asaṅga posits
a "true nature" (tathatā) which, as the ultimate object, bears the predicate. This reduces many problems to one—"What is tathatā?" If it is a truly existent real stuff, then this doctrine differs radically from that in the rest of this system (or indeed, of any Buddhist system). If not, how can one possibly call it perpetual any more than existent? While this question is examined in the Vijnānavāda śāstras, it does not seem to concern the author of this text.

X:3.5 Inconceivable (acintya), because its true, pure nature must be known by introspection, because there is no worldly equivalent, and because it is not an object for speculative reasoners.

Asvabhāva explains that the phrase, "... because there is no worldly equivalent, and because it is not the object for speculative reasoners," is an abbreviation indicating the entire process of reaching a firm logical conclusion, including reasoning, reflection, meditation, speculation and examples. That is, the ultimate nature of the Dharmakāya is inconceivable because it cannot be ascertained by normal reasoning.

However, there must be some sense in which the true nature of the Dk is knowable, otherwise the entire concept of a Dk would be merely a logical artifact—parikalpita rather than parinispanna. This sense is defined by, "its true, pure nature must be known by introspection." Although our commentaries leave "introspection" undefined, this term is common throughout the Mahāyāna debates on perception. It refers to the Vijnānavāda belief that primary sense-data are a source of absolutely valid knowledge (i.e., knowledge of the "true, pure nature," nirmalatathatā) which may be either correctly appreciated or misapprehended. Other Buddhist schools, particularly the Prasāṅgika,
rejected this doctrine. Therefore, Asaṅga is maintaining that the real nature of the Dk can be appreciated only by direct experience of it rather than by reasoning about it.

ii. X:7 The Buddhadharmas

Asvabhava (U438c25) explains that the question, "How many Buddhadharmas are involved in the Dharmakāya?" is a request for information about the true nature (svabhāva) of the Dk. The ensuing list of six Buddhadharmas which comprise the svabhāva is related to the laksānas via X:3.1, "reorientation laksana." Each reoriented aspect of the Bodhisattva results in an attribute which belongs to the svabhāva of the Dk. There also may be some relationship via X:3.2, "having-white-dharmas-as-svabhāva-lakṣaṇa," but Asvabhava glosses them in quite different ways.

The first Buddhadharma is:

X:7.1 Purification (viśuddhi) because by reorienting the ālayavijñāna, the Dharmakāya is obtained.

Asvabhava (U438c26-439a3) explains that the Dharmakāya is "pure" as it is free from the tendencies to blind emotional reactions (samklesa-bija). Thus, the Dk is fundamentally defined as that which is free from kleśas. As these are factors which drive the individual into increasingly unhappy situations, this point may be positively expressed by saying that the Dk is that which can control or dominate (vasīta) its situation, an idea already seen at X:3.2 and developed below at X:7.4.

We have already encountered the idea of reorienting the ālayavijñāna at X:5.5. However, there the reoriented ālayavijñāna was the Mirror-like
awareness. Here, it is the Dk itself. This apparent contradiction is due to different ways of regarding the ālayavijñāna. At X:5 it was the basis of the perceptual process. Here, it is the container for impure tendencies.

X:7.2 Result (vipāka) because by reorienting the rūpendriya, the vipākavijñāna is obtained.

Vipāka may simply mean that one thing is the outcome or result of another. In the Abhidharmakośa it indicates that something (especially an indriya) pertains to a living being and arises from earlier causes but is not itself good or bad. For example, the jīvitendriya, the simple fact of being alive, is vipāka because the individual is alive through his past action, yet has the option of moving toward either samsāra or nirvāṇa.

The present passage retains this general meaning. When the material sense organs (rūpendriya) of the Bodhisattva are reoriented, he obtains a new type of awareness (jñāna). By labelling this awareness "vipāka," Asaṅga stresses the idea that the Buddha's awareness reveals no new and independent reality to which the Bodhisattva is suddenly opened upon reaching enlightenment, but is the outcome of the Bodhisattva's previous state. Therefore, it is the very nature of the Dharmakāya to be grounded in the sensory life of the Bodhisattva.

X:7.3 Residence (vihāra) because by reorienting the residences, such as the active-life-of-desire residence, etc., the immeasurable jñāna-residence is obtained.

By stressing the transformation, rather than the elimination, of a specific relationship to the world (vihāra), the idea of an utterly transcendent Dharmakāya is rejected. The life dominated by worldly desire is replaced by
one dominated by immeasurable jhāna.

Obviously, vihāra, like the previous two Buddhadharmas, deals with the Buddha's awareness. The model here is one of broadening, from a life of reacting to a certain narrow range of pleasurable stimuli, to an ability to take in and appreciate the immeasurable richness of reality.

X:7.4 Sovereignty, because, by reorienting the various lucrative actions, the sovereignty of the jhāna, which is abhijñā unhindered throughout all the regions of the world, is obtained.

The "lucrative actions" are worldly occupations such as agriculture and commerce. The "jhāna which is abhijñā unhindered throughout all the regions of the world" is not a member of the traditional list of abhijnas. Asvabhāva (U439a10-12) seems to hold that it refers to the entire list, to the general idea of abhijñā.

This passage clearly indicates that the shift from common man to Dharma-kāya does not displace the cognizing individual from his central position. It seems to mean that his "lucrative" assimilation of the world is replaced by unhindered appreciation of it.

X:7.5 Discursus (vyavahāra), because, by reorienting the discursus of everything seen, heard, felt, and known, the sovereignty consisting of the awareness which satisfies the mind of all sentient beings is obtained.

Asvabhāva (U439a12-15) seems to understand by this that ordinary ways of speaking about experience become, for the Dharma-kāya, a way of speaking which
is inevitably able to satisfy (Lamotte: "charm") all sentient beings. If this is Asaṅga's meaning, there is no idea of the Dk inhabiting some ineffable absolute. Ordinary speech simply changes to pleasing speech.

\[ X:7.6 \]

**Expulsion (samudghāta),** because, by reorienting toward an expulsion of suffering and faults, a destruction of the suffering and faults of all sentient beings is obtained.

Following Asvabhāva (U439a15-18), because the Dharmakāya has expelled its own suffering and faults, it can then destroy the suffering and faults of others. This is possible because the reorientation yields the marvelous awareness that destroys the sufferings and faults of others.

iii. X:9-27 **Gunas Associated with the Dharmakāya**

Finally, the Dharmakāya is described by a set of qualities (gunas). Unlike the inherent characteristics (lakṣāṇas) or fundamental nature (dharma), the gunas are merely "associated with" (saṃprayukta; T: dang-l丹-pa; H: 相應) the Dk. This term usually indicates existential conjunction without raising the question of essential basis. Here, Asvabhāva (U439b12) regards it as an indication that these gunas are not exclusive to the Dk but also occur with the Śrāvakas, and so on. Perhaps because the essential basis for them does not come into question, this passage affords little fresh insight into the author's principles.

These gunas are, in fact, merely an old and widely accepted set of concomitants to Buddhahood. The fact that this traditional list is here applied to the Dk is yet another indication that, for Asaṅga, "Buddhahood" equals "Dharmakāya."
This particular list and explanatory kārikās are drawn directly from the Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra, XXI:43-59. As they are well known and as Lamotte has provided excellent references to other texts in which they are discussed and defined, I have simply reproduced the basic list below, and have paraphrased rather than translated a few of the more obscure ideas.

X:10 The four immeasurables (apramāṇa).

X:11 The eight freedoms-from (vimokṣa), the eightfold non-disturbing perception (abhibhāyatana); and the ten all-bases (kṛśnāyatana).

X:12 The ability to prevent emotional reactions in others (araṇā).

X:13 The awareness which is an outcome of the Bodhisattva vow (pranidhiśīlā).

X:14 The four aspects of expertise in the study and proclamation of the dharma (pratismaṃvid). 62

X:15 The six superior knowledges (abhiśīla).

X:16 The thirty-two major and eighty minor marks of a superior man.

Asaṅga lays very little stress on these. When he later distributes the Dk's attributes among the three kāyas, he does not really say whether the Nirmāṇakāya or Sambhogakāya exhibits them. They remain simply "associated with" Buddhahood.

X:17 The fourfold universal purity (sarvākārāpariśuddhi).

X:18 The ten powers (bala).
The four grounds for self-confidence (*vaiśāradya*).

The threefold absence of anything-to-conceal (*araksya*), and the three applications of mindfulness (*smṛtyupasthāna*).

The total destruction of habitual reactions (*vāsanāsamudghāta*).

Opportune aid to others (*asāmmosatā*).

Great compassion (*mahākaruṇā*).

The eighteen attributes specific to the Buddha (*avenīkā Buddhadvahā*).

Universal awareness (*sarvākāraṇājñatā*).

Fulfillment of the six perfections (*pāramitāparipūri*).

Asvabhāva's commentary on universal awareness (X:25) and the summary (X:27) will be examined later, as they contain information on the *trikāya*.

c. The Dharmakāya as Seen by the Bodhisattva

The description of the Dharmakāya thus far might be termed philosophical. That is, the scriptural facts have been arranged in a rational pattern comprehensible to any reasoning man. No extra-rational qualities—no mystical insight or believer's commitment—have been required. Since, to the Vijnānavāda, common man and Buddha are not two different beings, but two different epistemic attitudes, there is no essential reason that the Buddha cannot be described in common language.

None of this reasoning would be alien or incomprehensible to a Western
metaphysician—provided he was induced to accept the above set of "facts." Our religious author, however, cannot be content with merely describing how the Dk appears to ordinary man. He not only believes that his reader (originally "auditor") can make the gradual transition to Buddhahood but wishes to encourage him to do so. Therefore, to facilitate this transition he offers several descriptions of Buddhahood, each from a viewpoint nearer the final goal.

The major such intermediate stage is that of the Bodhisattva. The Bodhisattva's view of the Dk is not cast in the same logical form as that of the common man, because the Bodhisattva's perceptions are not limited by the same logical categories. In the Mahāyānasamgraha his view is characterized as "profound" (gambhirā) and is described at X:28 by passages obviously taken from or inspired by the prajñāpāramitā writings. Asvabhāva (U443b6-9) identifies this passage as the Bodhisattva view by maintaining that "profound, very profound" means that neither worldly sages nor śrāvakas can understand the basic nature of the Dk.63

The description of the Dk proceeds in the normal prajñāpāramitā style. Each characteristic is mentioned twice—once to affirm it, and again to negate it, the pair of antithetical statements being fused into a single line of verse. The resulting nonsensical image derives its convincing power from poetic effects especially when the stanza is chanted. That is, there is no being born at the Buddha's birth, his residence is no residence, and so on, through a list of twelve topics.

While X:28 expresses the "profound" bifocal vision of the Buddha enjoyed by the Bodhisattva, it gives no hint of the intense positive evaluation of the Buddha expected from a practitioner. This view of Buddha held by Bodhisattva-as-devotee is contained in X:29 where it is called "review of the Dharmaśāya."
The term "review" (anusmṛti) is derived from smṛti, an ambiguous term whose root meaning "memory" gives little clue to the complex series of terms generated from it. Basically, it refers to the process of maintaining a stable epistemic object for purposes of meditation.\(^6^4\)

In this passage the object of attention is the Buddha. Asvabhāva (U145c2-5) comments that anusmṛti means a stable recollection of the Buddha. The Mahāyānasamgraha and its commentaries tell us nothing about the actual meditation ritual, but X:29 says that when the Bodhisattva does fix his attention upon the Buddha he focuses upon seven properties:

X:29.1 The Buddhas have obtained sovereignty over all dharmas because they have obtained unhindered awareness which penetrates throughout the entire world.

To this is added a stanza to the effect that Buddha does not enjoy a similar sovereignty over the beings in the world. Asvabhāva (U145b1-5) explains that, while the Buddha enjoys sovereignty in the sense that he is aware of everything, he cannot abrogate the law of karma and immediately introduce all beings to nirvāṇa.

X:29.2 The bodies of the Tathāgatas are eternal because the Tathāgatas are continually free from stain.\(^6^5\)

Here, as elsewhere in this text, the epithet "eternal" implies not an infinite substantial existence but an uninterrupted continuity of some focal characteristic (i.e., freedom from stain).

X:29.3 The Tathāgatas are totally irreproachable because they are totally exempt from the kleśa and jñeya āvarānas.
The Tathāgatas are spontaneous because all their Buddha actions flow in an uninterrupted effortless stream.

The Tathāgatas enjoy great pleasure due to the pleasures of the pure Buddhafield and of the dharma.

The Tathāgatas are unsoiled because, although appearing in the world, they are not soiled by any worldly dharmas.

The Tathāgatas have a grand purpose because, by manifesting enlightenment and nirvāna, they mature all sentient beings who are not yet matured and liberate those who are already matured.

d. The Dharmakāya—A Summary

It is now obvious that, in the Mahāyānasamgraha, the term Dharmakāya designates Buddhahood, the terminus of the Mahāyāna practices. It is well summarized in the title of chapter X: "Resulting-Awareness" (phalajñāna). The Dk is a "result" in the sense that each of its characteristics is the fulfillment of some practice previously adopted by the Bodhisattva. It does not involve a rebirth or any sort of new being. Calling this result an "awareness" does not define its ontological state. It indicates that the Dk is being described within the same epistemological framework that was applied to the common man and the aspiring Bodhisattva. Within this framework, the physical body of the common man is an "idea" (vijñapti) resulting from a limited, biased awareness (vijñāna). This notion of the body as vijñapti is similar to that of a "self-image." As the individual begins Mahāyāna practices and his vision broadens, the vijñāna changes (through the stages of preparatory, fundamental and subsequent) into a non-discriminating awareness (nirvikalpaññāna) or, in
this text, simply "awareness" (jnāna). His static self-image gives way to the realization of himself as the perfect embodiment (kāya) of the Mahāyāna ideals (dharma), i.e., a Dharmakāya.

The notion of "self-image" must not be pressed too far, since it presupposes some "self" (pudgala) or transcendental ego to experience the image. Such an ego is denied throughout Buddhist thought. In the Mahāyānasamgraha Asaṅga has cast the theory entirely in epistemological terms. The mechanism by which the self-image of the common man maintains itself is described. The way in which this can be reoriented to become the resulting-awareness which is the Dk is explained. And the resulting awareness itself is described in various ways. But these descriptions are confined to the process of perception. There is no mention of a real perceiver or object. Even attributes of the Dk—which appears to imply an ontology—are interpreted in epistemic terms. For example, the apparent affirmation that the Dk is immortal (nitya) is interpreted as a reference to the incessant nature of the perception. Therefore, while the concept of "self-image" is applicable to the common man's viññāṇa, it is not applicable to the Dk.

The description of the Dk as resulting-awareness is the key to understanding most of the previous passages. It prevents the misunderstanding of the Dk's activities which occurs when one sees the Dk as a god-like figure exerting sovereignty or mastery over the things of this world. The concept that the Dk is awareness, not an accurate perception of external entities but a breadth of vision, reminds us that there are no "things" to be mastered by the Dk. The actions through which mastery or sovereignty is exercised are themselves aspects of the awareness. This point can be understood more clearly if we compare the actions of the common man, the Bodhisattva and the Dk.
For the common man, past events have planted the seeds of present perceptions, which present a concrete situation including individual, world, and perception of the world. The individual is driven to certain actions by the situation, and perceives "himself" carrying out the actions.

When the aspirant enters the Mahāyāna and becomes a Bodhisattva, he develops the six perfections (pāramitās) which will eventually form the Dk. These are customarily divided into two groups: the first five, which define the Bodhisattva's action (upāya); and the sixth, the insight (prajñā) which is his perception of the situation. Applied to the present text, these categories can be misleading, since the Bodhisattva's insight (prajñā) can be easily confused with the awareness (nirvikalpa-jñāna) which is the basic nature of the entire process. All six pāramitas, including both insight and action, are simply abstractions from the totality of one pattern (see IV: 7.6) which, when fully developed, is called the Dk. At this point, the perception is no longer interpreted as "self" and "other" locked into a fixed relationship. Therefore, the idea of perceiving an environment and then acting on the perception, while misleading when applied to the Bodhisattva, is incorrect when applied to the Dk. The Dk's awareness includes the realization that both its view and its actions have the same logical status, i.e., they are aspects of the perception. It is often easier to consider them both as "actions" through which the sovereignty or mastery is exercised.

Because the Dk is the result of the practice of the pāramitās, its actions do not constitute an empty omnipotence or simple "freedom-from." As the outcome of the Bodhisattva vows and practices, all activity is directed toward the welfare of others (strictly defined as aiding others eventually to develop
a similar outlook). Freed from concern for its "self," the Dk can reach out with compassionate concern. This outreach involves perceiving (i.e., creating) a situation within which the needs of others are both appreciated and satisfied. The appreciative insight (prajñā) into their plight is not pure openness to experience, for there is nothing to be experienced. It is the epistemic aspect of the mature patterned concern for others. The action which solves the problem is not a manipulation of the lives of others, for there are no lives to be manipulated. The perceived encounter, created by compassionate concern, within which the needs of the other can be appreciated, is also the very one within which these needs are satisfied. That is, through the very process of appreciating the other's problem, the solution develops spontaneously.

This explanation raises the obvious problem of the logical status of the recipient of the Dk's assistance. He seems to have no standing apart from the situation which has been created by the Dk. There can be no question of traditional solipsism because there is no real self involved, but some sort of quasi-solipsism appears to be unavoidable. I believe that this problem is inherent in the doctrine of this text as a byproduct of the presentation of an epistemology divorced from metaphysics. The later Vijñānavāda thinkers seem to have realized the problem and developed doctrines that avoid it.

This brings us to the real methodological problem of the present section, that of proposing a metaphysical interpretation of Asaṅga's theory. We must first note that the pure epistemology of the text apparently satisfied many within the saṅgha. Why?

While this question must be left to the historian, I will make a simple suggestion based on observation of present-day bKa'-brgyud-pa communities
that follow a similar doctrine. I suspect that epistemology may satisfy the believer who lives within a disciplined community under the direction and inspiration of a spiritual master. He may draw directly from his interaction with the master the reassurance and guidance that we expect from a metaphysical statement. He may require the theory to do nothing more than to explain how his practices and meditational experiences are related to the main points of Buddhist dogma. Such a requirement would be easily met by the theory of the Mahāyānaśāstra.

The scholar needs more. The practitioner has his guru, a living symbol of his goal, continually before him. His task is to emulate the guru, not to discuss the possibility of his existence. The scholar deals in ideas, not persons. He requires an intellectual formulation of the Buddha rather than an incarnation. He legitimately asks, "What is the Dharmakāya?" The answer may not be entirely satisfying, but it must give him some concrete portrait of the Buddha.

We could, like Guenther, turn to a later school of Vijnānavāda thought and accept its metaphysic. If such a school had appeared in immediate post-Asaṅga India, this would be the proper tactic. Emphasis could then be transferred to the writings of that school, and the Mahāyānaśāstra interpreted as a forerunner of the mature doctrine. However, Guenther's source—the rNying-ma-pa masters—appeared much later, in a different culture, and were influenced by intervening developments; its ideas may not be a legitimate vehicle for interpreting the early Indian tradition. Therefore, I shall attempt to derive an answer directly from the contents of the Mahāyānaśāstra.

At this point idealism reappears. Even though Asaṅga has failed to develop such a doctrine, is it not the obvious concomitant to his epistemology?
The answer is no. An idealistic interpretation involves one of two unacceptable alternatives. Either some element of the epistemic process must be declared more basic than the others, or some very abstract unifying concept, such as an "absolute," must be introduced. In the former case it is virtually impossible to avoid regarding the chosen element as an existent entity, thus introducing an unacceptable substantialism. A crude example of this would be the interpretation of the श्लायविज्ञान as a real substratum of personal existence.

If the second choice is accepted and an Absolute that is sufficiently transcendent to avoid ontological problems is posited, the unifying principle has simply been elevated to a rarefied status where it is of slight help with actual problems.

The task of deriving a more satisfactory explanation is simultaneously rendered both more and less difficult by the need to avoid ontology. It is more difficult because we cannot simply use the pudgalistic notion of an individual who sees things first as a common man and later in an enlightened manner. Nor can we assign ontological status to any other element of the epistemology theory.

The task becomes less difficult because we are forced to acknowledge the view of many philosophers that the metaphysician's task is not to uncover real entities, but to devise a scheme within which experience may be interpreted. In the words of A. N. Whitehead, "Speculative Philosophy is the endeavour to frame a coherent, logical necessary system of general ideas in terms of which every element of our experience can be interpreted." 66

As a demand for a perfect system, this sounds like an ontological quest in disguise. However, Whitehead means it only as the ideal in the sense that
a perfect scientific hypothesis is the ideal. Any actual theory may still be acceptable, although falling short of this. He adds:

Philosophers can never hope finally to formulate these metaphysical first principles. Weakness of insight and deficiencies of language stand in the way inexorably. Words and phrases must be stretched towards a generality foreign to their ordinary usage; and however such elements of language be stabilized as technicalities, they remain metaphors mutely appealing for an imaginative leap.

Throughout this study I use the term "metaphysics" to mean this search for an integrative perspective. That is, I shall follow what S. K. Verma in The Nature of Metaphysics calls the "root-metaphor" theory of metaphysics. 67

Our problem is much more modest than that of the general metaphysician in search of a scheme embracing the totality of experience. We need only a root-metaphor that is capable of unifying the ideas about the Dk. While it need not be totally self-consistent, it must be a vivid, concrete metaphor which will stay firmly in our mind and (almost literally) restrain the tendency to drift of into meaningless inhuman abstractions.

Materials for such a metaphor lie readily at hand. Asaṅga's talk of ground, seeds, maturation and fruit suggests an organic metaphor in which the ordinary personality becomes a self-perpetuating weed-patch (kleśas). The pāramitās are desirable plants which, if planted among the weeds and properly tended, will eventually crowd them out. The result is a mature crop of pāramitās, which is called the Dharmakāya.

This metaphor has several useful features. First, it clearly is no more than a metaphor. No one will take it literally. Second, it illustrates two of the most puzzling aspects of the Dk: the fact that it is both obtained at the start of the aspirant's career and developed throughout and the fact that
it is neither singular nor plural. The ordinary use of the term "crop" exhibits exactly those peculiarities. Furthermore, the notion of a "crop" and "seeds" is easily extended to account for the ideas of the dharma which, as an outflow of the dharmadhātu, initiated the spread of Dharmakāya(s). Finally, the metaphor maintains the continuity between common man and Dk.

Its failures are inherent in the nature of metaphor. The actual situation is always perceived from within by one standing somewhere on the continuum between common man and Dk. Yet the metaphor portrays a situation from without, as a thing, thus reifying and distorting the "ground" of the situation. Therefore, detailed conclusions about the ground or basic nature cannot be drawn from such a portrait.

Despite the apparent triviality of this metaphor, it is a true metaphysical view which will serve better than many couched in more formal philosophical terms. It is a model which exhibits many important characteristics of the situation described by Asaṅga, and can easily be kept in mind to provide a perspective within which any ideas about the Dk can be kept within the system. No one having this metaphor in mind could mistake the Dk for a deified figure, speak of a cosmic Buddha, or see it as a personification of some ineffable ultimate reality. It provides a useful way to grasp Asaṅga's general sense of Buddhahood and will be helpful later as we deal with specific questions under each of the three kāyas into which the Dk may be analyzed.

The most startling aspect of this portrait may be its conservatism. Most scholars have seen the Mahāyāna Buddhology as a radical departure from earlier concepts, involving the substitution of a theistic, god-like, transcendent Buddha for the earlier awakened aspirant. Yet, the previous passages contain none of this. The Dk is not a god and his activities are not god-like. His
abilities are remarkable only for their soteriological efficacy, i.e., he can control both himself and the situation in order to teach effectively. There is no suggestion of any cosmic powers such as world creation or dissolution. He certainly is no *deus ex machina* meddling with the fate of man, even for the latter’s benefit. He is even unable to abrogate the *karma* of another without that individual’s conscious co-operation (X:38-39).

3. THE TRIKĀYA

While Asaṅga drew the preceding ideas directly from other authorities, the arrangement of this final set into a *trikāya* doctrine appears to be his own contribution.

I shall first verify that Asaṅga actually posits a unified *trikāya*, and, as the text mentions four *kāyas*, discover which three form the *trikāya* and clarify their relationship to the fourth. The core of the present study, an examination of the relationship between the three elements and of the development of the key ideas, will follow. As Asaṅga mentions several perennial *Buddhological* dilemmas in connection with these *kāyas*, I shall investigate the utility of the *trikāya* in solving them. Finally, I shall propose a model of the *trikāya* doctrine which can guide investigations into related doctrines.

a. A Unified Trikāya or Three Kāyas?

The later standard term "*trikāya*" is not used in the *Mahāyānasamgraha*; Asaṅga speaks of the "triple *Buddhakāya*" (sangs-rgyas-kyi sku-gsum; 三佛身):

P.3.10  The triple *Buddhakāya* ... is the *phala-jñāna* of these
X:1
[three Bodhisattva observances].

III:2; III:14 and V:2.10

[These three similar passages label the result of
practising non-conceptual and subsequent awareness as
"omniscience," "the triple Buddhakāya," and "filling the
Dharmakāya," respectively.]

VIII:13 . . . the terminus of the nirvikalpajñāna is the obtainment
of the three pure kāyas and of the highest masteries. To
Vasubandhu (Bh 365b8), "pure" indicates that they have
reached the tenth bhūmi.

X:28 By the three kāyas,
You have obtained total mahābodhi . . .

X:28.2 All Buddhas have three kāyas.

II:33.18e . . . the unlimited domain of the triple Buddhakāya.

In these passages, "triple Buddhakāya" is synonymous with the "Dharmakāya"
previously examined. Furthermore, none of these passages suggests that one
kāya may be obtained by itself or before the others. This strengthens the
assumption that none of them can stand alone, and that the "triple Buddhakāya"
is a unitary concept, equivalent to Dharmakāya or "Buddhahood."

The evidence that its three aspects are obtained and developed simultane-
ously (VIII:13; X:25) also warns us not to misconstrue the various assertions
that one kāya "depends upon" another as an indication that one is temporally
prior to the others.
b. Which Three Kāyas?

The identity of the three kāyas (are they Dharmakāya, Sambhogakāya, and Nirmānakāya, or are they Svabhāvikakāya, Sambhogakāya and Nirmānakāya?) is bound up with the meaning of the term Svabhāvikakāya. This question will be answered on the basis of the following passages:

P.3.10 The triple Buddhakāya: Svabhāvikakāya, Sambhogakāya and Nirmānakāya, is the resulting awareness of these [Bodhisattva practices] . . .

There can be no mistake. The first is definitely Svāk, not Dk, in the Tibetan as well as the Chinese translations by Hsuan-tsang, Dharmagupta and Paramārtha. Buddhāsānta uses 貞 rather than 自性 but this should certainly be also understood as "svabhāva."

Vasubandhu (Bh 323a23-24) comments that:

The triple Buddhakāya is called the 'resulting awareness' —'resulting' because it is the result of previously mentioned practices and 'resulting awareness' because this result is aware. [Thus,] its basic nature (svabhāva) is to be 'the aware result of these.'

Now, if there were no Svabhāvikakāya [T: 'if there were no svabhāva'] there would be no Dharmakāya . . .

Asvabhāva (U381a16) says that the three are the Svāk, Sbk and Nk, and adds (381c14) that the "Svabhāvikakāya is unimpeded and stainless awareness (jñāna). As such, it is a term for Dharmakāya."

X:1.1 The Svabhāvikakāya is the Tathāgata's Dharmakāya because it is the support for the sovereignty over all dharmas.
Asvabhāva (U4:36al-5) offers several explanations for the term Svāk in the above passages:

It is called 'svabhāva' because it contains nothing artificial and 'kāya' because it is the support. Because the dharma-nature (dharmatā) is a body, it is called 'Dharmakāya' (U4:33al: "the body composed of the dharmas is the dharmatākāya") or because it is the support for the dharmas, it is called 'Dharmakāya.' The phrase, 'it is the support for sovereignty over all dharmas' means it is the support for obtaining such sovereignty.

X:3.2 [The characteristics (lakṣaṇas) of the Dharmakāya are being explained. The second lakṣana is:] "Having white dharmas as svabhāva—because the ten masteries are obtained through the fulfillment of the six pāramitās." [The ten masteries are explained by the commentators. These will be taken up later.]

X:25 "The three kāyas. . ." glossed by Asvabhāva as "the Svabhāvikakāya," etc.

X:28.2 [Vasubandhu refers to the first of the three as "Svabhāvikakāya"]

X:23.1 All Buddhas have obtained sovereignty over all dharmas, because throughout the entire world they have obtained unhindered penetrating awareness . . .

X:31 The Buddha's dharmadhātu at all times exhibits five sorts of activity . . . [Asvabhāva identifies the dharmadhātu as the Dk.]

X:35 Why is the Sambhogakāya not the Svabhāvikakāya?
X:36 Why is the Nirmānakāya not the Svabhāvikakāya?

The answers to X:35 stress the fact that the Svākāya cannot appear in diverse ways. The answers to X:36 stress the fact that the Svākāya cannot act in an inconsistent manner. Asvabhāva (U448b15-16) seems to suggest that the Svākāya is enlightened in the Tuṣita heaven but acts in the world by means of a nirmāṇa.

These passages appear to contain two contradictory ideas:

— that Svākāya is synonymous with Dk.
— that Svākāya refers to the first of three kāyas, whereas Dk has been used as a general term for enlightenment, roughly synonymous with the "triple Buddha-kāya."

The only direct discussion of whether Dk and Svākāya are synonymous, Vasubandhu's commentary to P:3.10 (Bh 323a23-b4), is rendered no more intelligible by Asvabhāva's apparent contradiction. This question must be resolved by comparing statements about the Svākāya with those made about the Dk. Before doing this, two types of passages must be deleted from the descriptions of the Svākāya. Those in which the Svākāya is equated with the Dk and those in which the Svākāya is listed as the first of the three merely repeat our basic problem. In addition, those that speak of the "svabhāva of the Dharma-kāya" will be considered as references to the Svākāya.

Two types of descriptions of the Svākāya (or the svabhāva of the Dk) remain. They are:

— an awareness resulting from the Bodhisattva practices (P:3.10; X:35.6 (U)). This compound idea may be divided into those concepts of being a 'result' of Bodhisattva practices, and of being essentially 'awareness.'
— a support for sovereignty or mastery over the dharmas (X:1.1; X:3.2).

Thus, the Svākhś entails three basic concepts: result, awareness and sovereignty. In order to explore the relationship between the Svākhś and the Dk, we will now reorganize the Dk passages from the previous section under the above three headings.

Again, certain passages which would obscure the argument have been set aside: the list of eighteen Śvenika Buddhādharmas at X:24 (which are clearly of little interest to Asaṅga and contain nothing new), the profundity of the Dk (X:28; which deals with the Bodhisattva's view and has been explained as such), and the question of whether the Dk is unitary (X:8; which will be considered later).

When the remaining passages are examined, we find that the Dk, like the Svākhś, is the culmination or result of the Bodhisattva practices. It is obtained by "Bodhisattva practices," i.e., by practising the pāramitās (X:4.3; X:26), by listening to the dharma (I:46-48), and by meditation (III:12,14; V:2.10; X:1; X:4.2, 4; X:7.2).

Like the Svākhś, the Dk is "awareness" (jñāna). Dk awareness is described in great detail. It is pure and unobstructed by vāsanās, kleśas and āvarānas which prevent accurate perception (I:46-48; X:7.1; X:11; X:17; X:20; X:21; X:29.3; X:29.6).

This awareness is an omniscience directed to questions necessary for the salvation of others (X:11; X:13; X:14; X:15; X:19; X:25). As such, it is not merely an accurate, unemotional perception of surrounding objects, but is compassionate concern for others' welfare (X:6.1; X:7.3; X:10; X:23).

From this concern spring the various activities of protection and aid which eventually lead others to a similar way of perception (X:6.2-3; X:7.6;
As these activities are ceaseless or at least coterminous with the liberation of all sentient beings, the Dk may be called eternal (X:3.4; X:29.2,4).

The central idea that awareness necessarily involves action is treated as a third category: the Svkh as the support for sovereignty over the dharmas. The connection between sovereignty (or mastery) and awareness is explained at X:29.1, while sovereignty is described at X:1.1; X:3.2; X:7.4 and X:7.5.

The key passage at X:5 outlines the way in which each skandha of ordinary man is reoriented in order to obtain a specific sovereignty of Buddha. Reorientation is discussed in several passages, but X:3.1 is especially relevant to the present topic. Details on sovereignty may be found at X:11,12 and X:18.

From the ease with which the Dk passages have been subsumed under the three aspects of the Svkh, we may conclude that the Svkh and the Dk are not two different things or even the same entity ("Buddhahood") viewed by different types of individuals. They are descriptions of the same phenomena viewed at different levels of generality. The Svkh is very general, while the Dk is exceedingly detailed. When Asanga wishes to reify the phenomenon of Buddhahood to "a Buddha," he uses Svkh or Dk interchangeably. When he wishes to stress the broader categories, he refers to the "svabhâva of the Dharmakâya," or "Svabhâvikakâya." His principal use of this term is as the first member of the trîkâya, to differentiate the fact of being a Buddha from the way in which the Buddha appears to sentient beings.

In brief, the members of the triple Buddhakâya are Svabhâvikakâya, Sambhogakâya and Nirmânakâya, and together they form a unity which is equivalent to the term "Dharmakâya."
c. The Nirmāṇakāya: Buddha in the World

The Nirmāṇakāya is usually considered to be the form in which Buddhahood is manifested within the world, i.e., the historical Buddhas such as Dipamkara, Sākyamuni or Maitreya.

P:3.10 [Commenting on the first mention of the Nk, Vasubandhu (Bh323a29) says:]
If there were no Nirmāṇakāya, the Bodhisattvas on the adhimukticaryābhūmi and the Śrāvakas, etc., whose aspiration is inferior, would not be able to escape from samsāra.

VI:5.2 [Asaṅga is explaining that the supreme morality is to lead others to practice the dharma, and that the question of means used to do this transcends ordinary categories of morality.]
"Furthermore, the affected (nirmāṇa) bodily and vocal actions are to be understood as the profound morality of the Bodhisattva. By them, he exercises authority, inflicting various torments on sentient beings in order to secure them in [the practice of] Buddhist discipline (vinaya)."

VIII:10 The retribution (vipāka) of the Bodhisattva's nirvikalpajñāna occurs in the two Buddha assemblies according to preparation and acquisition.

"Retribution" indicates the fate of an individual in his next incarnation. "Nirvikalpajñāna" (non-conceptualizing awareness) is a general term for enlightened awareness. Here the question is, "Where will the Bodhisattva who
possesses nirvikalpañjāna be reborn?" The commentators (Bh 365a10-14; U 430c18-24) agree that, if his nirvikalpañjāna is only in preparation, he will be born in the Nirmāṇakāya assembly, while, if he has actually acquired nirvikalpañjāna, he will be reborn in the Sambhogakāya assembly.

That is, the assembly surrounding the Buddha's Nk is composed of those who are "preparing" their awareness. This preparation is further characterized (VIII:14) by aspiration (adhimukti) and simple confidence (śraddhāmātrā).

The Nirmāṇakāya also depends upon the Dharmakāya because it manifests [the following Buddha-activities]: residing in the Tuṣita heaven, descending, being born, leaving the household life, frequenting tīrthikas, practicing austerities, arriving at mahābodhi, and entering mahāparinirvāṇa.

Asvabhāva (U 436a17-19) says, "Because of his developed insight, he leaves the Tuṣita heaven and performs all the Buddha activities, finally entering nirvāṇa. Such is the way in which anthropomorphic mental images arise in another's stream of being."

[The Dharmakāya] is the support for the various Nirmāṇakāyas because it principally assures the maturation of the Śrāvakas.

Asvabhāva (U 438c11-15) explains that "principally" indicates that the Bodhisattvas on the lowest level—the adhimukticaryābhūmi—also need the Nk: "Because of their inferior aspiration, the Śrāvakas and ādikarmika Bodhisattvas are not completely matured if they do not see the Buddha. But the Bodhisattvas who have entered the great bhūmis are not matured by the Nirmāṇakāya because they penetrate the vast and profound dharma."
[To the question of whether or not the various Sambhogakāyas are different or not different, Asaṅga replies:] . . . As their intentions and actions do not differ, they are not different. It is not the case that their different supports do not differ—an immeasurable variety of supports are found. The preceding remarks on the Sambhogakāya also apply to the Nirmanakāya.

Asvabhāva (U440cl-16) is commenting on the ability of the Tathāgata to destroy kleśas of sentient beings. He says that, if the Tathāgata sees that sentient beings will produce kleśas in regard to the Buddha's body, if they are capable of enjoying a nirmāṇa of the Buddha, he approaches them and skillfully disciplines them. Asvabhāva contrasts this Tathāgata with the Śrāvaka who, upon finding that his presence in a town or grove might excite passion, refrains from entering it.

When all sentient beings see you,
They recognize you as a mahāpuruṣa.
By a mere glimpse they achieve faith.
Homage to you, the effective one.

Asvabhāva (U441b7-12) says that sentient beings see the thirty-two major and eighty minor marks which convince them that the Buddha is the good arranger (H: "dharma-opener") of the world. Unfortunately, there is no clear indication of which kāya(s) manifest(s) these. Hsūan-tsang probably understood both Sbk and Nk, but this is not supported by the Tibetan.
... [You the Bhagavān] are in the world and in the Buddha assemblies...

Asvabhāva (U43a23) says, "... the Nirmāṇakāya is manifested in the world, while the Sambhogakāya resides in the great assembly."

The Dharmaśāya protects sentient beings from suffering because a mere glimpse of it protects against such miseries as blindness, deafness, madness, etc.

Asvabhāva (446c16-21; u351b8-352a3) deals with the difficulty raised by the fact that elsewhere the Dk has been declared to be invisible. How can a "mere glimpse" of it protect someone? He replies:

[I will now explain the way in which ordinary beings may] 'see the Dharmaśāya.' The Dharmaśāya is perfected by the projecting power of its previous Great Vow. It then manifests a functioning Nirmanakāya which causes the blind to see, etc. From the projecting power of previous equipment it obtains the Dharmaśāya, spontaneously sending forth actions like a wheel which finally returns to its starting point. So although we say they 'see the Dharmaśāya; they really see only a nirmāna.

Why is the Nirmāṇakāya not the Svabhāvikāya?

This question receives a complex reply in eight sections. In the first five, the traditional activities practiced by a Buddha between his last earthly rebirth and his parinirvāna are shown to be inexplicable if this worldly form (Nk) were, quite simply, the Buddha. To avoid such contradictions, it is necessary to posit an earthly body (Nk) and an essential body (Svabhāvikāya).

It is illogical that the Bodhisattva who has long ago acquired the imperishable samādhis, should be born in
the Tuṣita heaven or among men.

A being is reborn according to his past actions, and the action of
practising the meditation involving imperishable samādhis throughout the
Bodhisattva career cannot result in rebirth in the kāmadhātu. But scripture
reveals that the Buddha is reborn in the Tuṣita heaven and then in Jambudvīpa,
both of which are in the kāmadhātu. Thus, we must posit a bimodal Buddha.
This reasoning is extended in Paramārtha's translation of Vasubandhu's Bhāṣya
(T. vol. 31, p. 267c16), where the human body that the Buddha takes in order
to convert sentient beings is said to exist without cause (無因) and
therefore to be Nk rather than Vipākakāya or Svabhāvikakāya.

That is, we must also recognize that no relation of karmic causality
holds between the two modes. This will be an important point for understanding
the sense of "nirmāṇa."

X:36.2 It is illogical that the Bodhisattva, who has long since
remembered his former births, should be ignorant of
writing, calculation, numbers, finger reckoning, arts,
sciences, and the enjoyment of objects of desire.

X:36.3 It is illogical that the Bodhisattva, who has long since
known the dharma, badly preached or well preached, should
go to the tīrthikas.

X:36.4 It is illogical that the Bodhisattva, who has long since
known the good dharma of the path of the three vehicles,
should practice asceticism.

X:36.5 It is illogical that the Bodhisattvas should neglect one
hundred kotis of Jambudvīpas in order to achieve complete
e enlightenmen ent and turn the dharmkacakra in a single place.

The problem is here thrown into the starkest possible relief by the
cosmological setting. To the Mahāyāna authors, the cosmos consists of endless
replications of the four-continent universe. Now, the Bodhisattva has vowed
to save all beings, presumably including those of other universes. If the
Buddha were merely a single entity, he would have to choose one of these in
which to exercise his salvific activity, thus violating his vow. Furthermore,
Asvabhāva (U448b12) says that these different places are identical. 76 Thus,
the choice itself would necessarily be made on purely fortuitous grounds, a
concept alien to Buddhist thought.

X:36.6 If, instead of manifesting complete enlightenment [in
every Jambudvīpa], the Buddha performed Buddha activities
everywhere else by Nirmānakāyas [we could say that] he had
reached enlightenment only in the Tuṣita heaven.

X:36.7 Why not admit that in Jambudvīpas, Buddhas are born
simultaneously? There is no scripture or reason hindering
this conclusion.

Asvabhāva (U448b15) sees this as a reply to those who would attempt to
maintain the identity of Svāk and Nk by positing a quasi-unitary Buddha who
becomes enlightened in this Jambudvīpa and sends nirmāṇas to act in other
Jambudvīpas. Surely these thinkers would be willing to go further and admit
that the enlightenment takes place in the Tuṣita heaven and that all activities
in the Jambudvīpas are by means of nirmāṇas. Asvabhāva sees no harm in this,
and such an admission is quite enough to support the claim that the Svāk must be distinguished from the Nk.

This argument assumes that various Nks may be present simultaneously. The author must now explain why this does not contradict the scriptural maxim that two Buddhas cannot appear in the world at the same time. He says:

X:36.8 Even if many nirmanas appear, because "the world" is a four-continent world-system, the birth of two Tathāgatas in the world does not contradict the sutra which [asserts] that two Tathāgatas do not arise in the world, just as two Cakravartinins cannot arise in the same world.

Asvabhāva explains that the "world" of the sutra is one four-continent world-system, not an entire universe containing one thousand four-continent world-systems. There is no scriptural obstacle to simultaneous Buddhas, as long as each world-system contains only one.

A stanza is quoted to close this argument:

Many of the Buddha's subtle Nirmanakāyas
Are in the womb simultaneously,
In order to manifest
The Manifold Enlightenment.

The commentary (Bh 379b8-13; U 448c2-5) introduces an important idea. When the Buddha's Nk descends from the Tuṣita heaven into its mother's womb, nirmana Śrāvakas such as Śāriputra are created by the Buddha and descend to their mothers' wombs. Without their inferiority, the superiority of the Buddha would not be apparent. This surprising interpretation shows that the phrase
"manifold enlightenment" is not "the various types of enlightenment," but a single synonym for the highest enlightenment, thus justifying the superiority of the Mahāyāna enlightenment. While it may be possible to see this as the basis of the later notion that various beings may be Nks, there is no indication that Asaṅga or his commentators entertained such a notion.

X:36.8 [The Buddha] made his vow and practised the religious life in order to achieve great enlightenment for the welfare and happiness of all sentient beings. It is illogical to hold that he has completely gone to nirvāṇa, because that would render his vow and practice sterile and useless.

Asvabhāva explains that we are to conclude that the Buddha who has entered nirvāṇa is the Nk, distinct from the Svks, which is still present to aid others.

X:37 [In this discussion (which will be studied later) of whether the Buddha's body is eternal, Asaṅga maintains that the Nk is not eternal (nitya) but is repeatedly manifested.]

X:38 The Nirmāṇakāyas of the Buddha Bhagavāns do not remain [in the world] for six reasons: (1) Because their activity is complete when the matured sentient beings have been liberated.

The Nk is clearly a relational body whose appearance depends on both the Buddha and the sentient beings for whom it is manifest. When they no longer need it, it will disappear.
(2) To prevent [sentient beings] from not desiring nirvāṇa while seeking the Tathāgata's eternal body.

(3) To prevent mistaken ideas about the Buddha and to cause sentient beings to understand the profound teachings of the true dharma.

(4) In order to cause [sentient beings] to long for the Buddha's profound birth because they [the Bhagavāns] fear that, in those who often see the Buddha, a feeling of contempt will arise.

(5) In order to cause [each sentient being] personally to exert himself when he knows that the real teacher is difficult to find.

(6) In order that sentient beings be quickly matured by not rejecting the yoke of personal exertion.

These are all specific illustrations of one point. The Nirmāṇakāya exists because it is the most efficacious way in which the Buddha may aid sentient beings. The help which can be given is not an action-on-behalf-of, but is a stimulus to personal exertion and a direction for it. For this purpose, an eternally-present Buddha would be useless to the Śrāvaka who sees the Buddha as an external, authoritative, god-like figure. To one with such an attitude, the debilitating presence of the eternal within the transitory would lead to a passive dependency, the precise opposite of the desired maturation.

i. The Nirmāṇakāya: a Summary

The preceding passages portray the Nirmāṇakāya as the Buddha-form
manifested in the world by the Dharmakāya. As such, it is the familiar Buddha (Dīpaṃkara, Śākyamuni, Maitreya, etc) defined by a set pattern of actions.

These passages also suggest solutions to the principal problems arising from such a portrayal. The first problem, "Who can see the Nk?", is not as simple as it may appear. While VIII:10 suggests that the Nk appears to those Śrāvakas who have made some spiritual progress, the remainder of the passages suggest that the Nk is visible to all sentient beings, but is necessary only for the spiritual progress of the Śrāvakas and Bodhisattvas on the adhimukti-caryābhūmi. That is, all sentient beings can see the Nk, but only the Śrāvakas and novice Bodhisattvas benefit from this exposure.

A second problem involves the action of the Nk. The question, "What does the Nk do?" receives two different types of answers. First, (VI:5.2) Asaṅga suggests that the Bodhisattva, by means of bodily and vocal actions which are nirmāṇas, can do anything (including apparent harm) which might help establish sentient beings in the Mahāyāna discipline. While this passage appears to refer to the Nk, there are no similar ones elsewhere in the Mahāyānasamgraha. Furthermore, the Tibetan translator is careful to use the word lus ("physical body") rather than sku used elsewhere, to translate the kāya of Nirmānakāya. Therefore, this idea of taking direct action upon the aspirant does not seem to belong to Asaṅga's basic vision of the Nk. Second, the Nk performs certain actions in a prescriptive mythical pattern. It is born, leaves the household life, achieves enlightenment, turns the dharma-cakra, and so on. The pattern of these activities defines the Nk and constitutes its historical reality, i.e., its visibility to sentient beings. However, there is no suggestion that the Nk's main task—maturation of the Śrāvakas—is directly achieved by these actions. Not even preaching ("turning the dharma-cakra") is central
to this soteriological action.

This maturation seems to be achieved not by the Nk 'doing' something to the Sravaka, but by the situation in which the Nk (present by virtue of the Buddha activities) is seen by the Sravakas, by Bodhisattvas on the adhimukti- caryabhûmi, and by sentient beings in general. In addition to its maturing action, a mere glimpse of the Nk protects the Sravakas from worldly calamities.

This maturation involves faith (sraddhā) and aspiration (adhimukti). VIII:10 holds that the Sravaka must have these in order to be born in the presence of a Nk; X:6.3 says that their inferior adhimukti calls for a glimpse of the Buddha; and X:16 says that this glimpse results in adhimukti.

A reasonable interpretation of this would be that the Sravakas and the Bodhisattvas see the Nk because they have a certain confidence and aspiration, and that these are strengthened by the experience. This is in general agreement with the description of the benefits of hearing about the perfection of the Tathāgatas which is found in the Abhidharmakośa viii:34d.

The verb "to see" (藏, mthong-ba) implies ordinary grasping perception and is contrasted by Asvabhāva at X:6.3 with the Bodhisattva's "penetration" of the dharma. This leads into the question of the relation between Nirmānakāya, Sambhogakāya and Dharmakāya, a discussion which will be taken up after the data on the Sbk have been examined.

But what does 'seeing the Nirmānakāya' mean? Does Asaṅga literally mean that the mere sight of the Nk is efficacious, or is this a metaphor for being able to meet with, and undertake the religious life under, an historical Buddha? We should first note that 'seeing' the Buddha cannot be a metaphor for hearing or understanding the Buddha-word. Both hearing and understanding have their own consistent terminology throughout the Mahāyānasāstraṇgraha, and
that terminology is not found here. Furthermore, Asvabhāva (U436a19) refers to "anthropomorphic mental images." While there is also some chance that 'seeing' means joining the Buddha's entourage, the majority of passages seem to be based upon the more literal notion. Asvabhāva's statement that the glimpse of the Buddha is actually a glimpse of his thirty-two major and eighty minor characteristic (X:16) suggests that the recognition of a Buddha is the essence of the soteriological event.

Such an understanding makes good sense of these passages. Ordinary sentient beings can see, but not recognize, the Nk. The Śrāvaka does recognize it. His career is already well launched—he knows the basic doctrine, practices the meditation, and keeps the precepts. He requires assurance. A 'mere glimpse' of the Buddha will indeed assure him that the goal and foundation of his practice is realizable, and will therefore increase his confidence and aspiration.

The question of the relationship between the Nirmānakāya and Svabhāvikakāya will be taken up later.

d. The Sambhogakāya—Buddha in the Buddhafield

In the Mahāyānasamgraha, the Sambhogakāya is the form in which Buddhahood resides within a Buddhafield, teaching an enjoyable doctrine to the Bodhisattva. Relevant passages will be examined under three headings:

i. The Sambhogakāya; ii. The Buddhafield; iii. The Bodhisattva.

i. The Sambhogakāya—General

Prastāvanā [The commentators (Bh323a25-29; U381c17-20) say that, due 3.10
to the Sambhogakāya, the Great Bodhisattvas who have
to the Sambhogakāya, the Great Bodhisattvas who have entered the great bhūmis experience the pleasures of the dharma and these pleasures assure the perfection of their equipment.]

VIII:10 [This passage on the retribution of nirvikalpa.jñāna was quoted when discussing the Mārmanakāya. Asvabhāva adds that being born in the Sambhogakāya Buddha assembly is the retribution for having obtained the fundamental nirvikalpa.jñāna (described at VIII:14b).]

The implication seems to be that the fundamental nirvikalpa.jñāna leads to rebirth in this assembly, and that there the "subsequent (prsthahalabdha) nirvikalpa.jñāna," "whose possessor can circulate throughout the world without being soiled," is obtained.

X:6.2 [The Dharmakāya] is the support for the various Sambho-

gakāyas because it assures the maturation of the Bodhisattvas.

X:8 [To the question of whether the various Sambhogakāyas are different or not different, Asaṅga replies:] . . .

As their intentions and actions do not differ, they are not different. It is not the case that their various supports do not differ—innumerable supports occur.

Asvabhāva (U439b2-5) explains that the Buddhafields, assemblies, verbal expressions, sizes of the bodies, major and minor marks, taste of the doctrine,
etc., differ in various universes.

X:27b . . . [You, the Bhagavân] are present in the world and the Buddha assemblies . . .

Both commentators agree that the Buddha appears in the world by the Nirmāṇakāya and in the Buddha assemblies by the Sambhogakāya.

X:35 Why is the Sambhogakāya not the Svabhāvikakāya? For six reasons:

(1) Because a rūpakāya can be seen.

Again, Vasubandhu is ambiguous. Asvabhāva (U447c27-28) says, "... the Sambhogakāya has a material (rūpa) appearance while the Svabhāvikakāya does not."

(2) Because it appears variously in the innumerable Buddha assemblies.

Asvabhāva (U447c29-448al) says the Sambhogakāya exhibits diverse forms whereas the Svabhāvikakāya does not.

(3) Because it can be seen according to the aspirations [of the devotee], it appears to have an indeterminate svabhāva.

Asvabhāva (U448al-4) says that the Sambhogakāya is manifest in accord with the "aspirations" (adhimukti) of the observer and lacks a fixed nature. He quotes "a sutra" to the effect that some see a Sambhoga-Buddha, others a young man, and still others a child.

(4) Because it appears in different ways, it can be seen
to have a changing svabhâva.

Asvabhâva explains that the Sbk appears different to the same observer at various times.

(5) Because it can be seen mixed with various assemblies of Bodhisattvas, Šrâvakas, devas, etc.

The term "mixed" is taken for granted by the commentators. It probably means that the Sbk is seen "as a member of" the various assemblies. This is certainly the case at X:1.2 where the Sbk is said "... to be characterized by the various Buddha assemblies because it experiences the very pure Buddha-fields. . . ."

(6) Because the two reorientations-of-support, that of the Ālāyavijñāna and that of the pravṛttivijñāna, do not appear logically to coincide.

Asvabhâva (U448a10-12) explains that the reorientation of the Ālāyavijñāna yields the Svabhâvikâkâya while that of the other active vijñânas yields the Sambhogakâya.

X:37 As neither the Sambhogakâya nor the Nîrmanakâya is eternal, how can the sutra say that the Tathâgata's body is eternal? Because both Nîsyandakâya and Nîrmanakâya depend upon the eternal Dharmakâya. As the enjoyment is never interrupted and the nîrmânas are repeatedly manifest, it is proper to regard the Tathâgata's body as eternal. . . .

Asvabhâva (U448c19) equates the Nîsyandakâya with the Sambhogakâya.
X:1.2 The Sambhogakāya depends on the Dharmakāya and is characterized by various Buddha assemblies because it experiences the very pure Buddhafields and pleasures of the Mahāyāna dhammas.

The term "is characterized by" indicates that this is the way the Buddha is perceived, not that the Buddha assemblies, etc. are inherent characteristics.

Asvabhāva (U436a6-12) explains that the "Buddhafield" is a gathering of various groups of Great Bodhisattvas (as in Sukhāvatī, etc.). The "pleasures" are: the pleasures of jewels and precious metals; the pleasures of understanding the meaning of Mahāyāna sūtras, etc.; and the pleasures of scholastic reasoning enjoyed by the Buddha and Bodhisattvas. It might be possible to interpret Asvabhāva (U436a11-12) as saying that both the Buddhas and the Bodhisattvas possess Sambhogakāyas, but this passage is obscure and is not supported by the Tibetan.

In these passages, the Bodhisattva who has perfected nirvikalpajñāna finds himself in the presence of the Tathāgata (the Sambhogakāya) in a Buddha assembly. The physical appearance (rupa) of the Sbk is projected by the aspiration (adhimukti) of the observer, and hence varies from situation to situation. The Bodhisattva takes great pleasure in the occasion, and his pleasure is instrumental in furthering his spiritual progress.

There is no suggestion that the Sbk can appear apart from the Buddhafield; it is an intrinsic part of the definition of Sbk. Asaṅga devotes more space to describing the Buddhafield than to the Sbk itself.
The primary description of the Buddhafield occurs at X:30. The Bhagavan of this passage should be understood as the Sbk of others. To the possible objection that if Asanga had meant "Sambhogakāya" he would have used that term, I can only reply that, as X:30 is based upon a direct quotation from an earlier text (presumably a version of the Samdhinirmocanasūtra), it is determined by the latter's terminology.

Just as the Sambhogakāya could be considered the superimposition of an appearance projected by the Bodhisattva on the fact of Buddhahood, so the Buddhafield can be considered to be a symbol which maintains the perfect congruence of the image of a spatial country ruled by the Tathāgata, and the notion of the Bodhisattva's soteriological situation within which joyful and enriching communion is possible.

X:30 How should we understand the pure Buddhafields of the Buddhas? In the introduction to the Bodhisattvapiṭaka-śatasahasrikasūtra, they are described as follows:

The Bhagavan resides in an infinite grand palace:

(.1) which is adorned with the blaze of the seven jewels filling the infinite universe with a great radiance,
(.2) whose immense rooms are well disposed,
(.3) whose compass is unbroken,
(.4) whose domain totally transcends the three dhātus,
(.5) which arises from supremely wholesome world-transcending roots.
At X:30 the physical model for the Buddhafield is a great palace blazing with jewels, possessing immense, well-proportioned rooms, an unlimited area and immeasurable dimensions. Asvabhāva (U446a12-14) explains "its domain transcends the three dhātus" to mean that the Buddhafield is not something that can be either desired or attained like an ordinary physical palace. Rather, it "arises from supreme and world-transcending wholesome roots," which Vasubandhu (Bh377a10) identifies as non-conceptual awareness and subsequent awareness. This idea of an epistemic nature is supported by (.6):

(.6) which may be characterized as very efficacious and very pure vijñāpti.

Asvabhāva (U446a17-20) explains that no jewels, etc., can be found apart from the awareness of them. Thus, the Buddhafield is not a "more real" place than the common world. Both are "ideas" (vijñāpti); the difference originates from the differing interpretations placed on experience by the common man, Śrāvaka and Bodhisattva.

Vasubandhu has confirmed the suggestion (noted previously at VIII:10) that the Bodhisattva in the Buddhafield exercises subsequent awareness (prsthālabdhajñāna). As this is the awareness whose possessor can circulate freely throughout the world without being soiled, this is another indication that the Buddhafield is not some "place" apart from the world. Further, hints that the Buddhafield is simply the present environment viewed from a revaluating perspective occur at X:35.6, where Asvabhāva affirms that the reorientation of the Ṇlayavijñāna yields the Dharmakāya, while reorientation of the other active vijñānas yields the Sambhogakāya; and at X:5, where the reorientation of the rūpakāya is said to yield sovereignty over the Buddhafield, i.e., the
Buddhafield is a revaluation of the common world.

(.7) which is the residence of the Tathāgata.

X:30.14 [The Buddhafield] surpasses all other arrays (vyūha) because it is displayed by the Tathāgata's blessing.

Asvabhāva (U446b5) says that it surpasses the arrays of the Bodhisattva because it is the seat (āsana) of the Tathāgata's manifestation.

These passages, which portray a figure seated in the middle of a space arranged and beautified by his presence, leave no doubt that the Tathāgata has a reality apart from the Bodhisattva, even though the latter's expectation provides the form under which he beholds the Tathāgata.

Later in X:30 we find:

(.15) whose roads are great memory, intelligence and insight,

(.16) whose vehicles are śamatha and vipaśyanā,

(.17) which is entered through the great doors to liberation: śūnyatā and ānimitta.

(.18) which rests upon the arrangement consisting of a great jewelled royal lotus ornamented by innumerable qualities.

Like a physical region, the Buddhafield has gates, roads and vehicles. The gates are the great entries to liberation—śūnyatā, ānimitta, and passionlessness. The roads are the paths (mārga) to liberation—hearing, reflection and meditation. The vehicles are calm (śamatha) and insight (vipaśyanā).

Finally, it rests upon a "great jewelled royal lotus" which Asvabhāva
(U446b15-23) says may be either a physical thing or the lotus seat of the Tathâgata himself.

X:30 (.10) which is maintained by the joyful taste of the dharma and great bliss,
(.11) whose actions are entirely for the benefit of all sentient beings,
(.12) which totally excludes kleśa-induced torments,
(.13) which expels all māras.

Any difficulty in understanding Asaṅga's concept of the Buddhafield arises from our preconceptions. The first preconception comes from our familiarity with the interpretations placed upon such passages by the Pure Land schools of China and Japan, which regard the Buddhafield as a place reached by pilgrimage, as an aerial region in which one may be reborn or as a situation created by meditation. These ideas may be comprehended by regarding the Buddhafield as a symbolic environment in which both the physical place and the soteriological situation are equally and simultaneously indicated by the term "Buddhafield."

But such a symbolic interpretation cannot be applied to Asaṅga's explanation. He gives a highly rationalized description of the Buddhafield which so exhaustively interprets the myth of the Buddhafield as a beautiful dwelling that it retains little of its polyvalence. Instead, the description becomes a didactic allegory in which Buddhafields arise from supremely pure, world-transcending roots; their roads are great memory, intelligence and insight; they are travelled by the vehicles of samatha and vipaśyanā, and so on. Even the most basic spatial question: Where is the Buddhafield?" is left dangling.
Asvabhāva (U436a9) says that they are "Sukhāvatī, etc. in the four directions." However, there is no other mention in this text of this notion.

The didactic nature of X:30 is underlined by the fact that Asaṅga has not applied the same type of hermeneutic as he did to the earlier (II:33) description of the Buddhafields and residences. There is little need to interpret the present description—it is itself an interpretation of the myth.

iii. Bodhisattvas—Residents of the Buddhafield

The Buddhafield:

X:30 (.8) is the refuge of the Great Bodhisattvas,

(.9) is the promenade of infinite numbers of nāgas, yakṣas, gandharvas, asuras, garudas, kinnaras,
mahoragas, manusyas, and amanuṣyas.

The image of the Buddha surrounded by a group of attendants is a familiar scene from the sūtras. At X:1.2 the followers are only Bodhisattvas, while at X:35.5 the Sambhogakāya is surrounded by assemblies of Śrāvakas, devas, and so on. At X:30.8-9, Asvabhāva (U446a21-26) reconciles these by saying that the Buddhafields are really inhabited only by the Bodhisattvas who have entered the great bhūmis, and who assist the Tathāgata. The remaining inhabitants—the devas, nāgas, and so on—are nirmāṇas, not real aspirants. The question of whether the Śrāvaka is, in any sense, capable of entering a Buddhafield or seeing the Sbk is not answered in this text. However, even if he can see the Sbk, his Buddha is the Nk. The Sbk is the form related to the Great Bodhisattvas.

The Bodhisattva perceives the Buddha and his environment as a Sambhogakāya.
in a Buddhafield. Both are permeated with pleasure (sambhoga: enjoyment; successful love; sexual union) just as the world of the common man or the Śrāvaka is pervaded with suffering (duhkha). Even the fact that the central Śbk "dwells" within the field rather than being "manifested," as was the Nk, is interpreted as a reference to the aspirant's constant pleasure, rather than as an indication of the presence of a subsistent being. This pleasure is such an important element of the theory that a systematic examination of its nature and cause will form an excellent framework within which to examine Asaṅga's understanding of the Bodhisattva who experiences it.

Let us first note that this pleasure-filled Buddhafield is one of the most surprising innovations to appear within the Buddhist tradition. Earlier thinkers had pictured a world permeated with the misery arising from the individual's inveterate tendency to cling to objects generated by reification of experience. Such immediate and limited pleasure as might be gained from these pseudo-objects would be more than offset by the pain and frustration resulting from the inevitable termination of the basic experience. The object of Buddhist practice was seen as the eradication of the misapprehensions that caused the reification. When this practice was successful, the aspirant was beyond suffering and, incidentally, beyond pleasure.

Suddenly, the Vijnānавāda presents, along with this traditional model, the notion that the Bodhisattva enjoys pleasure rather than abandoning both pleasure and pain as he nears enlightenment. How can Asaṅga hold that the Bodhisattva simultaneously experiences pleasure and abandons pleasure?

We cannot avoid the problem by the facile assumption that "pleasure in the Buddhafield" denotes a Bodhisattva-emotion which is forever beyond the grasp of ordinary man. Statements of that type are clearly labelled "profound"
(gambhīra), a label not attached to these pleasures. Asaṅga is attempting to construct a rational system, and his ideas must be given a logical interpretation.

At first reading, the Mahāyānasamgraha might appear to contain a symbolic arrangement such as that frequently found in later Indo-Tibetan works, which would explain the contradiction: the aspirant abandons the three basic kleśas in reverse order, i.e., he first abandons revulsion-misery, then desire-pleasure, and finally nescience-dullness. The aspirant who was originally dominated by misery moves to a situation dominated by pleasure. This certainly would be in accord with the move of the aspirant to the Buddhafield. It would reduce the pleasures of the Buddhafield to a special case of the older theory, i.e., the Bodhisattva has simply not yet abandoned them. However, in this pattern the text would then show him moving to a situation dominated by dullness, and then to full enlightenment. The Mahāyānasamgraha does not mention the dullness, and the full enlightenment is not simply a further stage. In addition, the pleasures of the Buddhafield are obviously not the result of lingering kleśas—they are healthy, positive factors. Therefore this explanation fails.

I suggest that the problem can be resolved by viewing the concept of pleasure within the basic trisvabhāva framework of the Mahāyānasamgraha. That is, both common man and Bodhisattva are constantly engaged in perceptual situations that may be analyzed through the same categories—the skandhas. These include the vedanāskandha (feeling-tone) of which pleasure is one possible aspect. The difference is that the common man reifies his experiences and finds himself within a field of fixed external objects that dominate his existence. The Bodhisattva may be said to share the same basic
experience, but in a reoriented manner. He sees through the nature (which is that of mere idea, viññâpa) of the experience by his non-conceptual awareness (jñâna or nirvikalpa-jñâna), and so inhabits a world of creative possibilities. Rather than being driven by imaginary external objects, he himself creates, or exercises sovereignty over, the world. Both may experience pleasure but, while the common man experiences it as an inherent characteristic of certain transitory objects, the Bodhisattva experiences it as a phenomenon which he can maintain.

I shall now verify the above solution by examining relevant passages of the text. As these are scattered throughout the Mahāyānasamgraha, they will be abstracted and arranged under the following headings: Pleasure, Reorientation, Sovereignty, Awareness, Pleasure and the Other, Pleasure and the Bodhisattva's Maturation.

Pleasure

The Bodhisattva's pleasure is defined as "the enjoyment of the Mahāyāna dharma" (X:1.2). This has both an obvious and a subtle sense. The obvious gloss is given by Asvabhāva (Udāgī-12) as the enjoyment of the jewels, etc., in the Buddhafield and the pleasure of discussing and understanding the Mahāyāna texts. This must be intended for those with a literal concept of the Buddhafield. The "jewels" are the contents of the Buddhafield, and are seen as valuable just as the "objects" of the common world are valueless. The pleasures of discussing and understanding the teachings are almost certainly an idealization of the familiar monastic delight in the evening discussion between master and disciples. Neither of these rather literal explanations is central or is developed further.
The subtle sense is realized when we recall that by "the Mahāyāna" Asaṅga means his trisvabhāva-based doctrine, and that chapters II-IV teach that understanding the doctrine and being able to understand one's world in the reoriented way it describes are equivalent. Therefore, enjoyment of the Mahāyāna dharma is equivalent to seeing the world in a reoriented manner.

Reorientation

X:5.2

By reorientation of the vedanāskandha it [the Sbk] attains sovereignty over irreproachable, immeasurable, immensely pleasant residences.

Both Vasubandhu (Bh372a3) and Asvabhava (U438a2) agree that the residence is "immensely" (廣大) pleasant because it "transcends" (超) the pleasures of the three worlds.

That is, the Bodhisattva also experiences any perception as painful, pleasurable or indifferent but, because he sees through its nature, he evaluates it differently. Unlike the ordinary individual within "the three worlds," the Bodhisattva does not ascribe these feelings to some external object and hence his pleasure is not limited by the caprice of such an object. He exercises sovereignty which is "immense" and "transcendent."

Sovereignty

Sovereignty (vibhutva) and mastery (vaśitā) both imply a reversal of relationships within a life, rather than the abandonment of any major aspect of a relationship. In the most general sense, the "drivenness" is replaced by "control," even if the actual actions are identical. For example, the Bodhisattva abandons life of his own free will rather than being...
"taken" by death; he is able to choose the station of rebirth rather than being driven to a womb; he is able to perceive accurately and minister effectively instead of being gripped by misapprehensions and preached to by others.

The most important such reversal is connected with the Bodhisattva's vow to work for the welfare of others. The common man, working for his own worldly gain, is permeated with misery. The Šrāvaka, working for his own spiritual benefit, becomes free from misery. But the Bodhisattva, working for the spiritual welfare of others (X:7.6; X:10; X:12; X:29.5; X:37), is permeated with pleasure. While the common man or Šrāvaka strives to ingest desirable aspects of his environment, the Bodhisattva donates these to others. The former activity engenders suffering; the latter, pleasure.

The idea that the worlds of the Bodhisattva and of the common man are mirror-images suggests the possibility that the Bodhisattva's pleasure is the antithesis of the common man's suffering. Such an idea would be very convenient, for, while the pleasures of the Buddhafield are discussed in general, oblique, and symbolic terms, suffering (duhkha)—in particular, the famous dictum "all that is impermanent is suffering" (yad anityam tad duhkham)—has been treated very directly and exhaustively in the Abhidharma literature. Therefore, we should expect this literature to further our understanding of the Bodhisattva's pleasure.

This line of thought leads to a fascinating consideration. Were we to view the question of the Bodhisattva's pleasure in a strict Abhidharmic frame of reference (i.e., not invoking the trisvabhāva), it could be rephrased as follows: The Bodhisattva must have the same individual experiences, either pleasant or painful, as does the common man. The overall tone, however, is pleasant. How can this be? How can a specific painful experience have an
overall pleasant tone? The interesting thing about this question is that it is a mirror-image of the actual Abhidharma question regarding misery. How can life, which has both pleasant and painful experiences, be said to be permeated with suffering?

The answer of the Abhidharmasamuccaya (also attributed to Asaṅga) may be summarized as follows. Various specific instances of misery or suffering (duḥkha-duḥkhatā) are concomitants to common experiences. However, this experience is not suffering as such, but is only one limited aspect of a broader phenomenon: "suffering of all conditioned existence" (saṃskāra-duḥkhatā).

B. K. Matilal has described this as the "anguish of the human heart caused by our constant awareness of lack of freedom." 84

Since both pleasure and suffering are feelings that result from the primary processes, they need not be understood as tight logical concepts. The joy which an individual may occasionally feel need not invalidate the statement that his life is permeated with misery (or anguish), nor is it necessary to deny the similarity between the momentary joy and the pervasive anguish.

If this way of understanding misery is applied to the Bodhisattva's pleasure, the latter is seen as a thoroughgoing enjoyment of the Buddhafiel, different only in degree from common pleasure. I can find no passages in the Mahāyānasamgraha which would rule out such an understanding, and many tacitly support it. For example, in the description of the Buddhafiel at X:30.12-13, Asaṅga says that it is free from all the torments caused by klesas and that all the mātras are expelled. This does not necessarily indicate an absence of pain caused by the automatic emotional reactions (klesas). Asvabhāva (U448b3) says that everything associated with fear, i.e., klesamāra, skandhamāra, mṛtyumāra (death) and devaputramāra (the devil), is expelled. Again, while
pain may be present, it does not engender driving fear.

Notice that we have been able to explain the pleasure in Abhidharmic terms, without recourse to the trisvabhāva.

Thus, both the trisvabhāva explanation and our Abhidharma-derived view show the close connection between ordinary pleasure and the pleasure of the Buddhahfield, and stress the concept of sovereignty as the differentiating factor.

**Awareness (jñāna or nirvikalpa-jñāna)**

An examination of the logical status of the pleasurable experience reveals still more features. As we have seen, this text does not contain an ontology. Asaṅga regards any situation as an experience formed by a complex preconscious process (called "dependent upon another," paratāntara). The experience can appear only as the experience of a subject who completes it by taking a certain attitude, thus assigning to it some particular status. If the observer is a commoner or śrāvaka, the experience is reified into an "awareness of" (vi-jñāna) some totally imaginary (parikalpita) object. If he is a Bodhisattva, he sees through the nature of the experience and so has a "non-conceptual awareness" (nirvikalpa-jñāna) without any ontological referent, i.e., it is "perfected" (parinīspanna).

We can infer that the Bodhisattva's pleasurable perceptions are the non-conceptual awareness, and that descriptions of the latter will also be indirect descriptions of the former. This inference is upheld by X:7.3:

[The Svāk involves the attribute of] "residence" because from the reorientation of the life of desire, etc., the immeasurable "awareness" (jñāna) residence is obtained.
Chapter VIII, which appears to be the chief passage in *Vijñānavāda* sastras devoted to the nirvikalpa-jñāna, is particularly helpful. It lists three types of nirvikalpa-jñāna:

— the preparatory nirvikalpa-jñāna (*prayogika*), the attainment of which enables the aspirant to enter the Nirmāṇakāya assembly.

— the fundamental nirvikalpa-jñāna (*mūla*)—often simply called nirvikalpa-jñāna or even *jñāna*—the attainment of which enables the aspirant to enter the Sambhogakāya assembly or BuddhafIELD.

— the subsequent nirvikalpa-jñāna (*prsthala-bdha*) which is developed by the Bodhisattva within the BuddhafIELD, and which enables him to circulate in the world without being stained.

The notion of the subsequent nirvikalpa-jñāna has been noted previously when examining the way in which the *Dk* may be obtained. The basic passage is worth repeating:

III:12 . . . the subsequent awareness, which sees everything arising from the ālayavijñāna and merely mental appearances to be like an illusion, arises by its very nature free from misapprehensions. Thus, just as a magician is free from misapprehensions about the reality of things he has created, so the Bodhisattva, although speaking of causes and effects, is always free from misapprehensions about them.

Furthermore, we have also seen (at X:30.5 and .6) that the BuddhafIELD arises from supremely wholesome world-transcending roots (which Vasubandhu identifies as fundamental and subsequent nirvikalpa-jñāna), and that it may be characterized as very efficacious and very pure *vijñapti*. 
These passages leave no doubt that, despite the negative form of the term nirvikalpa­jñāna, the Bodhisattva's awareness ("subsequent" nirvikalpa­jñāna) is not a mental blankness or an ineffable state. It is the perception of an environment which, although it may have the same form as that perceived by the common man, is understood to be simply a transient experience rather than a binding and oppressing assemblage of objects.

This conclusion suggests that the pleasure experienced by the Bodhisattva is connected with his awareness of freedom. If misery results from a perception of oneself as driven within a world of objects, then pleasure results from a perception of oneself as being in a controlling position within a field of experiences. Reversing Matilal's definition of duḥkha gives an equally good description of pleasure: the joy of the human heart caused by our constant awareness of the presence of freedom.

Pleasure and the Other

The previous discussion notwithstanding, there is still something odd about applying such an apparently egocentric feeling as pleasure to a non-egocentric phenomenon. This objection disappears before the realization that the Bodhisattva's pleasure is not selfish but is the pleasure taken in the liberation of both self and others.

The key to further information is the note at Prastāvanā: 3.10 which states that the Bodhisattva simultaneously enters the Buddhafields and first great bhūmi, the joyful (pramudita) bhūmi. Therefore, a description of this bhūmi will also describe the Bodhisattva's pleasure. The Vijnānavādin doctrine of the bhūmis finds its classical statement in the Daśabhūmikasūtra. That text, the Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra (XX-XXII, 32) and the Mahāyānasamgraha (V:2) all agree that:
V:2.1  [The pramuditabhūmi takes its name from the fact that there] ... one obtains, for the first time, the ability to assure both his own personal welfare and that of others.

Asvabhava (U424a18-23) adds that the Śrāvaka, working only for his own welfare, obtains a clear insight (abhisamaya) but does not and never will feel joy, whereas the Bodhisattva experiences joy which will continue until full enlightenment is reached.

It is tempting to suppose that the former is the basic nirvikalpajñāna and the latter is the subsequent nirvikalpajñāna, but there is no real support for this assumption. Note that Asaṅga is not suggesting that the Śrāvaka takes pleasure in his own liberation while the Bodhisattva takes pleasure in the liberation of others, an idea which would require the Śrāvaka to feel pleasure and the Bodhisattva egocentrically to evaluate his experiences differently from those of others. Both of these ideas are rejected in the text. The Bodhisattva feels pleasure in his perception of both himself and others as liberated. The Bodhisattva has vowed to establish a new pattern of life based upon an altruistic regard for others. While this is described in chapter IV, it is easily overlooked in the present context. At X:30.8, Asvabhava (U446a23) says that the Bodhisattva "assists" the Tathāgata, and at VII:5 this assistance is described: "... [The Bodhisattva,] while residing in meditative bliss, takes birth where he wishes."

Pleasure and the Bodhisattva's Maturation

The Bodhisattva's pleasure has been pictured as an epiphenomenon arising from his engagement with his world. This impression is contradicted by the commentators who, in several passages (e.g., P:3.10, Bh323a25-29; U381c17-20), insist that the pleasure is itself instrumental in the Bodhisattva's maturation,
or in the collection or perfection of his equipment (sambhāra).

At X:30.10 Asvabhāva (U446a27) says that in the pure Buddhatfield the joy and pleasure in the taste of the Mahāyāna dharma serves as food, and at X:8 (U439b5) that in each universe the "enjoyment of the taste of the dharma" is special. The same point is made indirectly at X:6.3, where Asvabhāva (U438c14-15) comments, "... the Bodhisattvas who have entered the great bhūmis do not need to see the Buddha's Nirmānakāya in order to be matured, because they themselves penetrate the profound and extensive dharma." The equivalence of the "penetrating (i.e., understanding) the dharma" and of the Bodhisattva's pleasant awareness has been noted.

The concept of pleasure cannot be fully understood until the mechanism whereby it assures the Bodhisattva's maturation has been accounted for. The fact that the Mahāyānasamgraha does not explain it directly indicates that Asaṅga had some straightforward concept in mind, probably that the pleasure is simply the motive for the Bodhisattva practices. The Mahāyānasamgraha maps the Bodhisattva's progress within the Buddhatfield into ten stages (bhūmis, chapter V), which the Bodhisattva ascends as he develops the six facets of altruistic personality (pāramitās, chapter IV). It mentions the vow by which this altruistic activity is directed and channelled. What it does not mention is the motivation required by any model of goal-oriented activity.

The common man's motivation is the pleasure and suffering that drive him through his lives. In the Śrāvaka, the motive force is the confidence (śraddhā) and aspiration (adhimukti) inspired by his encounter with the Nirmānakāya. It seems reasonable that the Bodhisattva's motive for continual practice of the pāramitās is the increasing joy which is present from the first bhūmi onward.
The Three Kayas: Interrelationships

The essence of the trikāya doctrine lies in the way in which each member is related to each of the others. Only a few passages address this question directly. They are:

P:3.10 The three types of Buddhakāya: Svabhāvikakāya, Sambhogakāya and Nīrmanakāya, are the awareness-result of these [Bodhisattva practices].

Both commentaries explain this by a succinct preview of the trikāya doctrine. Vasubandhu (Bh 323a22-b) says,

The triple Buddhakāya is called the 'aware result' (phalajñāna)—'result' because it is the result of the previously mentioned practices, and 'aware result' because this result is aware. [Thus,] its basic nature (svabhāva) is to be 'the aware result of these.'

Now if there were no Svabhāvikakāya [T: "if there were no svabhāva"], there would be no Dharmakāya—this is similar to the caksurtṛidṛiya. If there were no Dharmakāya, there would be no Sambhogakāya—this is similar to the caksurvi-jñāna. In this simile the support and the supported should be considered as equals.

If there were no Sambhogakāya, the Bodhisattvas would not enjoy the pleasure of the dharma after entering the great bhūmis. Without this pleasure their equipment for enlightenment would not be perfected—this is similar to the rūpa [bh: "similar to not seeing the rūpa"].

If there were no Nīrmanakāya, the Bodhisattvas on the adhimukti-practicing bhūmi, and the Śrāvakas, etc. of lesser adhimukti, would fail ‘from the very first to leave the stations of rebirth (gati).’ Therefore, it is established that there must be three kāyas.

VIII:10 [This passage on the retribution of the nirvikalpajñāna has already been included under both Nīrmanakāya and]
Sambhogakāya. Vasubandhu (Bh 365a14) adds that both kāyas are the outflows (niṣyanda) of the nirvikalpa-jñāna.

If the Dharmakāya (or Svabhāvikakāya) is identified with the nirvikalpa-jñāna, we now have the relation of "outflow" between it and the other two kāyas. This term is not as simple as it appears, since it cannot imply temporal priority and still be consistent with VIII:13, below.

VIII:13 The terminus of the Bodhisattva's nirvikalpa-jñāna is the acquisition of the three pure Buddhakāyas and highest sovereignty (vaśītā).

Vasubandhu (Bh 365b7-9) and Asvabhāva (U 31a10-11) agree that the three are obtained on the first bhūmi, but that they become "pure" only on the tenth. This surely eliminates any possibility that one might be acquired prior to the others.

The commentators also identify the sovereignty with those sovereignties whose svalaksana is discussed later, presumably at X:3.2.

X:1.2 The Sambhogakāya depends upon (brten-pa; 依) the Dharmakāya . . . because it experiences the very pure Buddhafields and the enjoyment of the Mahāyāna dharma.

Asvabhāva (U 36a6) explains that "depends upon" means that "because of the existence of a Dharmakāya, a Sambhogakāya is obtained."

X:1.3 The Nirmānakāya depends upon the Dharmakāya because it manifests [the various Buddha activities].
X:5  [This passage was quoted earlier. Each of the skandhas, when reoriented, becomes an aspect of the Dharmakāya. Two of them are relevant to the trikāya question:]

X:5.1  By a reorientation of the rūpaskandha, it [the Dharmakāya] obtains sovereignty over the Buddhafield, the body, the laksānas, the minor mark(s), the infinity of phonemes and the invisible cranial marks.

From this we might conclude that a reorientation of the rūpaskandha yields the Sambhogakāya and associated Buddhafields, etc. However, both Vasubandhu (Bh 371c24-29) and Asvabhāva (U437c22-29) say that the "body" is manifested in various great assemblies according to the particular capacities of the sentient beings to be taught. If the Sambhogakāya is visible only to the Bodhisattva, then this passage may also refer to the Nirmanakāya.

X:5.4  [Reorientation of the sāṃskāraskandha results in sovereignty over]... nirmāna, transformation, convening the great assemblies, and collecting white dharmas.

This would appear to indicate the Nirmanakāya, but again the commentators do not support such a view. They explain these as the Buddha's abilities to create, transform, etc., as desired, but do not link these abilities more directly to the Nk.

X:6  How many things does the Dharmakāya support?

1. It is the support for the various Buddha residences...

2. It [the Dk] is the support for the various Sambhogakāyas because it assures the maturation of the Bodhisattvas.
The Chinese translation (U43bc10-11) of the key portion of the Asvabhāva commentary differs from the Tibetan (u337b2). The Chinese says that the Dharmakāya is the adhipatipratyaya for the transformation into a Sambhogakāya, but not in the same way that the sun supports its rays. The Tibetan says: "The Dharmakāya is the support for the Sambhogakāya. If it [the Dharmakāya] exists, then it manifests [the Sambhogakāya]. This is like the sun and its rays." It is probably unwise to conclude anything beyond the simple fact that the Sbk is primarily dependent upon the Dk.

(3) It is the support for the various Nirmānakāyas because it principally assures the maturation of the Śrāvakas.

X:37 ... both the nisyandakāya [i.e., the Sambhogakāya] and the Nirmānakāya depend upon the eternal Dharmakāya ... [although in different ways].

In these passages, the key term is obviously "dependence." The Sbk and Nk each "depend upon" or "are supported by" the Dk, but do not depend upon each other.

We should note in passing that this eliminates any possibility that the Dk (or Svks) is the real transcendent Buddha who manifests a Sbk which in turn manifests a worldly Nk. The relationship of both Nk and Sbk is directly to the Dk.

The most important clue to a proper understanding of the dependence relationship is Asvabhāva's commentary to P:3.10 in which he compares the kāyas to the perceptual triad: rūpa-caksurindriya-caksurvidhāna. Unfortunately, it is not clear which factor is being likened to which kāya, and the details are very ambiguous. However, if this simile simply means that the relationship
between the kāyas should be understood in the same way as that between the perceptual elements; the details are superfluous. It is based upon the Abhidharmic analysis of a moment of relational existence into: an epistemic object (in the case of vision, the rūpa), an epistemic subject (the faculty of vision or caksurindriya), and the awareness arising from their conjunction (the caksurviññāna). Most theoreticians accepted the subject and object as dharmas (i.e., components found at a final level of analysis) and did not attempt to go further than saying that the juxtaposition of subject and object gave rise to awareness. The juxtaposition was explained by other factors in the total situation, such as habits and memories.

The simile must mean that we should adopt a similar attitude to the three kāyas. Instead of searching for the mechanism by which three different entities are related, we should regard them as abstractions from a single given situation called Buddhahood or Dk. The reasons for positing the three, and the relationship between them, become equivalent questions to be answered by reference to their power of explaining specific aspects of the total group of phenomena termed "Dk." Thus, the statement that the Nk and Sbk "depend upon" the Dk points to the larger situation within which each of them makes sense.

This line of reasoning is exactly the one followed at X:1: "... because it experiences the very pure Buddhafields ... because it manifests ... because it principally assures the maturation of the Bodhisattvas ... because it principally assures the maturation of the Śrāvaka..." The Asvabhāva commentary to X:6.2 may support this interpretation even more explicitly, but textual problems, including wide divergences between the Chinese and Tibetan versions, render it suspect.
i. Nirmāṇakāya and Sambhogakāya Compared

The question of relationships can be seen more clearly if Asaṅga's ideas about the Nk and Sbk are summarized and compared. The first similarity is that both are ways in which the Buddha appears to a certain class of observers, rather than being aspects or parts of the Buddha. This interpretation is validated by the fact that both exhibit the same three basic characteristics as do the Dk or the Svk, i.e., each is the result of certain practices, each can be described as an awareness, and each exhibits sovereignty.

That is, the Sbk results from the practices by which the aspirant perfects his non-conceptual awareness. Like the Svk, the Sbk is an "awareness" rather than a concrete object. This is implicit in the previous point and explicit at X:35,6(U). Finally, like the Svk, the Sbk exercises sovereignty, which involves the joy or pleasure aroused in the Bodhisattva (P:3.10; X:1.2; X:30.10; X:31), and which ensures his maturation (P:3.10; X:6.2). Like the Svk, the Sbk is eternal because this maturing activity does not cease (X:31).

The six differences between the Svk and the Sbk listed at X:35 amount to one point—the Sbk, unlike the Svk, appears in a series of specific determinate forms depending upon specific circumstances.

The passages describing the Nk are very similar in form and may be grouped under the same three main characteristics. Like the Sbk, it results from two types of practices: those by the Buddha and those by the aspirant. However, the latter are not really Bodhisattva practices insofar as they are accomplished by Śrāvakas or low-level Bodhisattvas. The action of the Buddha, not of the aspirant, is emphasized.

The Nk and Sbk both appear in situations where both the Buddha, who has vowed to aid all sentient beings, and a sentient being who is prepared to
accept such assistance, are present. The Buddha's vow remains the same in each case, but the stage of the individual's progress elicits either a \( \text{Nk} \) or a \( \text{Sbk} \).

The various passages examined generally agree that the \( \text{Nk} \) appears only to the \( \text{Sravakas} \) and to the \( \text{adhimukticaryabhûmi} \) Bodhisattvas (novice Bodhisattvas on the first and lowest Bodhisattva level). \( \text{X:16} \), the only passage which might be read as suggesting that ordinary beings who are not Bodhisattvas may see the \( \text{Nk} \), is glossed by Asvabhava as a reference to those who, sooner or later, will see the \( \text{Nk} \) (presumably as \( \text{Sravakas} \)).

A major problem arises from the differences between the information in chapter VIII and chapter X. In VIII:10-14 the Bodhisattvas who are "preparing" their \( \text{nirvikalpa} \) who listen to others explain the non-conceptual (\( \text{nirvikalpa} \)) character of things but cannot see it directly themselves—are said to be reborn in the \( \text{Nk} \) assembly. The Bodhisattvas who have perfected their \( \text{nirvikalpa} \)—who have personally grasped the truth of this doctrine—are reborn in the \( \text{Sbk} \) assembly. On the other hand, at \( \text{X:27} \) Asvabhava (U443a23-26) says that the \( \text{Dk} \) is invisible to gods and men, the \( \text{Nk} \) is manifested in (\( \text{出现} \)) the world, and the \( \text{Sbk} \) resides in (\( \text{出现} \)) the assembly.

These two versions must be based either upon different theories or upon different viewpoints. Since the \( \text{Mahâyânasamgraha} \) is reasonably free of contradictions, I believe that the difference is one of viewpoint. VIII:10 is a mythical statement of an omniscient narrator recounting, from some detached cosmic standpoint, the place of each individual's rebirth. The viewpoint of chapter I, on the contrary, is that of an ordinary man for whom the \( \text{Nk} \) appears to "enter" the world as a projection from somewhere outside. The \( \text{Sbk} \) assembly, on the other hand, is itself outside this commonplace world and its aspirant is seen to move toward it.
The Sbk affords a more complex situation. The aspirant sees not only the Sbk, but an entire transformed environment in which he is able to hear or receive the Buddha-word from which he attains an understanding which involves pleasure. This pleasure encourages him to continue practicing the pāramitās and in this way helps perfect a life dedicated to the welfare of others.

Exactly what the aspirant must do to enter the Buddhland is unclear. In chapter VIII Asaṅga suggests that he is reborn there. The idea, known in later practice, that the Buddhland is entered during meditation is not contradicted in the Mahāyānasūtra. Finally, the tradition that after many years of ritual practice Asaṅga was taken to the Tuṣita heaven and taught by Maitreya may also be relevant.

ii. The Trikāya and the Classical Problems

Many developments in Buddhology appear to have been forced by the need to resolve certain basic contradictions in the concept of the Buddha. The most ubiquitous of these can be considered to be the "classical" problems. They are:

- One Buddha, or many Buddhas?
- Is the Buddha mortal, or immortal?
- Does the Buddha remain in nirvāṇa, or not?

As the intellectual horizons of the early Buddhist thinkers expanded and the implications of their basic dogmas became better understood, earlier attempts to set aside such questions or to provide simple answers were seen as inadequate. It became clear that these questions called for a description of a transcendent Buddha in worldly terms. A satisfactory answer must be mediated
by a frame of reference which will allow the ambiguity inherent in this concept. As the trikāya is the fundamental Buddhology of the Mahāyānasāṅgraha, we should expect that Asaṅga and his commentators would have applied it to these questions. In the following section, I shall examine this application and, from its effectiveness, attempt to judge the degree to which such questions might have encouraged the development of this concept.

One Buddha, or Many Buddhas?

All Buddhist traditions share a common myth of successive Buddhas, each training a disciple who, upon reaching Buddhahood, trains another. This myth raises the unity/plurality problems that arise from one basic dilemma. On the one hand, "Buddha" is a certain cluster of characteristics. It makes no sense to speak of more than one. It is a single concept applied when an individual has become coterminous with this ideal. On the other hand, although the Buddhist cannot speak of a plurality of individuals in a state known as Buddhahood, he can and does speak of the personalities and practices of various individuals who have reached Buddhahood. It seems unreasonable to deny any sense of plurality to the resulting Buddha(s). Note that this is a peculiarly Buddhist problem. In almost all other systems of thought a distinction between the individual and his characteristics must be maintained. No matter what set of characteristics the individual acquired, the "one, or many" problem could be solved simply by counting the individuals in the class of those possessing the set of characteristics. In the Buddhist system, which recognizes no individual apart from his characteristics, an aspirant who has successfully taken on those of Buddha is "Buddha"—totally.

Most Buddhist thinkers have solved the problem by recognizing a Buddha
possessing two aspects. For example, in Abhidharmakośa, vii:34 the question, "Are the Buddhas similar to each other?" receives the reply, "The Buddhas are similar with regard to equipment for enlightenment, Dharmakāya, and the service of sentient beings. They are dissimilar with regard to the length of life, caste, height, and so on." The subsequent commentary implies a three-fold Buddha: a Dharmakāya and its visible aspect called the rūpakāya (which are identical for all Buddhas), and the appearance of the individual who eventually reaches Buddhahood (which differs from one Buddha to another). This argument is adopted and expanded in the Mahāyānasamgraha:

X:8

Is it necessary to say that the Dharmakāyas of Buddhas are different or not different?

As their support, intention, and actions do not differ, we must say that they are not different. But, insofar as innumerable persons reach enlightenment, we must say that they do differ.

What has been said about the Dharmakāya may also be applied to the Sambhogakāyas. As their intentions and activities are not different, then we must say that they are not different. But as their supports are different, they are not non-different because innumerable supports appear.

The preceding remarks on the Sambhogakāya also apply to the Nirmānakāya.

Asvabhāva (U439a25-b6) explains that the "support" (for the Dk) is tathatā; its "intention" is the intention to work for the benefit of all
sentient beings; and its "actions" are the various Buddha-activities.

The supports that differ for the Nk and Sbk are the Buddhafields, the assemblies, the size of bodies, and so on.

X:3.3 [The Dharmakāya is characterized by a non-duality] of plurality and unity because, [on the one hand,] the support of all the Buddhas is not differentiable, [while, on the other,] innumerable streams of existence are enlightened.

Two stanzas develop this point. These are best expressed by a paraphrase based upon Asvabhāva's commentary:

In the case of a Dharmakāya, no element in the cognitive process is identified as more fundamental than the others, i.e., as an "I" or a "self." Therefore, no division into "I" and "other," or interior and exterior occurs. Since no self and no division is recognized, and the Dharmakāya certainly is not seen as a self, then there is no reason to speak of several Dharmakāyas.

However, from a worldly viewpoint, many individuals appear to have reached Buddhahood. Therefore, we must also say that there are multiple Dharmakāyas.

The second stanza (drawn from Mahāyānasūtraśālaṅkāra IX:77) offers a series of reasons to reject the "one, or many" choice. The first reason is based on the concept of gotra or spiritual lineage. As this is a complex passage, I will paraphrase:

There are two types of lineages—innate and acquired. When we regard only the first, we can say that because the same inborn tendencies lead to enlightenment, the result is the same. However, the acquired lineage which depends on the spiritual guide, etc., is of different types and logically should give rise to different Buddhas. It is inadmissible to maintain only that there is one Buddha, because:

— if only one Buddha arrived at enlightenment, the practices
of his fellow Bodhisattvas would be in vain, an inadmissible conclusion.

— there must be more than one Buddha in order to lead various types of beings to enlightenment.

— it is always necessary for a Bodhisattva to practice under a Buddha, who must himself have previously practiced under a Buddha. Thus, there must be a multiplicity of Buddhas.

On the other hand, we cannot simply say that there is a multiplicity of Buddhas because the "immaculate" (in the sense that it destroys adventitious stains) support or dharmadhātu cannot contain different Buddhas.

If the Dharmakāyas of all Buddhas are the same, why do we speak of many Buddhas? This question is answered in a stanza:

[We say there is one Buddha] because there are not two Buddhas in the same world. [However,] because innumerable [Bodhisattvas] finish collecting their equipment at the same time, because [the idea of] an orderly progression [of Buddhas] arriving at enlightenment is inadmissible, we affirm the plurality of Buddhas.

The preceding passages all offer similar arguments which do not depend upon, or even harmonize with, the trikāya doctrine. They group the Nk and Sbk together as the plural, and regard the Dk as the singular, aspect of the Buddha. To the objection that a plurality of Nks contradicts the maxim that only one Buddha may appear at one time, Asaṅga replies:

Even if many nirmānas appear, because "the world" is a four-continent world system, the birth of two Tathāgatas in the world does not contradict the sūtra which [asserts] that two Tathāgatas do not arise in the world, just as
two Cakravartins cannot arise in the same world.

That is, the affirmation of the existence of several Nks is orthodox if they inhabit different world-systems.

From this it appears not only that Asaṅga did not need the trikāya in order to solve the one-or-many problem, but that he was forced to reduce it to a two-kāya system to deal with this problem.

Is the Buddha Mortal, or Immortal?

The most obvious approach to this problem, via the Buddhist concept of time, is impractical because no suitable study of that topic is available. Therefore, I will merely point out a few conclusions arising directly from our text.

The Majjhima Nikāya: 63 lists four questions which the Buddha declined to answer on the grounds that the answer would not be conducive to salvation: Is the universe eternal? Is the universe infinite? Are the jīva and the body identical? Does the Tathāgata survive death? I suggest that later thinkers devoted a great deal of attention to the final question because it proved to be far from peripheral for soteriological purposes. The discussion in the Mahāyānasamgraha involves two types of answers: an abstract, philosophical answer which shows that the mortal/immortal dilemma cannot undermine the logical structure of the Vijnānavāda system; and a specific answer which shows that orthodox statements questioning the Buddha's immortality cannot undermine his soteriological dependability.

The most fundamental discussion is found at II:30 where any dharma (including the Buddha) is said to be eternal, transitory, or neither, depending on whether one is speaking of parinispatta, parikalpita, or paratantra. In
the case of the Buddha, this means that the experience "Buddha" (paratantra) will either be reified as an individual who will inevitably perish (parikalpita); or it will be understood as pure experience and so become one pole of a liberating encounter, in which case it need never end (parinispanna). Which of these views is followed depends upon the past experience and religious practices of the aspirant.

Asaṅga is primarily concerned with the dependability (the soteriological sense of nitya) of the Buddha, rather than with the strictly logical question of immortality. This soteriological sense is best expressed in terms of the Abhidharma from which it developed. The Abhidharma masters analyzed all experience into a number of constituents (dharmas), which fell into one of two groups: saṁskṛta or asaṁskṛta. The dharmas composing any event in saṁsāra were termed saṁskṛta—"participating in the causal process"—while those which could be relied upon not to create new worldly situations were called asaṁskṛta. The saṁskṛta dharmas were described as having three or four basic characteristics, typically: jāti (coming into existence), sthiti (remaining in existence for some time), jara (reaching the end of their term), and anityatā (going out of existence). While these were understood in various ways, they are all forms of one idea which in the Abhidharmasamuccaya is called anityatā, "impermanence." Therefore, as the major criterion of asaṁskṛta dharmas was nityatā, "permanence," that term came to designate ultimate reliability. This idea that something is nitya if it provides a firm basis for personal salvation underlies the Mahāyā-nasāṅgraha.

In passages which equate the Buddha with a unitary Dk the following statements appear:

X:3.4 [A laksana of the Buddha's Dharma is] nitya because
it is characterized by the purification of the true nature; it is the outcome of a former vow; and its activity is never completed.

In the first statement nityatā refers to the true pure nature (tathatāvisuddhi) which Asvabhāva identifies with the Dk. This is equivalent to the trisvabhāva explanation at II:30, since the tathatāvisuddhi characterizes the parinīṣpanna. The same point is repeated at X:29.2 where Asvabhāva (U445b15-16) adds that "eternal" refers to the fact that the Dk's pure tathatā, its real nature, is unalterable and immutably pure. The other two explanations refer to the Buddha's activity. As this distinction between nature and activity is just the distinction between Svāk and Nk-Sbk, this explanation of nitya can be brought into harmony with the trikāya.

The argument is further developed at X:37, which begins from the contradiction generated by a naïve view of the term nitya:

X:37

As the Sambhogakāya and Nirmānakāya are not eternal, how can the sūtra say that the Tathāgata's body is eternal? Because both the Nisyandakāya and the Nirmānakāya depend upon the eternal Dharmaṇakāya.

As the enjoyment is never interrupted and the nirmāṇas are repeatedly manifest, it is proper to regard the Tathāgata's body as eternal. This is similar to saying that, "[He] always nourishes."

That is, while the author must accept the tradition that the Tathāgata's body is nitya, the Sk and Nk, which are certainly bodies of the Tathāgata, are not nitya. How is this contradiction to be explained?
Asvabhāva (U448c18) advances two criteria for calling something nitya: if its substance (體) is nitya, as in the case of the Dk; and if its support is nitya, as in the other two kāyas. Hence, the fact that the other two depend upon the Dk is sufficient to characterize all three as nitya. This explanation contains a tacit distinction between the soteriological sense of nitya (in which all three may be called nitya as they possess or participate in the salvic reliability), and the philosophical sense in which the Nk and Sk are not nitya.

By further explaining the soteriological sense as constant repetition, he divorces it from any flavor of an eternally subsisting thing. As Asvabhāva (U448c27-28) says,

The Buddha's Nirmānakāya is to be understood in this way: it is not freedom from birth and death which earns it the epithet nitya, but the fact that it incessantly appears again and again according to the needs of beings to be converted. This is the intention of the term nitya.

This is supported at X:29.4:

X:29.4... The Tathāgatas are spontaneous because their actions flow in an uninterrupted, effortless stream.

The final two passages (X:38, 39) of our text explain the necessity for maintaining a clear difference between a Dk which is nitya, and a Nk which is not. At X:39 the notion that an eternal Dk necessarily leads to quietism is refuted on the grounds that it would then undercut its own cause (i.e., spiritual effort), a unique argument not available to the theologians of theistic religions! Therefore, there must be two aspects: the eternal Dk, and a mortal Nk which is visible to the aspirant. Asaṅga has already (X:38) shown that the
second is identical with the Nk which does not "remain" (tisthate; gtan-du bzhugs; 畢竟住) in the world.

In conclusion, an answer to the question of the Buddha's immortality, like that of his plurality, requires a two-term rather than a three-term model. The trikāya is unnecessary and must be reduced to a two-kāya by grouping the Nk and Sbk as one term.

Does the Buddha Remain in Nirvāṇa, or Not?

This perennial question, like the last one, also concerns the Buddha's soteriological efficacy.

VIII:22 [The awareness (jñāna) of the Bodhisattva is distinguished from that of the Śrāvaka by its "non-staying" (apratiṣṭhita), because it stays in non-staying nirvāṇa." [This awareness is further explained at X:13.]

Asvabhāva (U+3ball-12) explains that the Śrāvakas, etc., stay only in nirvāṇa while the Bodhisattvas, because of their karunā and prajñā, stay in non-staying nirvāṇa.

X:36.8 [The Buddha] made his vow and practiced the religious life in order to achieve great enlightenment for the welfare and happiness of all sentient beings. It is illogical to hold that he has completely gone to nirvāṇa, because that would render his vow and practice sterile and useless.

The apratisthita-nirvāṇa is only half of Asaṅga's vision. The complete
How do we know that the Buddha's Dharmakāya is neither wholly in nirvāṇa nor not wholly in nirvāṇa? The question is answered by the following stanza:

Because (he is) free from all obstacles, and
Because (his) activity is not completed.
The Buddha is (at the same time) wholly in nirvāṇa [but] wholly not in nirvāṇa.

This identification of the Buddha's actions as the continuing worldly aspect is the key to the Mahāyānasūtraṁgraha's answer. At X:31.1, Asvabhāva (U446c18) says that these activities proceed via the Nk. This does not imply immortality for the Nk. As we have seen, each Nk has a normal human lifespan, although a repeated series of them is possible. Even so, the series will end when all beings are saved.

The only direct mention of the full trikāya in connection with this problem is X:28.2:

The Buddha's activity is stable (dhruva; brtan-pa; ) and unstable, because all Buddhas have three kāyas.

Here also, the trikāya is more an embarrassment than a necessary concept. Both commentators reduce the trikāya to a two-kāya model, although not in the same way. Asvabhāva says that the activity of the Svāk is stable, while that of the Nk and Sbk is unstable. Vasubandhu holds that that of the Sbk is stable while that of the Nk is unstable.
Conclusion

The importance of these classical problems tempts us to regard the ability of the *trikāya* (or any other Buddhological doctrine) to resolve them as the key to the doctrine's popularity. Nagao has taken this view (*Eastern Buddhist*, 6, no. 1, p. 38). On closer examination, the *trikāya* seems to be not simply unnecessary, but even a hindrance to their solution. Asaṅga has reduced it to a *tvaḥkāya* system when dealing with them. Therefore, these problems cannot have been the motive force behind the development of the *trikāya* doctrine, and my attempt to develop an interpretation will not be focused on them.

f. Why Three Kāyas?

There seem to be three possible classes of reasons why Asaṅga chose to develop a *trikāya* rather than simply modify one of the two-kāya theories. These are:

(a) He may have been the first to realize that the earlier schemes were inadequate for the doctrines which they purported to systematize.

(b) He may have incorporated radically new ideas, which forced the addition of a third term into his system.

(c) He may have been led to a triadic scheme by external forces, e.g., a general Indian vogue for trinities.

In the light of the paucity of historical information on Indian culture, the last is the least desirable choice, and will be considered only if neither of the first two seems plausible.
The second choice seems most likely. As we have seen, earlier thinkers resolved the classical dilemmas by distinguishing the visible rūpakāya from a basic Svāk or Dk. Asaṅga found himself with two additional, mutually irreducible doctrines. The first was that of the vow of benevolent conduct (bhadracārya-pranidhāna) by which the aspirant binds himself to continual worldly manifestation in any form necessary for the salvation of suffering sentient beings. As the actor, he is in general control of the encounter with them. Provided only that the practitioner is able to recognize the Buddha, the latter presents himself.

This seems to be directly contradicted by the second new doctrine, that of the Buddhaland which the aspirant reaches by his own efforts, and within which he encounters the Buddha.

Although the other two possibilities cannot be ignored, I suggest that the need to maintain both the unity and the mutual irreducibility of these concepts forced Asaṅga to adopt the trikāya. Embryonic forms of the vow and the Buddhaland were present earlier, and we might say that Asaṅga was the first to recognize the problem that they raised. Furthermore, it is difficult to imagine that he remained unaffected by the triadic tendencies throughout the nascent Indian theistic traditions. However, during his era both of these new doctrines had become so explicit that he was forced to differentiate between a Nk (which went out to the practitioner), a Sbk (which the practitioner approached in a Buddhaland), and a Svāk which maintained the unity of these two.
NOTES


3 The wording of the Tibetan and the Chinese (135a20-21) versions differ. I have translated freely in order to emphasize the logical structure. The verb "embraces" is no tighter in the Tibetan (bsdug) than in the Chinese (embraces). Its exact meaning must be understood from the context. See also note 26 below.

4 A particularly vivid example of this procedure is his dismissal of the trisvabhāva doctrine:

   C'est ainsi que je ne traiterai pas de la théorie des trois natures, imaginaire, dépendante et accomplie, bien qu'elle appartienne en propre au Vijnānavāda; elle n'offre en effet aucun élément de nature véritablement idéaliste (p. 272).

5 Matilal does refer to the La Vallée Poussin translation of the Ch'eng Wei Shih Lun, and translates a key passage of the Sādhanirmocanasūtra from Lamotte's reconstructed Sanskrit. The latter contains a good example of the perils of relying on such reconstruction. He has missed the problem raised by discrepancies between the Chinese (Bodhiruci—T. 675; Hsüan-tsang—T. 676) and Tibetan (Otani 774) descriptions of the parikalpita and parinispamna.

6 Ashok Kumar Chatterjee, Readings on Yogacāra Buddhism (Varanasi: Centre of Advanced Study in Philosophy, Banaras Hindu University, 1971).


8 H. V. Guenther, Buddhist Philosophy in Theory and Practice, pp. 98-103.

9 H. V. Guenther, "Mentalism and Beyond," JAOS, 86, no. 3:297-304.
This statement is a paraphrase from Prastāvanā. The original Sanskrit must have been ambiguous, as both commentators have glossed the key terms (U382a18–27; Bh323b16–27) and the Tibetan and Chinese (133a21–22) translators seem to have understood the grammar differently.

The key terms describing the path are:

— "logically sound": shin-tu 'thod-pa (Lamotte reconstructs: upapanna, and translates, "pleinement justifiés"). This could be understood in many ways, but the commentators agree that a logical consistency is meant.

— "orthodox": mthun-pa; (Lamotte reconstructs: anukūla, and translates, "conformes").

— "non-contradictory": 'gal-ba med-pa; (Lamotte reconstructs: aviruddha, and translates, "sans contradiction"). Both commentators stress the idea of logical consistency.

The Tibetan reads: shes-par bya-bas na shes-byā'o, while the Chinese reads: . Both are stronger than simply "may be."

These last two paragraphs are an extremely simplified statement of the "three natures" (trisvabhāva) doctrine. Both the character and fundamental importance of this doctrine are frequently misunderstood by those who suppose the Vijnanavāda to be an idealism. A more accurate understanding is emerging as more early texts become known. An excellent modern work embodying such an appreciation is Stefan Anacker's Vasubandhu: Three Aspects. Anacker's work has been particularly encouraging for this study as he, working from the Karmasiddhiprakaraṇa and Madhyântavibhâgabhâsya, has arrived at the same view of the Vijnânavâda as I have derived from the Mahâyânasamgraha.

He summarizes the importance of the trisvabhāva as follows:

Rather than pointing towards an idealistic system, the theory of the store-consciousness is used for totally different purposes by Vasubandhu. It is the recognition that one's normal mental and psychical impressions are constructed, i.e., altered and seemingly stitified by our consciousness-complexes, that forms the actual main point of the Triṃśikâ. "Cognition-only" involves primarily the doctrine of the three natures of reality and their interrelationships. In fact, the store-consciousness serves only as a bridge to this more essential doctrine, which in the last analysis reduces itself to a Śûnyavâda which is thoroughly all-embracing (p. 70).

Janice D. Willis comes to a similar conclusion. In "A Study of the Chapter
on Reality, Based upon the Tattvārtha-Paṭalam of Asaṅga's Bodhisattvabhumi" (p. 87) she states that the trisvabhāva is Asaṅga's basic ontology in all texts except the Yogācārabhumi.

13 This is implicit throughout chapter II. The most nearly explicit statement occurs at II:16.

14 A very helpful work for understanding this idea is Harold N. Lee, Percepts, Concepts and Theoretic Knowledge: A Study in Epistemology (Memphis: Memphis State University Press, 1973).

Dr. Lee has constructed an epistemology similar to that of Asaṅga. His comments on the relationship between such an epistemology and ontology are directly applicable to our problem:

When I speak of the flux of process, I make an ontological assumption, but it is a most general one—simply that something is going on and it is continuous. The flux is posited to give a context for experience—parts of the flux interact, affect each other, and the interaction is the experience of each part (p. 24).

The Mahāyānasamgraha also requires the ontological assumption that "something is going on and that it is continuous" whether the action is thought of in terms suggesting a container (the ālayavijñāna), or an object of perception (jñeya, "the knowable"). However, his work demonstrates that, for purposes of constructing an epistemology, the ontology need be taken no further; that there is no need for a real something (such as a mind) in which such activity occurs.

When throughout the present study I deny that the Mahāyānasamgraha contains ontological presuppositions, I am not denying this most general sense of ontology, merely any more specific and detailed application. That "something is going on" is indisputable, but Asaṅga has avoided the question of whether it is mental, material, or something else. It would require a separate study (based on a different text) even to confront the question of whether or not he considered such a question to be legitimate.

15 Dharmadhātu, the realm or sphere of dharma (or "the dharmas"), is a ubiquitous term which has been used in a number of ways by Buddhist writers. The Vijnānavāda use of this term is still unclear. David Seyfort Ruegg touches up the question several times in La Théorie du tathāgarbha et du gotra (Paris: Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1969), but no comprehensive study
The first occurrence of the term in the Mahāyānasamgraha is at I:48, where the seed of enlightenment obtained by hearing the dharma is declared to be an outflow from the transcendent and very pure dharmadhātu, i.e., the dharmadhātu is the provenance of the preaching which initiates the convert's career. At II:9 and 11, the dharmadhātu is the realm of parinīpanna, in which the Bodhisattva resides by direct perception, or which he penetrates. At X:31, the dharmadhātu is said to undertake five kinds of action. The dharmadhātu as actor rather than 'realm' creates problems which both Vasubandhu and Asvabhāva solve by glossing it as "Dharmakāya."

These passages suggest that the dharmadhātu is the Buddha's perceptual situation and that this is not a static way of 'seeing the truth,' but a state of continual outreach to others.

16 In addition to the articles mentioned in the earlier survey of scholarship, see E. Lamotte, Le Traité de la grande vertu de sagesse, tome 3 (1970), and articles on "Buddha" and related compounds in G. P. Malalasekera, Encyclopaedia of Buddhism (Sri Lanka: Government of Sri Lanka, 1973), vol. 3.

17 Etienne Lamotte, ed. and trans., Saṃdhinirmocanasūtra (Louvain: Université de Louvain, 1935), Tibetan text at Introduction, 2, p. 32; translation, pp. 167-168. See also the sources listed by Lamotte in his end-note to II:33 of the Mahāyānasamgraha.

18 To Lamotte's note (see end-note to chap. III) that III-X form a unity, we may add that I-II do also: As each of these segments ends in a Buddhology, it is possible that the Mahāyānasamgraha was conceived as two texts that were later fused. However, in the absence of early manuscripts in which they are separate, or even of any Sanskrit original which might be analyzed for stylistic differences, such notions must remain as conjecture.

19 A concise explanation of this process is given by John MacQuarrie in The Scope of Demythologizing (New York: Harper Torch-books, 1960), p. 19:

But although existential interpretation of a story does not in itself deny the factual content of the story, it certainly does put that content 'in brackets,' so to speak. The objective reference becomes bracketed in the sense that interest has shifted away from it to the existential significance. The
question of fact is no longer being raised. We are not asking what happened but about what the story says to us in our situation now. The objective reference has somehow become irrelevant. Whether we affirm it or whether we deny it or whether we suspend judgement about it, the existential religious message of the story can still speak home to us . . .

20 Ruegg, Tathāgatagarbha, pp. 411-454.

21 For Asvabhāva’s commentary to II:33, see U410oc22-411b3 and u287a3-291b4. No individual references for this passage will be given.

22 thugs-su chud-pa; 至 . The Tibetan thugs-su chud-pa is used to translate both the Sanskrit root √jñā ("to understand") and √gām ("to go"). The passage seems to read better if we use "to understand" but as all Chinese versions have 至 ("to arrive at a certain state or situation"), the translation must be "has gone to." The same applies to this term in 5. and 9.

23 Avikalpita; T: rnam-par ma brtags-pa; H: 不可分別

24 the-tshom med-pa’i ye-shes; 智無疑滯 . Lamotte reconstructs: "niḥsaṃsatajñāna."

The key to this compound is "doubt" (the-tshom; vicikitsā), an Abhidharmic term which Vasubandhu (Abhidharmakośa v:32c-33) places near the very root of incorrect perception. He says that from nescience (avidyā) arises confusion which leads to doubt about the Buddhist truths. This doubt leads to the false views and hence to the deluded life. Asahga, in the Abhidharmasamuccaya (pp. 10, 41), agrees.

The term is literally "the accurate awareness (jñāna) which involves the utter absence of doubt (vicikitsā)." This implies that "accurate awareness" is not something complete apart from "doubt" as a content or an evaluation. The doubt is a formative factor which distorts the entire perceptual process. Its absence is synonymous with the "accuracy" of the awareness. To stress the fact that this compound is one awareness, not an awareness whose "freedom from doubt" is a secondary non-essential characteristic, I have translated "veridical awareness."

25 vinaya; T: 'dul-ba; H: 調伏 . This is the broadest term for the actions whereby a Bodhisattva leads sentient beings toward enlightenment.
Other translations, such as "to discipline" and "to teach," are too narrow.

26 "Involved with" (bsdus-pa; 擰) is reconstructed by Lamotte as saṃgrhīta and translated, "ressortir au." As it simply indicates general conjunction of two things, such translations as "contained in" or "belongs to" are much too specific.

27 adikarmika bodhisattva; T: byang-chub-sems-dpa' las-dang-po-pa, H: 初修業菩薩. This is the first stage of the thirteen in a Bodhisattva's career. According to the summary of this thirteen-stage theory found in Herbert V. Guenther's The Jewel Ornament of Liberation by sGam-po-pa (Berkeley: Shambhala, 1971), pp. 232-256, the adikarmika stage is equivalent to the saṃbhāramārga (Path of Preparation) and designates the level of those individuals who have just begun Mahāyāna practices. It is followed by the adhimukticaryābhūmi (equivalent to the prayogamārga, Path of Application), the ten great Bodhisattva bhūmis and a final buddhabhūmi.

28 For a discussion of the use of this simile to illustrate a similar question about the birth of an individual in the tathāgata family, see Ruegg, Tathāgatagarbha, pp. 114-115.

29 The various types of nirvikalpajñāna mentioned in these passages are discussed by Alan Sponberg in his "Dynamic Liberation in Yogācāra Buddhism" (The Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies, 2, no. 1 (1979): 44-65).


31 Note that this is a simile, not a statement that the vijñapti are illusory. The trisvabhāva theory is not concerned with such ontological questions. Asaṅga uses the simile of someone seeing through an illusion to describe the enlightened mode of perception. The classic set of the similes used for this purpose is found in the Saṃdhinirmocanasūtra, chapter VI.

32 Misapprehension (viparyāsa; T: phyin-ci-log-pa; H: 真倒) is

33 Lamotte's "Dharmadhātu," rather than "Dharmakāya," is incorrect in both text and commentary.

34 See Lamotte, Mahāyānasamgraha, I:45 and III:1.

35 Sarvajñājñāna; T: thams-cad mkhyen-pa'i ye-shes; H: 一切智智


39 H: 不染無知; Lamotte reconstructs: akliśṭam ajñānam.

40 Ting Fu-pao, Fo-hsiieh ta-tz'u-tien (Taipei: Tung Yü Wen Hua Ch'u Pan She, 1946), p. 599b.

41 The Sanskrit parāvrtti means, "turning back, revolving, change." The Tibetan 'gyur-ba is extremely broad: "to change, to become, to revolve." 轉 can be read chuan: "to revolve," or chuan: "to change direction." I have abandoned the usual translations of these as "revolution" or "reversion." "Revolution" is unsuitable because: (a) throughout the Mahāyānasamgraha a 180° change of direction is meant, not a 360° one; (b) the Tibetan would certainly have chosen skor-ba (as in "turning the dharmacakra") had the translator understood "revolution"; and (c) "revolution" is now a political or at least a social term, and sounds odd in this more psychological context. "Reversion"
Buddhist thought. "Reorientation" (from "orientation"—the practice of facing churches in an easterly direction) carries the correct implication.

The Mahāyānasamgraha contains two important related terms for the Mahāyāna ideal of control of a life-situation: vaṣiṭā and vibhutva. It is difficult to judge how these differ as the various translations have obscured the original Sanskrit term in each passage. The main occurrences of these are as follows:

X:1.1: T: dbang-sgyur-ba; H: 自在轉; all other Chinese translators: 自在. LC and Mvy translate this as vaṣiṭā (the sgyur and 轉 probably reflect the -tā ending). Lamotte, however, reconstructs: vibhutva, and translates: "la souveraineté."

X:3.2 contains a list of ten dbang-ba; H: 自在. Lamotte's reconstruction of vaṣiṭā, "la maîtrise," is clearly correct as this is the same as the ten Bodhisattva-vaṣiṭā in Mvy, 771-780.

X:5; X:7.4: T: dbang-'byor-ba, which Mvy gives as vaibhūtikam; all Chinese translators: 自在. Lamotte again reconstructs: vibhutva, and translates: "la souveraineté." However, he has reconstructed the abbreviated dbang or which stands for the contents of X:5 in the verse summary at X:2 as vaṣiṭā, and translated: "la maîtrise."

VIII:13; the terminus of the religious path is said to involve the dbang-gi mchog; H: 昇自在 which Lamotte reconstructs: agravaṣiṭā and translates: "les maîtrises supérieures."

There appears to be little logical distinction between these two terms if we follow Lamotte's reading. If we read vaṣiṭā at X:1, X:3.2 and VIII:13, and vibhutva at X:2, X:5 and X:7.4, a difference does become apparent. Vibhutva is, in each case, the outcome of reorientation (parāvr̥ttī). This may reflect the use of the term in the Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra, IX:41-48. Vaṣiṭā is used when reorientation is not specifically mentioned. This may reflect the fact that vaṣiṭā seems to have been the customary term through the Mahāyāna schools. See Mvy, 771-780, for the list of Bodhisattva-vaṣiṭā.

Throughout the present study I have adopted the latter readings in preference to Lamotte's, and have translated vibhutva as "sovereignty," and vaṣiṭā as "mastery."

These thirty-two laksānas and eighty snuvyaṣṭanas are the observable
characteristics of a great man (mahâpurusa), whether a world ruler (Cakra-
vartin) or a world savior (Buddha). They include both visible bodily charac-
teristics such as forty teeth, a golden hue, and so on, and behavioral characteristics such as bodily bearing and tone of voice. Asvabhâva obviously understands them to be the most exoteric characteristics of Buddha, by which he may be recognized by even the dullest of sentient beings.

A list of these characteristics and references are given by Lamotte in his end-notes to X:16.

To these should be added the expanded list and references by Leon Hurvitz in "Chih-I," Mêlanges chinois et bouddhiques 5, no. 12 (Bruxelles: l'Institut Belge des Hautes Etudes Chinoises, 1960-62), pp. 353-361.

^ See Ting Fu-pao, Fo-hsiieh ta-tzu-tien, p. 1952c. Lamotte's plural translation: "les marques" is certainly incorrect.

^ Note that the common mistranslation of cetanâ as "volition" would render this passage nonsensical. Cetanâ indicates that little volition is possible, that the individual is driven or motivated to a certain type of perception or action by extrinsic previous influences. See Herbert V. Guenther, Philosophy and Psychology in the Abhidharma (Lucknow: Buddha Vihara, 1957), pp. 61-70.


^ The term "white dharmas" designates a variety of desirable things. For a discussion of this term in Abhidharma thought, see Abhidharmakośa, iv:60.

^ A Mâdhyamika understanding of sûnyatâ must not be blindly applied here. Both the Mâdhyamika and the Yogâcâra accepted the prajñâpâramitâ literature with its terms such as sûnyatâ and tathatâ, but each worked out the implications differently. The Yogâcâra view of sûnyatâ is found in chapter VII of the Saññhinirmocanasûtra, and is embedded in the trisvabhâva doctrine of the

51 T. R. V. Murti, The Central Philosophy of Buddhism (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1960), p. 217. Although Murti goes on to discuss the use of advaya in the Vijnānavāda writings, his analysis is muddled and superficial. A brief mention of this issue also appears in Ruegg, Tathāgatagarbha, p. 3.

52 For example, see Paul Wilfred O'Brien, A Chapter on Reality from the Madhyāntavibhāga Śāstra (Tokyo: Monumenta Nipponica, vol 5, IX-X. 1953-54), and Janice Dean Willis, "A Study of the Chapter on Reality, Based upon the Tattvārthapaṭalas of Asaṅga's Bodhisattvabhumi" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Columbia University, 1976).

53 See also Ruegg, Tathāgatagarbha, fn. 1, p. 298, for comments on a similar passage of the Ratnagotravibhāga.

54 Pratyātma-vedha; T: rang-gis rig-pa; H: 自内证. Vasubandhu (Bh371c2) glosses this as, "the Tathāgata's introspection," thus identifying it as an ability of the spiritually advanced. Asvabhāva (U437b20) makes the same point in a negative manner: "... [the ordinary man] can only adhere to [the Dharmakāya] by faith."


56 Abhidharmakośa ii:57a-b.

57 Vihāra: T: gnas-pa; H: 安住. The basic meaning of "a dwelling place" must be understood within the Buddhist cosmology, which assigns a certain state of being or major preoccupation to the residents of each division of the universe. Hence, vihāra designates not only a monastery, etc., but
also the predominant factors in an individual life.

58 Vibhūtva. See above, note 42.

59 The abhijñās are the abilities which, in Buddhist mythology, are gained by a Buddha during the night of his enlightenment. By the exercise of these abilities he discovers the truths which form the content of his eventual preaching. The Vijnānavādin list is found in Rahula, trans., Abhidharmasaṃcaya, pp. 166-167:

- rddhyabhijñā—the supernatural powers such as flying, etc.;
- divyāsrotabhijñā—the divine ear;
- cetaḥparyāvabhijñā—the ability to know the thoughts of others;
- pūrvanivasānusmṛtyabhijñā—the ability to remember previous lives;
- cyutypapādabhijñā—the ability to see the births and deaths of others;
- āsravaksayabhijñā—the ability to see the extinction of impurity.

Vyavahāra: T: tha-snyad-pa; H: 言説: the outward sign or signal by which communication occurs. It is usually, but not necessarily, vocal. This passage points out the communicative nature of the Buddha. See also Abhidharmakośa i:v:74-75 and Franklin Edgerton, Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Grammar and Dictionary, 2 vols. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1972), vol. 2, p. 516.

Lamotte's references are all to primary texts. For translation of the more important passages, see Abhidharmakośa vii:28-56, and Rahula, trans., Abhidharmasamuccaya, pp. 163-176. The most exhaustive discussion of these is found in vol. 3 of Lamotte's translation of the 大智度論: Le Traité de la grande vertu de sagesse (Louvain: Institut Orientaliste, 1970).

For a definition of the pratisamvids, see Asvabhava's commentary to V:2.9 (U424b18-24).

A clear indication that gambhīra was commonly understood to refer to the Bodhisattva's view is found in Lamotte, trans., Le Traité, vol. 1. This reads in part:

Il en va de même pour la pensée: le sot (bāla), par l'action du savoir conceptuel, découvre dans les Dharma divers caractères. Voir que le vrai caractère des Dharma n'est ni vide (śūnya) ni non-vide (aśūnya), ni existant
(sat) ni non-existent (asat), et pénétrer profondement dans cette doctrine sans détours ni arrêts, c'est ce qu'on nomme "être passé à l'autre rive de la patience relative aux Dharma profonds" (gambhiradhamaksântipâramgata) (p. 338).

2. En outre, les Bodhisattva ont un savoir (jñâna) profond (gambhIRA) et aiguisé (tiksna) . . . (p. 370).


65 H. translates, "... because the tathâta (tathâta) is free from stain."


69 The term Nîrmânakâya cannot be translated without severely biasing later arguments about its meaning. Earlier scholars who did not doubt the theistic nature of the Mahâyâna Buddha usually translated it as "transformation-body," i.e., as a form into which the Buddha transforms himself according to the needs of the aspirant. However, this study questions the theistic premise. The word nîrmâna is so ambiguous that it brings little inherent meaning to the compound. If the search for the "basic" meaning of nîrmâna is limited to the Mahâyânasamgraha, we find only a few uncompounded examples of the term. Asvabhâva's commentary to X:30.9 ((u46a25; u350b6) says, in Lamotte's translation, that the devas, nâgas, etc., of the Buddhhalands are nîrmânas, but as neither the Chinese nor the Tibetan uses the same term here as they do elsewhere for
nirmâna in Nirmânakâya, this is a questionable reconstruction. The only unequivocal definition is given by Asvabhâva at Uû4l.b20 where he defines nirmâna as a creation of a form not previously in existence, i.e., as the very opposite of a "transformation."

70 The adhimukticaryaâbhûmi is the stage immediately preceding the first of the ten great Bodhisattva bhûmis. In the Mahâyânasaâgraha this is properly the stage of the Bodhisattva who has heard, and adheres to, the teaching that all dharmas are vijñaptimâtra (III:3), but Asaṅga often uses it simply as a category for those who have the attitude of simple confidence and devotion of the Śrâvaka, but who hold a Yogâcâra rather than a Hînayâna philosophy. See also Rahula, trans., Abhidharmasamuccaya, p. 145 (for adhimukticarya-bodhisattva), and pp. 158-159; G. P. Malalasekera, ed., Encyclopaedia of Buddhism (Ceylon: Government Press, 1963), fasc. 2, s.v. adhimukti-caryabhûmi, pp. 202-203; and Guenther, trans., Jewel Ornament, p. 239. For adhimukti, see below, note 72.

71 Nirvikalpajñâna is a general term for enlightened awareness. It must not be misunderstood as a state of mind which is necessarily lacking in discursive thought. It is described in detail in chapter VIII of the Mahâyânasaâgraha where it is divided into three types: (1) prayogika, the awareness preparatory to full nirvikalpajñâna; (2) nirvikalpajñâna proper; and (3) prâthalabdha, the awareness subsequent to nirvikalpajñâna.

For a detailed discussion see Alan Sponberg, "Dynamic Liberation in Yogâcâra Buddhism," Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies 2, no. 1 (1979): 44-64.

72 Adhimukti; T: mos-pa; H: 勝解. This term usually refers to the act of directing the attention to a specific object with a clear, or even fervent, expectation of a certain perception. As this object is often a representation of the Buddha, adhimukti is frequently translated, "devotion." But, as the expectation can amount to projecting a vivid visualization, adhimukti should sometimes be "creative imagination." Since both elements are important in this text, I have followed Lamotte's "aspiration." See Abhidharmakośa, ii:24.9; 72.4; Rahula, trans., Abhidharmasamuccaya, p. 180; and Guenther, trans., Jewel Ornament, p. 37.
The precise meaning of "simple confidence" (śraddhāmatra; T: dad-pa tsam; H: 唯信) is unclear. In general, śraddhā designates a warm and trusting confidence. Rahula, in his *Abhidharmasamuccaya*, pp. 148-149 and 148, fn. 2, drawing from the *Majjhimanikāya*, pictures an aspirant called a śraddhā-nusārin—a rather dull individual of no great spiritual abilities who attains enlightenment due to the confidence with which he follows instruction. The *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi*, p. 320, mentions three types of śraddhā in a list which was later regarded as a standard *Vijñānavāda* doctrine, e.g., see Guenther, trans., *Jewel Ornament*, pp. 19-21.

Furthermore, śraddhā is frequently combined with adhimukti, e.g., śraddhā-dimukta (*Abhidharmasamuccaya*, p. 149): "la personne dévouée à la confiance." But the term śraddhāmatra conjoined with adhimukti seems to occur only in this text. I have simply taken the term as an indication that the members of this assembly cannot see the truths themselves, but are willing to follow the instructions of the Nk.

See U449bl1 (愛化) and U342b3-4.

Mudrā; T: lag-rtsis; H: 印, is the most obscure member of this traditional list of subjects studied or recalled by the Bodhisattva. The common meanings such as "ritual hand gesture" or "object of a symbolic encounter" (e.g., *karmamudrā") obviously do not apply. M. Monier-Williams in *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1899), p. 822, citing the *Divyāvadāna*, suggests that this mudrā refers to a form of reckoning on the fingers. This is supported by J. J. Jones, trans., *The Mahāvastu*, 3 vols., Sacred Books of the Buddhists Series, vols. 16-19 (London: The Pali Text Society and Luzac, 1949-56), vol. 2, p. 376, who summarizes the comments of several scholars and opts for "reckoning with the fingers."

Lamotte's "la gravure" almost certainly was suggested by Paramātha's translation (paraphrase?) of Vasubandhu's explanation as 以印印物為相 (*Taishō* vol. 31, p. 367c25).

T: mthun-pa; H: 相似 implies a very close similarity, not an ontological identity. Lamotte translates: "pareil."

H: 一切種成等覺; T: rnam-kun mgon-rdzogs byang-chub-pa, but

T: 'dres-pa; H: 間雜; Lamotte reconstructs: saṃsṛṣṭa.

Rab-tu-phye-ba; H omits this phrase; Lamotte reconstructs: prabhāvita.

Lamotte's translation of this term is puzzling. Both T and H have used "Buddhafield" (*Buddhaksetra*; T: sangs-rgyas-kyi zhing; H: 佛陀土) throughout most of the text. Lamotte, however, sometimes reconstructs: *Buddhabhūmi* ("les terres du Buddha") and sometimes: *Buddhaksetra* ("les champs des Buddha").

Many summaries of the literature on the Buddhafield concept are available in Western languages. The classic study is Teresina Rowell's "The Background and Early Use of the Buddha-kṣetra Concept," *Eastern Buddhist* (published in three installments: 6, no. 3 (1934), 6, no. 4 (1935), 7, no. 2 (1937)). This is still one of the best summaries of data towards a history of the proto-Mahāyāna developments.

Ms. Rowell identifies the earliest Buddhafield concept with the idea that Śākyamuni could see anything in his world (his "field" of knowledge), and that he could exercise benevolent influence or control over this field. The main type of influence is his teaching to the Bodhisattvas. She also discusses the early writings on how the Bodhisattva obtains and purifies this field by purifying his mind and acting for others, especially by worshipping the Buddha.

However, her arguments about the developed Mahāyāna tradition wear extremely thin as she attempts to cover too many texts and ideas.

82 In his end-notes to X:30, Lamotte notes a suggestion by Demiéville that this text is a version of the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra*.


84 Bimal K. Matilal, a talk delivered to the Department of Religious Studies, UBC, in October 1975.


86 Ruegg has published an explanation of this stanza in his *Tathāgata-garbha*, p. 83. As it is drawn from Vasubandhu's *Mahāyānasūtrālaṁkārabhāṣya* it differs significantly from Asvabhāva's interpretation, which has been summarized here.

87 One of the most interesting attempts to date is Nishitani Keiji's "Emptiness and Time" in *Eastern Buddhist*, 9, no. 1: 42-71; 10, no. 2: 1-30. While this Heidegger-on-his-head work is a brilliant apologetic for the author's Zen-oriented religion, it lacks the historical perspective required of any useful interpretation of earlier Indian Buddhism.
CHAPTER III

CONCLUSION
In the last section, the Buddhological passages of the *Mahāyānasamgraha* were analyzed and the function of the *trikāya* doctrine was clarified. A full study of this doctrine would require two further steps:

(a) An examination of other texts.

(b) An interpretation of the doctrine.

These could be accomplished by two possible strategies: a historical approach in which (a) would be undertaken before (b); or a historical, doctrinal analysis in which (b) would be undertaken before (a).

The historical approach would involve analyzing other Vījñānavāda texts in the same way as was the *Mahāyānasamgraha*, and assembling a comparative history of the *trikāya* from the results of these analyses. The actual interpretation could then be done in light of this history. The list of texts examined would include, at a minimum, the *Ratnagotravibhāga* (early Indian Vījñānavāda), the *Buddhabhumisūtra* (Indian and Far-Eastern), the *Ch'eng Wei Shih Lun* (Far-Eastern traditions), and one of Guenther's Tibetan sources. This is a popular approach. It is the methodology implicit in many of the studies which have been noted, especially those by La Vallée Poussin and the *Hōbōgirin* article. Its classical formulation is given by Eliade in "Methodological Remarks on the Study of Religious Symbolism," where he accepts it as the essential methodology for the historian of religions. In that article, to the usual historian's demand that the phenomenon be examined within its historical setting, he adds the stipulation that any possible variants of the phenomenon must also be examined. His example, a study of the Cosmic Tree, shows the proposed method:

Suffice it to say that it is impossible to understand the meaning of the Cosmic Tree by considering only one or some of its variants. It is only by the analysis of a
considerable number of examples that the structure of a symbol can be completely deciphered. Moreover, one can understand the meaning of a certain type of Cosmic Tree only after having studied the most important types and varieties. Only after an elucidation of the specific meanings of the Cosmic Tree in Mesopotamia or in ancient India can one understand the symbolism of Yggdrasil or the Cosmic Trees of Central Asia and of Siberia. In the science of religions, as elsewhere, comparisons are made in order to find both parallels and distinctions.

But there is still more. Only after taking account of all the variants do the differences of their meanings fall into relief. It is because the symbol of the Indonesian Cosmic Tree does not coincide with that of the Altaic Cosmic Tree that the first reveals all its importance for the science of religion. Thus the question is posed: Is there, in either instance, some innovation, obscuration of meaning, or a loss of the original meaning? Since we know what the Cosmic Tree means in Mesopotamia, in India, or in Siberia, the question arises: Because of what religio-historical circumstances, or by what interior reason, does the same symbol in Indonesia reveal a different meaning? (p. 94).

This type of study is based upon the results of previous studies by specialists. As Eliade says, the task of the historian of religions is,

To inform himself of the progress made by the specialists in each of these areas. One is a historian of religions not by virtue of mastering a certain number of philologies, but because one is able to integrate religious data into a general perspective. The historian of religions does not act as a philologist, but as a hermeneutist (p. 91).

While this is an attractive procedure, it is possible only when the specialists have actually made progress and when their investigations have been sufficiently similar that the results may be compared. This is a reasonable expectation when studying a simple symbol like the Cosmic Tree, but the data on the trikāya (i.e., the doctrine from each text) are already the result of complex and selective studies. It is difficult to compare the conclusions of any two of the scholars previously mentioned.
Therefore, the generalist who studies the trikāya must also be the specialist who himself selects, translates, and arranges each, in order to obtain comparable data for a meaningful history. The effort necessary for such a project renders the historical approach impracticable at this time.

The alternate strategy is to derive an interpretation of the doctrine from the data in the Mahāyānasamgraha, and then to determine if this interpretation applies to the doctrine in the other texts.

Although this interpretation must be made without the guidance of a full history, such guidance is less important for the study of a sophisticated doctrine than it would be for the study of less self-consciously theological ("primitive") material. A great deal of meaning can be deduced from the logical structure of the doctrine, i.e., from the way in which the mass of data has been woven into a coherent doctrine. Furthermore, the development of each kāya is not totally unknown. While previous studies do not provide the detailed data that would be required to appreciate the innovative nature of the trikāya, they do show the concepts that fed into each kāya.

Note that a legitimate interpretation may be derived from one text only if this text is known to contain the basic or central version of the doctrine. The interpretation derived from an idiosyncratic text would not prepare the investigator to appreciate other formulations. Fortunately, the choice of a suitable text is the type of question on which the scholar may trust the indigenous theologian's judgement. The learned Buddhist believer, acting as textual critic, discusses much the same problems as does the scholar. The Buddhist traditions have long fostered examinations of the relative
importance and interrelationships of the śāstras. Buddhist thinkers, other modern scholars and myself have found the Mahāyānasamgraha to be the central text of the early Indian Vijnānavāda tradition.

Therefore, I shall now develop an interpretation of the trikāya doctrine directly from the preceding analysis of the Mahāyānasamgraha with occasional reference to the earlier scholarship and to other Vijnānavādin texts.

A. CRITERIA FOR A MODEL

A successful interpretation of the trikāya doctrine will describe or imply its major features in assertions acceptable to a modern Western non-believer. The description will consist of some type of analogy or model. This analogy need not have been recognized within either the Buddhist or Western traditions, but must summarize the message that an informed Westerner would receive from the text.

The model must satisfy two criteria: coherence and clarity. By "coherence" I mean that, in the words of A. N. Whitehead, "Fundamental ideas, in terms of which the scheme is developed, presuppose each other so that in isolation they are meaningless." This means that, as the text contains a unified trikāya doctrine rather than three doctrines of separate kāyas, it must receive one explanation rather than three loosely-related explanations or models.

By "clarity" I mean primarily that no element of the model can require the reader to be a believer in order to assent to it. An explanation that involves any type of non-shared belief (not only in Buddhist dogma) is unsatisfactory. This demand again illustrates the inadequacy of any model that portrays an essential Svāk appearing in the Buddhafield and descending
into the world, an idea which is acceptable only to those who believe in the possibility of such a god-like being. I have belabored this point throughout the present study because such interpretations are the most tempting error and because the model to be proposed has been shaped by the dynamics of the search for an alternative.

The clarity criterion involves a second demand: to avoid any element that requires further explanation or is not on the same logical level as the rest. That is, any model that contains a veiled thing-in-itself is unacceptable as this element would then require another model to unveil its meaning. The interpretive model must be a simple analogy that represents the doctrine in sensible and generally acceptable terms. As Ian G. Barbour says in *Myths, Models and Paradigms*, "The metaphysician takes a 'co-ordinating analogy' from some relationships he judges to be specially important and from it derives a model which can order a diversity of kinds of experience . . ." (p. 64).

The demand for clarity eliminates any portrayal of a sacred Buddha (which would require further interpretation) vis-à-vis a secular or profane aspirant. It also eliminates Eliade's plausible model of a three-tiered universe in which the sacrality of the higher regions is communicated to the lower via the discontinuity of the world axis. In this case, clarity is equivalent to the avoidance of normative ontological elements in an explanation of non-ontological Buddhist dogma. As Baird has shown, such elements are inherent in Eliade's model.

**B. ELEMENTS OF THE MODEL**

The model must portray two classes of facts:

(a) The fundamental nature of the total situation or process. This must be
decided before the individual elements can be represented.

(b) Individual elements mentioned in the doctrine, i.e., each kāya, each type of aspirant, the fields in which they interact, and the relationships between them.

We have seen that Asaṅga has constructed his Vājinavaṇāda around the interpretation, rather than the nature, of experience. His unifying concept is "awareness"—indicated by terms based upon ज्ञान, e.g., prajñā, jñāna, vijñāna, nirvikalpajñāna, vijñapti, etc. Therefore, the best analogy for some sub-doctrine (such as the trikāya) would appear to be an epistemic model. As the trikāya can be seen as an epistemic encounter between aspirant and Buddha within a certain situation, and these can be identified with those of the subject-object-field triad, I suggest that such an encounter form the basic model for the trikāya. This model will exhibit coherence (it is meaningless to speak of an objectless subject) and clarity (none of the three terms refers to anything mysterious or hidden behind the situation portrayed).

This is not a claim that Asaṅga's doctrine does (or does not) really refer to such an encounter between Buddha and aspirant. As Asaṅga does not admit that either of them exists, such a claim would be nonsensical. This is an analogy. I will argue below that the most useful answer to the question of the real nature of the trikāya is that it is a pure structure. While the epistemic encounter is only one possible interpretation of this structure, it is the most suitable one for studying the contentions embodied in the Mahāyānasāṁgraha.

The individual elements require little immediate discussion. The main ones are the Svā, Nk, Sbk, the Śrāvaka and Bodhisattva, plus the common world of misery and the joy-filled Buddhafield. These fall into related sets: the
Srāvaka and Nk inhabit the common world, while the Bodhisattva and Sbk inhabit the Buddhabfield. Each includes the aspirant (as Srāvaka or Bodhisattva) who perceives the Buddha (as Nk or Sbk) within a field (common world or Buddhabfield). The Svk, which appears to be a special case, can be ignored for the moment.

The sets are related in a clearly defined manner. They are located along a linear continuum of "awareness" (jnāna) described in chapter VIII. It stretches from the preparatory non-conceptual awareness of the individual who is not yet a Srāvaka, through the fundamental and subsequent non-conceptual awarenesses. The common world containing the Srāvaka-Nk is located in the fundamental non-conceptual awareness region of the continuum, while the Buddhabfield containing the Bodhisattva-Sbk is located at the subsequent non-conceptual awareness region.

**COMMON WORLD**  **BUDDHAFIELD**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Srāvaka</th>
<th>Bodhisattva</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nk</td>
<td>Sbk</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PREPARATORY NON-CONCEPTUAL AWARENESS**  **FUNDAMENTAL NON-CONCEPTUAL AWARENESS**  **SUBSEQUENT NON-CONCEPTUAL AWARENESS**

Figure 1
Note that the distance between situations along the continuum of awareness is soteriological distance measured in degrees of non-conceptual awareness, not necessarily temporal distance. As Asaṅga views temporal distinctions as conventional (vijñāpā, II:2), the model need illustrate temporal considerations only when they correspond to soteriological development.

C. STRUCTURALISM?

Another brief consideration of methodology is necessary before we can proceed to develop the model. It is impossible to ignore the similarities between Figure 1 and those models developed by contemporary Structuralists. This realization is encouraging because, as structuralism is a popular trend, we may expect to find useful suggestions in its immense literature.

However, the label is applied to a bewildering diversity of methodologies in linguistics, mathematics, anthropology, psychology and sociology. Practical aid can be expected only from someone who deals either with similar questions (improbable) or with structures sufficiently abstract that they may be used for such a radical hermeneutic. The interests of the linguists and literary critics are much too narrow, and others (e.g., Piaget) are more historians of the movement than practitioners. Fortunately, the work of one scholar is applicable and accessible.

In this study, "Structuralism" will designate the methodology of Claude Lévi-Strauss. Not only has he studied structures underlying a broad range of practices and beliefs, but his models are very similar to ours.
This similarity can be seen by comparing Figure 1 with his criteria for a structural model. In *Structural Anthropology* he says:

The question then becomes that of ascertaining what kind of model deserves the name "structure." This is not an anthropological question, but one which belongs to the methodology of science in general. Keeping this in mind, we can say that a structure consists of a model meeting with several requirements.

First, the structure exhibits the characteristics of a system. It is made up of several elements, none of which can undergo a change without effecting changes in all the other elements.

Second, for any given model there should be a possibility of ordering a series of transformations resulting in a group of models of the same type.

Third, the above properties make it possible to predict how the model will react if one or more of its elements are submitted to certain modifications.

Finally, the model should be constituted so as to make immediately intelligible all the observed facts (pp. 279-280).

All of these are satisfied by the model of Figure 1.

I must stress that this study follows his methodology in a very loose manner. I am not obliged to defend any or all of his opinions on related or unrelated matters. The Structuralist approach is indicated by the nature of our data, and it is only common sense to accept guidance from others who have faced similar problems.

A real objection must be forestalled. Structuralism is often said (especially by linguists) 'to deal only with implicit (in the jargon, "unconscious") patterns in myth, social institutions, etc. The structuralist's task of exposing patterns normally obscured by conscious doctrine is seen as a variety of Kantian analysis. If this were strictly true, an attempt to elucidate Asaṅga's explicit dogmas could not be Structuralism. However, such an
understanding grossly oversimplifies the method. In structural Anthropology, Lévi-Strauss says:

A structural model may be conscious or unconscious without this difference affecting its nature. It can only be said that when the structure of a certain type of phenomena does not lie at a great depth, it is more likely that some kind of model, standing as a screen to hide it, will exist in the collective consciousness. For conscious models, which are usually known as "norms," are by definition very poor ones, since they are not intended to explain the phenomena but to perpetuate them. Therefore, structural analysis is confronted with a strange paradox well known to the linguist, that is: the more obvious structural organization is, the more difficult it becomes to reach it because of the inaccurate conscious models lying across the path which leads to it.

From the point of view of the degree of consciousness, the anthropologist is confronted with two kinds of situations. He may have to construct a model from phenomena the systematic character of which has evoked no awareness on the part of the culture; this is the kind of simpler situation referred to by Boas as providing the easiest ground for anthropological research. Or else the anthropologist will be dealing on the one hand with raw phenomena and on the other with the models already constructed by the culture to interpret the former. Though it is likely that, for the reasons stated above, these models will prove unsatisfactory, it is by no means necessary that this should always be the case. As a matter of fact, many "primitive" cultures have built models of their marriage regulations which are much more to the point than models built by professional anthropologists. Thus one cannot dispense with studying a culture's "home-made" models for two reasons. First, these models might prove to be accurate or, at least, to provide some insight into the structure of the phenomena; after all, each culture has its own theoreticians whose contributions deserve the same attention as that which the anthropologist gives to colleagues. And, second, even if the models are biased or erroneous, the very bias and type of error are a part of the facts under study and probably rank among the most significant ones. But even when taking into consideration these culturally produced models, the anthropologist does not forget — as he has sometimes been accused of doing — that the cultural norms are not of themselves structures. Rather, they furnish an important contribution to an understanding of the structures, either as factual documents or as theoretical contributions similar to those of the anthropologist himself (pp. 281-282).
By these standards the present study is certainly Structuralist research. Asaṅga presents the raw phenomena (the agreed-upon facts about Buddhahood) together with a home-made model (the trikāya). I suggest that the trikāya be regarded as an implicit structure underlying the doctrines about Buddhahood. In the preceding section, following Asaṅga's categories wherever possible, his derivation of the trikāya was examined. In this section it will be carried one stage deeper to arrive at a structure sufficiently abstract to be credible to those outside the circle of believers.

In the course of this derivation, Lévi-Strauss's models will provide suggestions on how particular problems may be solved. At no time will a solution be adopted simply because he has chosen a similar one.

D. DEVELOPING THE MODEL

Lévi-Strauss's structural models exhibit two characteristics that suggest approaches to developing our own model. The most notable features are the sets of structures that can be transformed into one another according to certain rules. That is, the same structural elements are present in each structure of the set although they may take different names, forms, etc. These are definitely not the same "things" appearing in different ways. The Structuralist focusses on the patterns of relationships between them and so gains the ability to speak of one thing turning into another without becoming entangled in considerations of essence. It is this ability that recommends the Structuralist method for the study of Buddhist material. We can speak of the Nk and Sbk as transformations of one another without being forced to explain how this can occur. I shall refer to each situation, such as the Śrāvaka-Nk in the common world or the Bodhisattva-Sbk in the Buddhafield, as a "structure,"
to the movement whereby one changes into the other as a "transformation," and to the complete set of structures as a "model."

The second characteristic of a Structuralist model is its tendency to contain pairs of binary opposites mediated by an intervening term. These individual structures are organized into full models which display a similar symmetry.

With this characteristic in mind, the asymmetry of Figure 1, caused by the peculiar protuberance of preparatory non-conceptual awareness, suggests that the model may be incomplete. The most obvious possibility is that the **Svk** (which was set aside) is the missing complement to the preparatory non-conceptual awareness, and may be placed to the right of the **Sbk** to balance the preparatory awareness at the left. As one of the basic descriptions of the **Svk** has been "awareness" (**jñāna**), this must be its label on the baseline. However, **Asaṅga** gives no reason to regard it as the terminus of the continuum of non-conceptual awareness. Both the **Svk** and its awareness seem to be disconnected from the Buddhafield. This discontinuity will be indicated by a heavy broken line.

Although this is the only logical position for the **Svk**, its **jñāna** is clearly not the missing complement to the preparatory non-conceptual awareness. The latter is part of the continuum, the former is not. Furthermore, a true complement for the **Svk** is available as the **Pṛthagjana** or worldling dominated by nescience (**avidyā**) or conceptual awareness (**vijñāna**). Although he is not mentioned in the text, the theory of the **Pṛthagjana**, and the intention of the **Mahāyāna** to offer salvation to all, is clear. He will be located to the far left of the diagram, past the **Śrāvaka-Nk**. His segment of the baseline can be designated "conceptual awareness," **"vijñāna."** This position does not imply...
that he is the lower terminus of the awareness continuum. While his viññāna may appear to be the logical starting point for the developing non-conceptual awareness, the text does not state that there is a continuity between the two. This question will be taken up later.

The addition of these two situations has not removed the asymmetry arising from the preparatory non-conceptual awareness. It is now clear that this awareness must pertain to the individual standing between the states of Prthāgjana and Śrāvaka, i.e., one who has heard but not developed the Buddhist message. As Asaṅga gives no simple label for such an individual, I will call him the "Neophyte."

These additions give the model in Figure 2.

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Figure 2
More detail can be added. Asaṅga identifies the Buddha, aspirant, environment and interaction within each situation. They can be portrayed in a field centered upon whichever figure is felt, by the aspirant, to be the most important. The other one can be pictured at a certain distance from the center, representing the distance remaining between the aspirant and Buddhahood.

First, the Prthagjana occupies the central position and no Buddha is present. The Neophyte's situation is not described. The Śrāvaka occupies the center of his world, where he is approached by the Nk. The Sbk, occupying the center of the Buddhafield, is approached more closely by the aspirant as Bodhisattva. Asanga is ambiguous about whether the lone Svk is aspirant or Buddha. However, the pattern across the model suggests that the Svk is a fusion of both. The Buddha is absent from the Prthagjana's world, is closer to the Śrāvaka, and still closer to the Bodhisattva in the Buddhafield. It is reasonable to assume that the two merge in the final situation.

Note that, in this diagram, the transition from the world of the Śrāvaka-Nk to the Buddhafield is the abrupt turn-about that Asaṅga calls "reorientation." I suggest that we regard the model as symmetrical about this point. If it is, then the Buddhaland must be equivalent to the situations of Śrāvaka-Nk and Neophyte, and will contain all phases of the aspirant's interaction with the Sbk.

These additions give the model shown in Figure 3.
At this point each situation of the emerging portrait may be examined in more detail.

1. THE PRTHAGJANA

The Prthagjana (pure worldling), untouched by the Buddhist message, is discussed in the Abhidharma literature. His perceptions are dominated by nescience; they are conceptual (vijñāna), molded by the general schemata of interpretation (including those of space and time, see II:2-11) as well as more idiosyncratic prejudices. Therefore, he experiences his "self" as an object surrounded by other objects—both self and other generated by his reifying perceptions—a closed and frustrating world in which experience cannot lead to insight or improvement.
As the Prthagjana is an added logical category, it need not be an inhabited, or even habitable, category. Asanga may not have believed that any being could remain untouched by the Buddhist message. This question will be a key to later developments of the model.

2. THE NEOPHYTE

The discontinuity between Prthagjana and the rest of the diagram marks the precise point at which the Buddhist message is addressed to the Prthagjana. Buddhahood, or non-conceptual awareness, develops from the impression left by this seminal message (srutavasanabija). The message consists of the ideas contained in the text, including the moral rules, the prescribed meditation, and the appearance of the Nk with its thirty-two and eighty marks. Attending to it involves living according to the code, performing the meditation in order to develop the non-conceptual awareness, and awaiting a Buddha who has a specific appearance.

The gradual transition to the world in which the Nk has appeared appears in the model as movement along the continuum.

3. THE NIRMĀNAKĀYA-ŚRĀVAKA ENCOUNTER

As the preparatory non-conceptual awareness develops, the Neophyte's situation becomes that of the Śrāvaka or novice Bodhisattva. While the aspirant still occupies the central position, a Nk, bearing the marks of a Buddha, has entered the field. He proceeds through the traditional Buddha activities. His visible presence seems to be necessary for the Śrāvaka's maturation, but Asanga places no stress on personal interaction, except for
the fact that the Nk disciplines or teaches the Šrāvaka through pain.

The question of the relationship of the Nk to the other kāyas can now be raised. Sufficient emphasis has been placed on the impossibility of a "real" Buddha behind the Nk to make the advantages of a Structuralist model obvious. In such a model each situation may be transformed into another without gaining or losing elements, i.e., "For a given model there should be a possibility of ordering a series of transformations resulting in a group of models of the same type."

If this is applicable, the Nk would be a transformation of some element present, in different forms, in both the preceding (Neophyte) and following (Bodhisattva-Sbk) situations. This seems to be the case as the Nk and Sbk may be regarded as transformations of one another, as may the Neophyte, the Šrāvaka and the Bodhisattva. But surely there is no form of the Buddha present in the Neophyte's situation? I suggest that the Buddha is fully present in the form of the message or doctrine (dharma) internalized by the aspirant. When he moves to the Šrāvaka-Nk situation, there is no need to posit an external Buddha in addition to the developing message. The marks and acts of the Nk are supplied from the memorized descriptions. The presence of the Buddha, i.e., the fact that he is recognized, comes from the aspirant's preparatory non-conceptual awareness developed through meditation.

This solution, which requires no new or mysterious terms, explains the puzzling fact that the Nk facilitates the Šrāvaka's maturation into a Bodhisattva by the pain of the parinirvāna. If the Šrāvaka is a Neophyte who has gained both knowledge of Buddhahood and an openness of perception, he will perceive the Buddha image as he would any other: he will see it appearing, remaining and disappearing. The disappearance will cause pain as would that of any other
valued object. But the Śrāvaka will benefit from this painful experience by adopting the Mahāyāna practices,⁹ which will allow him to share the Buddha's company in a Buddhafiel.

Another way of applying this solution is to regard the Buddha as a singular "active" type of object. Attachment to the Buddha pains the aspirant, as does attachment to any transitory object. However, the Buddha is not a passive object. Since all aspects of its relationships, including the painful ones, have been reoriented into masteries, the Buddha can play an active role in the aspirant's perception. The pain arising from its disappearance is not grounded solely in the Śrāvaka's mentation, but is a stimulus whose locus is the interplay between Buddha and Śrāvaka.

4. REORIENTATION

The Śrāvaka develops his basic non-conceptual awareness in the presence of the Nk before entering the Sbk's Buddhafield. The entry to the Buddhafield is the reorientation by which domination of the aspirant by perceptions is replaced by a mastery of them. That is, the quietistic fundamental non-conceptual awareness which can circulate freely throughout the world.

5. THE SAMBHOGAKĀYA-BODHISATTVA ENCOUNTER

This is a mirror-image of the Nk-Śrāvaka encounter. The Buddha has moved to the central position and has changed from a plain (in the iconographic sense of lacking jewels, gold, robes, etc.) mahāpurusa form, to one which varies, according to the aspiration of the observer but which tends toward that of a bejewelled Sambhoga-Buddha.
The aspirant who was formerly a Śrāvaka (surely to be pictured as a pious monk) has now been transformed into a Bodhisattva and has exchanged places with the Buddha. Instead of sitting at the center awaiting the Nk, he approaches the Sbk who is seated at the center. The distance between the two has decreased.

The nature of the field has also altered. The pain-filled world of common objects has changed into a Buddhafield of pleasure-yielding jewels.

Most important, the teaching is now via pleasure rather than pain. Using the Buddhist pratītyasamutpāda scheme, we might say that the Nk teaches by means of old age-death while the Sbk, represented by a child, young man or Sambhoga Buddha, teaches by means of birth and life. Under these conditions, the joy "matures" the Bodhisattva by aiding the development of non-conceptual awareness.

6. THE SVABHĀVIKAKĀYA

The Svk appears as the antithesis of the Prthagjana. The former is pure Buddhahood; the latter is untouched by Buddhahood. The former is pure awareness (jñāna); the latter is conceptual awareness (vijñāna). They lie at opposite ends of the model but neither is a direct continuation of the central situations.

The discontinuity between Svk and the Buddhafield is a key to further development of the model. A revealing approach is the consideration of the Svk in each of its three aspects (result, awareness, and support for sovereignty).

As "result" it is the culmination of a life based upon an acceptance of the dharma and attendant practices. The initial taste of the dharma leads to an encounter with the Nk, to a closer encounter with the Sbk, and to eventual
identity with the Svāk. Thus, it appears to be the logical terminus of a "result" continuum.

As "support for sovereignty" and "awareness," the Svāk cannot be seen as a transformation of the central situations. In the first case, the discontinuity is obvious. A support for actions must be more than the eventual result of those actions. It must stand beneath or behind that which it supports. In the second case, the text outlines a process by which the preparatory non-conceptual awareness develops into the Śrāvaka's fundamental non-conceptual awareness and finally into the Bodhisattva's subsequent non-conceptual awareness. Asaṅga mentions no "super-subsequent" non-conceptual awareness that could pertain to the Svāk or be experienced separately. He merely matches "awareness" (jñāna) and Svāk.

7. THE FULL MODEL

The model of Figure 3, with Prthagjana at one end and Svāk at the other, is ambiguous. In some ways, it seems to be a map of personal progress toward enlightenment. In others, a truncated version of such a map (i.e., Neophyte-Śrāvaka-Bodhisattva) appears to be caught between the two end terms, which are disconnected from the facts of personal development.

I suggest that this ambiguity arises from the superposition of two basic ideas on the same axis. The first is the idea of a continuum of developing Buddhahood running from Neophyte, through Śrāvaka to Bodhisattva. The second is that of the general description of the trikāya doctrine as an encounter between Prthagjana and Buddha—an encounter which takes the form of the three central situations. These are closely related but separable.

As both ideas share the central situations, they may be better displayed
by turning the Prthagjana-Svk axis at right angles to the continuum. This yields a two-dimensional diagram in which the former terminal points will be on the vertical axis and the three central situations will be on the horizontal axis. As development is customarily associated with rising, the Svāk will be at the top of the diagram and the Prthagjana at the bottom. The central situations may be left in the same order as in Figure 3. This gives the model of Figure 4. It will be used throughout the remainder of this study.

The model now has two dimensions which, while they are on the same logical plane and share the same central situations, appear to portray quite different approaches to the data. These differences can be understood by considering the relationship of the upper and lower terms to the central situations.

The first question is that of the relationship of the Prthagjana to the rest of the model. In particular, how absolute is the discontinuity? Can the Prthagjana ever become a Srāvaka or a Bodhisattva? Most Buddhists or scholars would probably reply in the affirmative. However, the Mahāyānasamgraha contains no statement to that effect. The very term "Prthagjana" is not found; the text describes only the development of the Neophyte who has already heard the dharma.

Support for the notion that the Prthagjana is an empty category also comes from a previous line of reasoning. We have noted that the diagram of Figure 3 contains four situations: those of the Neophyte, the Sravaka, the Bodhisattva and the Svāk. Each of these contains an element that may be regarded as a transformation of the aspirant, and an element that may be regarded as a transformation of the Buddha. The fact that the Svāk situation contains only one element was explained by assuming that the Svāk is the fusion
Figure 4
of aspirant and Buddha. The first situation contains only the aspirant, the second and third both contain aspirant and Buddha, and the fourth contains the Svākhā, which may be either aspirant or Buddha.

However, the Prthāgjana is apart from the Neophyte. While the Neophyte encounters the Buddha in the form of the Buddhist dharma, the Prthāgjana lacks even that contact. Therefore, his situation cannot be a transformation of the others, and thus cannot be one of the set composing a Structuralist model.

Furthermore, if the Buddha develops from the dharma, it is difficult to understand how the utterly closed individual, who has not heard the message, could hear or develop it. Asaṅga gives no hint of another term that could become the message.

The final piece of evidence that the Prthāgjana cannot be another habitable category is the discussion in the Vījñānavāda literature, where he is known as an agotraka (one belonging to no "family" of practitioners), or an icchantika (one who is "cut off" from the possibility of enlightenment). Although these are not discussed in the Mahāyānasamgraha, the related literature10 shows that the Vījñānavādins abandoned the possibility of such a class of individuals.

Therefore, the vertical and horizontal dimensions represent alternate ways of regarding the Buddhology and must be explained differently. I propose that the vertical axis of the model be regarded as a dialectical relationship between two polar opposites, rather than as a continuum of related situations. The dialectical tension between them gives rise to the mediating situations portrayed on the horizontal axis. That is, "Man" and "Buddha" are the abstract terms whose interaction gives rise to the existential encounters portrayed on the horizontal axis.
The most valuable characteristic of this model is its openness to a variety of applications. While it shows the possible patterns of interaction, it does not specify the "true" nature of any element (aspirant, Buddha, or environment) and does not limit the fundamental nature of the process. Although epistemic terms were adopted as a heuristic analogy, they do not imply that the trikāya is really a description of perception.

The importance of the openness is apparent when we consider, for example, that only the most naïve reading of Asaṅga's account of the aspirant's encounter with Nk and Sbk would indicate that these are necessarily "historical" meetings with the Buddha, either in personal history (as Nk), or after the termination of same (as Sbk in the Buddhafielid). Not only do Buddha-figures appear in meditation and visions, but Prthagjana and Svī can also be regarded as the logical poles in the possibilities of an individual life, mind, moment of perception, or even lineage. While it is senseless to attribute extra-textual ideas to Asaṅga, it is necessary to realize that he has sketched an outline that can accept a variety of interpretations and is capable of organizing new ideas. I suggest that this theory has proven so enduring because it elucidates one of the major unconscious structures inherent in the Buddhist view of reality.

8. THE MODEL APPLIED

I will now reopen discussion of several of the most important questions encountered in the Mahāyānasamgraha. With guidance from Figure 4, we can improve and expand the former tentative answers.
a. Reorientation and Soteriological Progress

The text describes the possibilities open to the individual. Although those are mapped more clearly than are other topics, and we have examined the relevant passages, an application of the model of Figure 4 to the data reveals an important concept.

In Figure 3, the individual's progress was represented as a motion along a continuum on the horizontal axis. It began with the Neophyte, who is both enmeshed in the world and has some knowledge of the Buddhist dharma. He must choose whether to disregard the message or begin to develop it. Although Asaṅga has not stressed the element of choice, he certainly does not believe that the Buddha can force anyone to become enlightened.

When the Neophyte chooses to advance, he develops preparatory non-conceptual awareness and becomes a Śrāvaka. He encounters a Nk, begins to develop subsequent non-conceptual awareness, and moves into the Buddhafield, but does not continue to some final realm centered on the Svākh.

The point of reorientation is ambiguous in this model. While it appears to be an abrupt alteration, chapter IX describes a gradual process involving Neophyte, Śrāvaka, and Bodhisattva (IX:1-2). This is another ambiguity arising from the attempt to represent two ideas on the horizontal axis. In developing the one-dimensional diagram of Figure 3, reorientation was placed as a fixed point between the common world of Śrāvaka-Nk and the Buddhafield of the Bodhisattva-Svākh. The shortcomings of this diagram can be exposed by attempting to trace the aspirant's development. This must be represented by a point moving from left to right. However, as this point passes through the position of reorientation, we should expect it to reverse direction, never reaching the Buddhafield. The entire theory demands that it does reach the extreme right
of the diagram before moving back toward a new aspirant. Figure 3 cannot portray this.

In the two-dimensional model of Figure 4, the problem has been solved by moving soteriological progress to the vertical axis. The aspirant ascends from Prthagjana to Svka, but does so by means of the processes illustrated on the horizontal axis. He then reaches back to help others through this same process. The interplay of the aspirant's left-right motion and the Buddha's right-left motion constitutes the dynamics of the model.

The ambiguity in reorientation was caused by the fact that this concept belongs to the vertical rather than the horizontal axis. It appears in the latter only because it also marks the point of intersection of the two axes. Thus, when the vertical axis was eliminated, its only remaining point was the single point of intersection with the horizontal axis. If only the vertical axis is examined, reorientation is indicated by a point midway between Svka and Prthagjana. As the only represented position of the entire horizontal axis, it will stand for the entire process portrayed on that axis. That is, reorientation occurs throughout the situations of Neophyte, Sravaka and Bodhisattva.

I believe that this is one of the most useful insights arising from the new model. It justifies regarding the horizontal axis as a single, coherent portrait of the encounter between man and Buddha. This portrait is sufficiently general that it can reconcile diverse ideas about the achievement of enlightenment. It is especially promising as a framework within which to reconcile statements found in the "sudden versus gradual" polemic regarding the acquisition of enlightenment.
b. Svabhāvikakāya, Dharmakāya, and Support for the Rūpakēyas

The distinction between Svāk and Dk was explored in the preceding study of the Manāyañasamgraha. The more important question of the relationship of either of them to the Nk and Sbh was not answered. In the present section, I will review the concepts of Dk and Svāk in terms of the new model, and will show that this model can account for Asaṅga's concept of the supportive relationship between the Svāk and central kāyas.

We have found that Asaṅga uses Svāk and Dk to describe Buddhahood at different levels of generality. Svāk is very general, while Dk is detailed. He uses Svāk and Dk interchangeably when reifying his subject to "a Buddha." The choice of Svāk usually stresses the first aspect of the trikāya, the fact of Buddhahood, rather than either of the specific appearances. In order to discover further implications of their differences, the peculiar relationship of the Svāk to the central situations must be re-examined.

I have argued that Svāk as "result" is a logical transformation of the central situations, but, as "awareness" and "support for sovereignty," is simply the logical pole of a dialectic. That is, depending upon whether we are discussing individual progress or overall pattern, the Svāk may appear as a result as well as a goal. The latter idea has been discussed. As "result," the Svāk must be added to the set of habitable situations: the Neophyte's dharma; the Nk, the Sbh, and now, the Svāk. The area occupied by these four is indicated by the bold line in Figure 5.

I suggest that this area corresponds to the Dharmakāya. That is, it is portrayed as an inclusive category that contains the Svāk as one element. The value of this portrayal will be shown below.

It is tempting to create a perfectly symmetrical model by assuming that
Figure 5
the Dk is balanced by a complementary area (including Prthagjana, Neophyte, Srāvaka and Bodhisattva) representing "Sentient Being," the logical opposite of the Dk. However, the tenor of Asaṅga's reasoning throughout the text suggests that he believes in eventual salvation for all, and that those who have reached Buddhahood do not reverse their progress. Both ideas quickly became explicit dogma within the Vijñānâvāda tradition. This belief might translate into some asymmetry in the model. We must avoid eliminating such a possibility by imposing an arbitrary symmetry not supported by doctrine.

This point could be settled only by further research into the relation between icchantika and sattva in the Indian Vijñānâvâda literature.

The central unanswered question of this study is: How does the Svk or Dk support the Nk and Sbk? The above depiction of the distinction between Svk and Dk shows the Dk supporting the central two kāyas as the general category that contains them. This simple interpretation appears to explain all relevant passages of the text.

The question of how the Svk supports the Nk and Sbk may be approached from several directions. First, it has been simplified by the argument that the Svk cannot be a full transformation of the Nk and Sbk as, of the three concepts that define it, only "result" shows it to be continuous with the Nk and Sbk. When it is regarded as "awareness" or "support for sovereignty," it is not a continuation of them. Therefore, only the former must be explained.

We have noted several times that the difficulty arises from the fact that the Svk seems to reside at the far right of the diagram when regarded as "result" but occupies the top in all other cases. An acceptable explanation should encompass both.

I suggest that the key to such an explanation is the realization that the
Svk, as result, is equivalent to the aggregate of all kāyas on the horizontal axis: the dharma, Nk, and Sbk. The Svāk takes all of these forms but has no existence apart from them.

This interpretation agrees with that suggested previously for the concept "reorientation." If reorientation is the point of intersection of the axes, then the aspirant will encounter and acquire all of the kāyas as he ascends the vertical axis. The acquisition of the Nk and Sbk will then be equivalent to the attainment of the Svāk.

This section of the study has concentrated on the elements in the relationship between Prthagjana and Svāk, while ignoring the feeling-tone of that relationship. The model can also display the feeling-tone and, in doing so, display another aspect of the relationship between Svāk, Nk, and Sbk.

We have seen that the Nk inflicts pain upon, and the Svāk affords pleasure to, the aspirant. We have also noted the symmetry by which the Prthagjana stands in a similar relationship to the Sravaka and Bodhisattva as the Svāk stands to the Nk and Sbk. If an explanation can be found for the relationship of the Prthagjana to the former two, it is reasonable to examine the possibility that its converse will help us understand the way in which the Svāk can support both the painful and the pleasant actions of Nk and Sbk. Such an explanation does exist, and its inversion does appear to be useful.

The relevant doctrine is that of the "three poisons"—the idea that the Prthagjana is dominated by a triad of emotional reaction-patterns: an egocentric nescience (avidyā) or confusion (moha), a subsequent self-aggrandisement through attachment (rāga) to things believed to be desirable objects for consumption, and an other-depreciation through avoidance (dveṣa) of things seen as inherently painful or harmful.
This doctrine shows the same pattern as that displayed by the lower portion of Figure 4. The Prthagjana is the model of the individual dominated by avidyā. The Neophyte, dominated by avidyā, reifies the Buddha, of whom he has heard, into an external godlike "other" that may be the occasion for either painful abandonment (by the Nk) or pleasant presence (of the Sbk). Thus, the doctrine of the three poisons provides the pattern of support between the Prthagjana and the Śrāvaka and Bodhisattva.

An inversion of this doctrine can be applied to the upper portion of the model. Just as the Prthagjana is dominated by nescience, the Svēk is, or is dominated by, its opposite, "awareness" (jñāna). Just as the aspirant (as Śrāvaka) is pained by the loss of the Nk, so the Svēk—as Nk—exhibits fundamental non-conceptual awareness, the total absence of painful involvement (VIII:14). Just as the aspirant (as Bodhisattva) experiences pleasure in the presence of a Sbk in the Buddhafield, the Svēk—as Sbk—exhibits a subsequent non-conceptual awareness that can circulate in the world without being soiled. That is, the Bodhisattva goes to a closed situation surrounding the Buddha, while the Sbk expands this situation to encompass the world.

E. FINAL COMMENTS

In this concluding chapter, I have exposed the structure underlying the trikāya doctrine of the Mahāyāna-saṅgraha, and demonstrated that an abstract model of it can elucidate and harmonize the main features of the Buddhology. The study is complete.

The next stage in a continuing study will be an examination of the applicability of the model to related texts. Appendix B lists those to be examined first.
Figure 6
The immediate test of this model would be an attempt to describe the alternate Buddhology within this same text (II:33), the twenty-one gunas of the Buddha (see above, pp. 87-90). As Asaṅga has quoted II:33 from the Saṁdhinirmocanasūtra and kept it separate, it should be understood by means of the commentaries to that text (see below, Appendix B) rather than through those to the Mahāyānasāṅgraha. Such a test is too complex to undertake within the present study.

In addition to displaying the fundamental Vijnānavāda ideas about Buddhahood, this model can also serve as a framework within which the relation of any Buddhological idea to any other Vijnānavāda dogma may be explored. While a systematic treatment of the many possible combinations is impracticable, the application of the model to any problem will usually be obvious. I shall examine one, very superficially, to illustrate the possibilities of this method.

We have seen that Asaṅga refers to the reoriented Ālayavijñāna as both Mirror-like Awareness (X:5.5; see above, pp. 112-113), and as Dharmakāya (X:7.1; see above, pp. 125-126). This was explained by the supposition that, when Asaṅga needed a value-free term to designate the basis of perception, he used the former; when he needed a value-laden term for the container of tendencies to biased perception, he used the latter. This is not a totally satisfactory explanation, as the connection between the two concerns is merely implicit. When we reflect that they cannot be two ways of speaking of the same thing (the Ālayavijñāna is not a "thing"), this explanation seems even less satisfactory.

The Structuralist model provides a framework that can encompass both ideas. The two explanations contain three terms: Ālayavijñāna, Dharmakāya,
and "Mirror-like Awareness." Our model does not contain an explicit term for the alayavijñāna, but does contain terms for the other two. Figure 5 shows the Dk directly, and exhibits various types of "Awareness." The Dk is clearest: it is the category containing all of the Buddhakāyas. Therefore, the statement that the Dk is a reorientation of the alayavijñāna suggests that the latter is that portion of the diagram complementary to the Dk. That is, it is the area containing the Prthagjana, Neophyte, Śrāvaka and Bodhisattva. This area matches the description of the alayavijñāna as the container for (or "composed of") impure tendencies. It has been portrayed and labelled in Figure 6. Note that it is the area that was earlier (see above, p. 245) tentatively identified as representing "Sentient Being."

The relation of the final term, "Mirror-like Awareness" (ādarśajñāna), to the "Awareness" can be seen in the model. The short description in the text (X:5.5 U) appears to include ideas that belong to both Fundamental and Subsequent Non-conceptual Awareness—it is accurate, unhampered by time or space, non-conceptual and enjoys the images perceived by the Buddha. That is, it includes the awareness of both Nk and Sbk. If so, it is coextensive with the Dk, the category that contains both. With this identification, the problem has been solved. The alayavijñāna and Mirror-like Awareness are complementary, general categories. The former is the awareness that forms perceptions according to prejudices; the latter accurately reflects the perceptions. However, the enlightened awareness is not simply the ability to see things "as they are," but is the ability to mold a situation for the benefit of all. Therefore, it can also be called Dk. The two descriptions that caused the problem in the section can now be seen as special instances of the continuous/discontinuous problem that has been discussed at length above.
Finally, I wish to note that the Structuralist model is a useful tool for comparing the results of Western investigations into Buddhist ideas. Many of these are of limited value, simply because it is difficult to compare them to other studies. The wide variety of disciplines and approaches in use makes the derivation of a coherent portrait of any aspect of Buddhism nearly impossible. The Structuralist model provides a framework within which results from these diverse studies may be compared.

For example, while John Strong's recent articles on early devotional practices ("Gandhakuti: The Perfumed Chamber of the Buddha"; "The Transforming Gifts: An Analysis of Devotional Acts of Offering in Buddhist Avadāna Literature") obviously deal with similar materials, it is difficult to see them as different approaches to the same tradition. When we also include an article such as Roy C. Amore's "Giving and Harming: Buddhist Symbols of Good and Evil," which regards similar ideas as Buddhist Ethics to be approached through Ricoeur's phenomenology, it is difficult to believe that a common subject is under study. A broader picture that shows the position of each of these is necessary. Traditional Buddhist concepts, addressed to the believer, offer little help, as they were developed to reconcile differences of opinion within one tradition, not to reconcile hermeneutical categories from outside any Buddhist tradition.

The model of Figure 4 can contain all these studies as details of the symbolic lessening of the distance between aspirant and Buddha in the situation of Śrāvaka-Nk and Bodhisattva-Sbk. As such, they can easily be related to each other, and to any other studies of practices (involving Buddhhalands, stūpas, mandalas, worship, etc.) whereby early Buddhists attempted to approach their goal.
NOTES


2 See above, pp. 139-140. For a detailed discussion, see Ian G. Barbour, Myths, Models and Paradigms: A Comparative Study in Science and Religion (New York: Harper and Row, 1974).


4 This model appears in most of Eliade's works. The clearest statement is in The Sacred and the Profane (New York: Harper and Row, 1961).


6 Paul Ricoeur has developed this characterization. His description of Lévi-Strauss's work and of the latter's response is discussed in Philip Pettit, The Concept of Structuralism: A Critical Analysis (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1975).

7 Models based on pairs of binary opposites are found throughout the mature works of Lévi-Strauss. They are so basic to his approach that there is probably no single passage that may be taken as his standard explanation of the topic. A good collection of short essays on binary models in art, mythology, social structure and village geography, is found in Claude Lévi-Strauss, Structural Anthropology (New York: Basic Books, 1963). For a thorough development of one basic model in Amerindian culture, see his The Raw and the Cooked, and Honey and Ashes.

8 While the various early systems defined the prthagjana in slightly different ways, the term always refers to the deluded individual who has not started (or who has barely started) on the Buddhist path. Vasubandhu, in
Abhidharmakośa, ii: 9 b-d, quotes the Sakhyauttanikāya: "Celui à qui manquent complètement, à quelque degré que ce soit, tous ces cinq indriyas, la foi, etc., je le déclare homme du dehors, appartenant à la classe des Prthagjanas."

And again, at ii: 20c-d: "Le Prthagjana est appelé ignorant (bāla) parce qu'il n'a pas vu les vérités."

Although the early history of Buddhist practices is obscure, it is clear that practices and symbols derived from the parinirvāna and cremation (especially the stūpa symbol) have been central to the devotional path since very early times.


While this general theory is basic to Buddhist thought, the elements are called by different names (e.g., klesa, anusaya, and related compounds), and are listed as parts of different sets in almost every major text. A thorough account is found in Hōbōgin (s.v. "Bonno," pp. 121-134).

Asaṅga does not explain this idea in the Mahāyānasāṅgraha, but simply mentions the "snare (or 'explosion')" of the passions. However, it is implicit in the doctrine of the ālayavijñāna (I: 29-34) and the acceptance of the twelve-linked chain of causation.
APPENDIX A

• BIBLIOGRAPHY OF SECONDARY SOURCES


_____ Readings on Yogācāra Buddhism. Vārāṇasī: Centre of Advanced Study in Philosophy, Banaras Hindu University, 1971.


Hôbôgirin: *dictionnaire encyclopédique du Bouddhisme d’après les sources chinoises et japonaises.* Tokyo: Maison Franco-Japonais,


Ting Fu-pao. Fo-hsüeh ta-tzu-t'ien (Great Dictionary of Buddhism). Taipei: Fung Yu Wen Hua Ch'u Pan She, 1946.


APPENDIX B

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF SELECTED PRIMARY SOURCES
This bibliography contains the most important texts and translations for a study of the trikāya concept in the Indian Vijñānavāda. It includes those mentioned in the present study and those that would be most useful for an expanded study.

These are either Indic language texts that have been preserved in Tibetan and/or Chinese translations, or are Tibetan or Chinese commentaries. As indigenous scholars in both cultures soon elaborated and modified the doctrine, all texts that go beyond an accurate reflection of Indian ideas have been excluded. Very conservative criteria have been employed in order to obtain a reliable basis for future work.

With the exception of the three fundamental sūtras, the bibliography excludes texts that do not contain a coherent trikāya, and does not contain minor texts or texts containing only passing references to the trikāya.

The number accompanying the title of a Tibetan work is its number in the Tibetan Tripitaka Research Institute's reprint of the Peking tripiṭaka (also known as the Ōtani number). Those accompanying the titles of Chinese texts refer to the Taishō edition of the Chinese canon.

The chief studies on, and translations of, these texts in European languages have been noted. Modern Japanese work, apart from editions of texts, has not been included.

I. INDIAN TEXTS AND COMMENTARIES

A. SŪTRAS

The Vijñānavāda was formulated as an explanation of the new ideas appearing within the Buddhist tradition, especially in a few Mahāyāna sūtras. Although a study of the trikāya will be based upon the sāstras, it must not lose sight of the contents of the three extant and accessible sūtras. Although they do not contain a full trikāya, they are the ultimate authority from which it was derived.
1. Saṃdhiṇīrmoçanasūtra

The central and most basic sutra of the Viśiṃavāda tradition. The trikāya may be the only doctrinal idea not developed in it. Any study of the tradition must begin with this text. Sanskrit text lost.

a. Translations:

i. Tibetan

P. 774. 'phags-pa dgongs-pa nges-par 'grel-pa theg-pa chen-po'i mdo. Translator not recorded.

ii. Chinese

—T. 678 (vol. 16, pp. 714a-718a) 相續解脫地波羅蜜了義經

by Guṇabhadra (435-443 A.D.). This is a partial translation corresponding to chapter IX of the Tibetan. See also T. 679 for anonymous translation of chapter X.

—T. 675 深密解脫經 by Bodhiruci (ca. 514 A.D.). All ten chapters complete.

—T. 677 解深密經 by Paramārtha (557-569 A.D.). Partial; corresponds to first four chapters of Tibetan.

—T. 676 解深密經 by Hsuan-tsang (ca. 647 A.D.). In five chapters; corresponds to full ten chapters of Tibetan.

b. Commentaries

i. Sanskrit

Note: While all Viśiṃavāda sāstras are "commentaries" on this sutra, this list includes only direct commentaries on the text.

—Asaṅga's Āryasaṃdhinirmoçanabhāṣya.

Tibetan P. 5481: 'phags-pa dgongs-pa nges-par 'grel-pa'i rnam-par bshad-pa.

—(author unknown) Āryasaṃdhinirmoçanasūtrasāraṣṭryākhyānam.

Tibetan P. 5845: 'phags-pa dgongs-pa nges-par 'grel-pa'i mdo'i rnam-par bshad-pa.
—Jñānagarbha's Āryasaṃdhinirmocanaśūtra Āryamaitreyakevalaparivartabhāṣya.

Tibetan P. 5535: ’phags-pa dgongs-pa nges-par ’grel-pa'i mdo las ’phags-pa byams-pa'i le'u nyi tshe'i bshad-pa.

ii. Chinese

Lamotte (Saṃdhinirmocana, p. 11) mentions an Āryagambhirasāṃdhinirmocanasūtratīkā by Yüan-ts'e (元測). This does not seem to be in the Taishō, but a translation by Chos-sgrub is extant in Tibetan: P. 5517: ’phags-pa ágongs-pa zab-mo nges-par ’grel-pa'i mdo'i rgya-cher ’grel-pa. This would have been written ca. 683, when Yuentse resided at Ch'ang-an.

c. Western Language Translations

i. Étienne Lamotte. Saṃdhinirmocanaśūtra. Louvain: Bureaux de Recueil. Bibliothèque de l'Université, 1935. This, the sole French translation, is in three parts:
—preface
—a French translation based upon the Tibetan, Hsüan-tsang's Chinese, and Asaṅga's Āryasaṃdhinirmocanabhāṣya.


ii. —An English translation from the Tibetan by Brian Cutillo and Geshe Jampel Thardo will be published in an English Translation Series of Asaṅga's works (announced in Buddhist Text Information, The Centre for Advanced Studies in World Religions. #2, March 1975).

d. Western Language Studies

This sûtra has attracted little attention, as most philosophical studies have focussed on the voluminous śāstra literature. Aside from
brief passages in the standard surveys (e.g., Winternitz), I have been unable to find substantial material.

See also Bibliographie Bouddhique xxviii-xxxi (1961), pp. 167-168.

2. Laṅkāvatārasūtra

Of the three sūtras, the Laṅkāvatāra contains the doctrine nearest to the trikāya. Suzuki's study of the trikāya passages was introduced in chapter I of the present study. The Sanskrit text has been published:


a. Translations

i. Tibetan

—P. 775. 'phags-pa lang-kar gshegs-pa theg-pa'i mdo. The translator is traditionally regarded as Chos-grub (法成) who translated from Chinese to Tibetan during the 9th century.

ii. Chinese

—T. 670 楞伽阿跋多羅寶經 in 4 fasc. by Guṇabhadra (ca 443 A.D.). The shortest and most popular version. Probably the one used by Bodhidharma. It was translated into Tibetan by Chos-grub as: P. 776. 'phags-pa lang-kar gshegs-pa rin-po-che'i mdo las sangs-rgyas thams-cad-kyi gsung-gi snying-po zhes-bya-ba'i le'u.
—T. 671 入楞伽經 by Bodhirucci (ca. 513 A.D.).
—T. 672 大乘入楞伽經 by Sikṣānanda and others (ca. 700 A.D.).

b. Commentaries

No Sanskrit commentaries survive.

i. Chinese

—T. 1790 入楞伽心玄義 by Pa-ṃṣa (ca. 700 A.D.). This is a short, expository treatise—really a commentary on the Sikṣānanda translation.

The Dainihon zoku zōkyō (Great Japanese Supplement to the Canon). Kyōto: 1905-1912, fasc. 25-29 contain a total of fifteen commentaries.
on the Lankavatāra. These include two from the Tang, four from the Sung, and seven from the Ming dynasties.

c. Western Language Translations and Studies


These are workmanlike sources of information, although the "studies" are more like "sermons" on the sutra. Suzuki explains it in light of his own belief in Mahāyāna Buddhism.

3. Śrīmālādevīsimhanānandasaṅga

Although this early sutra does not contain a trikāya doctrine, it does establish the related notion of the tathāgatagarbha. Since a modern translation is available which includes an extensive study of the sutra, its history and translations, this text should be a reference for any study in Vijnānavāda theory.

a. Translation


B. ŚĀSTRAS

The śāstras, and scholarship on them, have been discussed earlier in this study. Those listed below are simply the most promising sources for a study.

4. Mahāyānasūtralamanḍāra

This verse summary of the Vijnānavāda must be understood through the
commentaries. The Buddhological passages have been incorporated into the
Mahāyānasamgraha.

Sanskrit text edited and translated by Sylvain Lévi. Mahāyāna-Sūtrā-
laṁkāra, 2 vols. Bibliothèque de l'Ecole des Hautes Etudes: Sciences Histo-

a. Translations

i. Tibetan
—P. 5521. theg-pa chen-po'i mdo-sde'i rgyan-gyi tshig le'ur byas-pa.
Translated by Śākyasimha and dPal-brtegs.

ii. Chinese
—T. 1604 大乘莊嚴經論 by Prabhakaramitra (ca. 630-633 A.D.)

b. Commentaries

i. Sanskrit
—Sūtrālaṁkāra-bhāṣya by Vasubandhu. Tibetan translation P. 5527.
Apparently no Chinese translation.

—Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṁkāra-tīkā by Asvabhāva. Tibetan translation:
P. 5530: theg-pa chen-po'i mdo-sde'i rgyan-gyi rgya-cher bshad-pa.
Apparently no Chinese translation.

—Sūtrālaṁkāra-vṛtti-bhāṣya by Sthiramati.
Tibetan translation P. 5531; mdo-sde rgyan-gyi 'grel bshad.
Apparently no Chinese translation.

c. Western Language Translations

See above, Sylvain Lévi.

Giuseppe Tucci (ed. and trans.). Mahāyānasūtrālaṁkāra. Serie
Orientale Roma, IX, 1956.

d. Western Language Studies

Gadjin M. Nagao. An Index to the Mahāyānasūtrālaṁkāra. Part 1:
5. **Mahāyānasāṅgraha** of Asaṅga. Sanskrit text lost.

   a. Translations

   i. Tibetan
   
   —P. 5549: theg-pa chen-po bsdus-pa.

   ii. Chinese
   
   —T. 1592: 蓄大乘論 by Buddhasānta (ca. 531 A.D.).
   —T. 1594: 蓄大乘論本 by Hsüan-tsang (ca. 648 A.D.).


   b. Commentaries

   i. **Mahāyānasāṅgrahabhāṣya** by Vasubandhu.


      Chinese translations: T. 1595 by Paramārtha (ca. 564 A.D.); T. 1596 by Dharmagupta (605-616 A.D.); T. 1597 by Hsüan-tsang (ca. 648-649 A.D.); all are titled 蓄大乘論釋.

   ii. **Mahāyānasāṅgrahopanibandhana** by Asvabhāva. Sanskrit text lost.

      Tibetan translation: P. 5552: theg-pa chen-po bsdus bshad sbyor.


   c. Western Language Translation


6. **Abhisamayālaṃkāra**

   This text appears to be *prajñāpāramitā* but is considered to be a *Vijñānavāda sāstra*. It contains a Buddhological section that promises to be a good source for data that could relate the *Prajñāpāramitā* understanding of the *Dk* to the one developed in this study.

a. Western Language Translations


7. *Ratnagotravibhāga* (Uttaratantra)


This will be one of the most important texts for an expanded study as, like the *Śrīmālādeviśītra*, it relates the *trikāya* to the concepts of *tathāgata-tagarbha* and *dharma-dhatu*. While these are not important in the *Mahāyāna-saṅgraha*, they became major features of the Indian Vijnānavāda.

a. Translations

i. Tibetan

—P. 5525: *theg-pa chen-po rgyud-bla-ma'i bstan-bcos*.
Translator: Blo-ldan shes-rab (ca. 11th century).

ii. Chinese

—T. 1611: *究乗一乘寶性論* by Ratnamati (ca. 511 A.D.).
—Modern publications: see above, Z. Nakamura.

b. Commentaries

i. Sanskrit

—*Ratnagotravibhāga vyākhyā*, by Asaṅga; see above, E. H. Johnston.

ii. Tibetan

—P. 5526: *theg-pa chen-po rgyud-bla-ma'i bstan-bcos rnam-par bshad-pa*.
Translator: Blo-ldan shes-rab.
c. Western Language Translations


d. Western Language Studies


C. MISCELLANEOUS TRIKĀYA TEXTS OF INDIAN ORIGIN

8. A number of short descriptions of the doctrine, whose original titles were probably Kāyatrayastotra or Trikāyastava, exist in Chinese or Tibetan translations. Little is known of these texts, but they should be incorporated into any further study.

a. Chinese Texts


—T. 1678: 佛三身讃 .

b. Tibetan Texts

—P. 949: 'phags-pa sku gsum shes-byā-ba theg-pa chan-po'i mdo (reconstructed as Ārya-kāyatraya-nāma-mahāyāna-sūtra). One folio. This text has been reprinted in note 2 to chapter 1 of the present study. Western Language Translation:


Part of this text is translated by La Vallée Poussin in his "Three Bodies of a Buddha," 1906 (pp. 455-456).

—P. 2016: sku gsum-la bstod-pa shes-by-a-ba'i rnam-par 'grel-pa (reconstructed by the editors as Kāyatra-ya-stotra-nāma-nivaraṇa).

This is a commentary to No. 2015. It was written by Nāgārjuna and revised by Śraddhākararavarm and Rin-chen bzang-po. Eight folios.

—P. 5290: sku gsum-la 'jug-pa'i sgo shes-by-a-ba'i bstan-bcos (reconstructed by the editors as Kāyatra-ya-avatāra-mukha-nāma-śāstra).

Written by Nāgemitra and translated by Prajñāvarma and Ye-shes sde. Fifteen folios.

—P. 5291: sku gsum-gyi 'grel-pa (reconstructed as Kāyatra-ya-vṛtti).

Written by Jñānacandra and translated by Prajñāvarma and Ye-shes sde. Seventy-two folios.

Texts 5290 and 5291 appear to contain a very thorough description of the developed trikāya doctrine. However, these texts have not been edited or studied. Very little is known about their authors. The editing and preliminary translation of these texts, to render them useful sources of data, would be a major undertaking. In the immediate future, a few general ideas could be obtained from them, and, in the long run, they may be the most important texts; but they are unlikely to be available as reliable sources for some time.

C. Sanskrit texts


This little text contains an extremely clear treatment of the relationship of the concept of reorientation to the trikāya in late Indian Buddhist thought.
II. CHINESE TEXTS AND COMMENTARIES

9. Suvarnaprabhāsottamasūtra

This is a popular and widely-studied sūtra. Early versions, including the surviving Sanskrit text, did not mention the trikāya. A separate chapter, which became one of the fundamental statements of the doctrine in the Far East, appears in I-Tsang's translation (late 7th century), and in the Tibetan translation from his Chinese by Chos-grub (9th century). This chapter was commented upon by many later Chinese writers.

The Dainihon zoku zōkyō (Great Japanese Supplement to the Canon), vols. 30-32, contains several commentaries. Hui-chao's line-by-line commentary appears to contain the most information on the trikāya doctrine.

Unlike most other texts, this one has been very carefully edited and translated. J. Nobel has published several versions. The one that would be the basis for any study of the trikāya chapter is his Suvarnaprabhāsottamasūtra. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1958. This contains a photo-reprint of I-Tsang's Chinese translation (T. 665: 金光明最勝王經), an edited and transliterated version of Chos-grub's translations, and a German translation.

10. Buddhabhūmisūtra

While the place of this sūtra within the development of Indian Buddhism is still unclear, it articulates a Buddhology that is very close to that of Asaṅga. It should be included in any expanded study. The sūtra, together with a commentary (vyākhyāna) by Śīlabhadra, was translated into Chinese by Hsüan-tsang (T. 680: 佛地經 and T. 1530: 佛地經解説), and into Tibetan by


11. Ch'eng Wei-Shih Lun

成唯識論. This is a summary of the Viśṇuavāda. It was composed by the pilgrim Hsüan-tsang and his disciple K'uei-chi after the former's return
to China in the mid-seventh century A.D. It is arranged as a commentary on Vasubandhu's Trimsika, and draws most of its interpretations from Sthiramati and Dharmapāla. It became the fundamental text for the Sino-Japanese heirs to the Vijñānavāda tradition.

While this text is probably closer in structure to the Mahāyānasamgraha than any other, and also ends with a Buddhology, it is properly the beginning of the Far Eastern traditions rather than a culmination of the Indian. The very fact that Hsüan-tsang, the translator of the Mahāyānasamgraha, preferred to arrange his general exposition of the tradition around the ambiguous verses of the Trimsika, rather than around the former text, indicates that he was developing a Chinese interpretation that required a fresh formulation.

a. Translations

There are no Tibetan translations and, of course, no Sanskrit text.

b. Commentaries

i. Principal T'ang commentaries:
   - T. 1830: 述記 by K'uei-chi 窮基. The major work.
   - T. 685: 義蕴 by Tao-i 道邑.
   - T. 686: 義演 by 如理.

ii. In addition, there are several less orthodox (to the dharmalaksana tradition) interpretations from followers of K'uei-chi's rival, the Korean-born Yuan-ts'e 圓測 (613-696):
   - T. 689: 古迹記 by 太賢.
   - T. 690: 太抄 (incomplete) by 靈泰.

c. Principal sub-commentaries to K'uei-chi's 述記

   - T. 1832: 丁義燈 by 惠沼 (d. 714), second patriarch of the sect.
   - T. 1833: 演秘 by 智周.

d. Western Language Translations