THE SCOPE OF AMBIGUITY IN THE YOGĀCĀRA THREE NATURES DOCTRINE

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ABSTRACT

In this paper I argue that the interpretive disagreement between the so-called pivotal and progressive interpretations of the Yogācāra Doctrine of the Three Natures (trisvabhāva) can be traced back to an indeterminacy with respect to the relationship between reality and mental construction in the Tattvārtha Chapter of the Bodhisattvabhūmi. The view that mental construction (vikalpa) is adventitious to reality (vastu) corresponds to the pivotal model, according to which the Perfected Nature simply names Dependent Nature stripped of the falsifying constructions that comprise the Imagined Nature. Conversely, to the extent that mental construction conditions reality, a gap opens up between the thing (vastu) serving as the basis of predication and the thing as such (vastu-mātra) that is unconditioned by mental construction. This latter view corresponds to a progressive model of the three natures, according to which a cessation of mental construction results in the cessation of the conditioned reality corresponding to the Dependent Nature. Inasmuch as this ambiguity is found at the very origins of the Three Natures doctrine, one cannot say that either of these interpretations, and not the other, represents a putative original or authentic intention of the doctrine.

In his 1991 book Consciousness Explained, the philosopher Daniel Dennett calls into question a number of commonsense intuitions that derive from the inveterate – and for Dennett, intellectually debilitating – tendency to think of mind and matter as separate realities. Among these implicitly dualistic truisms is the notion that the content of a verbal statement gives direct expression to the prior thought of its author. Against

1 Many thanks to Professors Nobuyoshi Yamabe (Waseda University) and Shigeki Moro (Hanazono University) for kindly suggesting works on the Three Natures in Japanese. Professor Yamabe graciously provided pdfs of his copies of Aramaki 1976a and 1976b. Thanks also to Luke Thompson for guiding me through the obscurities of Aramaki’s prose and for much else besides.
this intuition, Dennett suggests that the intentions that give rise to speech are often only vague and inchoate, becoming determinate and consciously held conceptions only subsequently, under the formative influence of the words that are uttered. He cites as an example of this phenomenon the well-known line attributed to Abraham Lincoln: “You can fool all of the people some of the time, and some of the people all of the time, but you cannot fool all of the people all of the time.” Noting the “scope of ambiguity” in Lincoln’s statement – it can be taken to assert either that there are some particularly gullible people who can be fooled all of the time or, alternatively, simply that on any given occasion there are bound to be some people, though not necessarily the same group of people fooled on other occasions, who will get taken in – Dennett suggests that Lincoln’s communicative intent may not have been determinate enough for him even to have been aware of the ambiguity. Perhaps, rather, the phrase “just sounded so good to him when he first formulated it that he never picked up on the ambiguity, and never had any prior communicative intention – except the intention to say something pithy and well cadenced on the general topic of fooling people” (Dennett 1991: 244).

Dennett’s remark serves as an appropriate introduction to the topic of this paper, the origins of the doctrine of the Three Natures, one of the doctrinal pillars of the Yogācāra school. Despite being the subject of interpretive disagreement, the Three Natures doctrine has been assumed to express a consistent and determinate meaning. Introductory presentations of Yogācāra invariably offer a unified and consistent interpretation of the Three Natures with only a passing mention, if that, of textual statements that are inconsistent with it (see, e.g., Gethin 1998: 246–247; Harvey 1990: 110–111; Williams 2009: 89–92). Even studies that acknowledge competing interpretations of the doctrine tend to assume that one of these represents the original intent of the doctrine, the other a later deviation. In this article I would like to challenge the assumption that a consistent and determinate conception precedes, and expresses itself through, the classification of the three natures. The origins of the doctrine, I suggest, can be traced back to the deeply aporetic

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2 See the discussion of Sponberg (1983) and Brennan (2018) below.
issue of the relation between reality and the concepts used to identify and express it. In the doctrine of the Three Natures, a number of disparate intuitions about the nature of reality and its relation to conception are structured according to a tripartite schema that derives from the stages in the Buddha’s dispensation, stages that are recapitulated in the bodhisattva’s path to awakening. This schematization has the effect of partially occluding the fundamental ambiguity lying at the heart of the doctrine. The two prevailing interpretations of the Three Natures, what Alan Sponberg dubbed the pivotal and progressive models, are each rooted in this ambiguity and represent interpretive efforts, neither fully successful, to resolve it. Neither can claim to represent a putative original or authentic intention of a doctrine whose formulation, like Lincoln’s quip, may have been guided more by aesthetic, mnemonic, and numerological considerations than by a fully worked-out philosophical conception of the nature of reality.

The pivotal and progressive models of the Three Natures

As just mentioned, Sponberg, in a seminal article, identified two distinct interpretations of the Three Natures doctrine, more specifically, of the relationships among its three members, the Imagined, the Dependent, and the Perfected (parikalpita, paratantra, parinispansa, respectively). According to the first of these interpretations, the pivotal, the Imagined and Perfected natures correspond to the deluded and enlightened perspectives, respectively, on the true nature of phenomena as dependently arisen. The dependently originated nature of phenomena, which can be cognized either through the falsifying reifications of language (the Imagined) or as it really is (the Perfected), corresponds to the Dependent Nature. In this schema, the Dependent represents the ontological ground of reality, and the Imagined and Perfected represent alternative ways in which this reality can be known (Sponberg 1983: 100–101). As Sponberg notes, the salient feature of the pivotal model – and, as we shall see

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3 Some formulations describe the three as “natures” (svabhāva), others – for example, those of the Saṃdhinirmocanasūtra and the Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra (on the latter text, see D’Amato 2005: 192) – as “characteristics” (lakṣaṇa).
presently, the fundamental difference between it and the progressive – is that there is no question of transcending the Dependent (Sponberg 1983: 101). The progressive model, by contrast, sees the Imagined, Dependent, and Perfected Natures as corresponding to successive stages in the bodhisattva’s path of spiritual development. As in the pivotal model, the Imagined Nature corresponds to the falsifying reifications through which ordinary, unenlightened people experience and understand reality. Phenomena are experienced as enduring, substantial entities. The Dependent Nature, again as in the pivotal model, corresponds to the world of ever-changing, dependently arisen phenomena. One attains a knowledge of the Dependent only by overcoming the inveterate habit of projecting the reifications onto phenomena, that is, one attains the second nature only by abandoning the first. In marked contrast to the pivotal model, however, the progressive model conceives the movement from the Dependent to the Perfected in similar terms: One attains the Perfected only by abandoning the Dependent. Central to the progressive model is the concept of suchness or thusness (tathatā), the unchanging nature of reality, which corresponds to the Perfected Nature. In contrast to dependently originated phenomena, suchness neither arises nor ceases (Takahashi 2001: 41; 2012: 90). To realize it, one must come to “see through” the ever-changing phenomena of the Dependent Nature, that is, to see these phenomena as somehow illusory (Sponberg 1983: 101–102).

Of these two interpretive models, the pivotal dominates the interpretation of the Three Natures doctrine in in contemporary scholarship, particularly in those accounts published in English (e.g., Boquist 1993; Williams 2009: 90–92; Nagao 1983; Keenan 1989: 160–165). Even Sponberg, who recognized the progressive as an authentic Yogācāra interpretation of the doctrine, went on to suggest that the pivotal model corresponds to the understanding of the Three Natures in classical Indian Yogācāra. He saw the progressive model as a later development that came into prominence in East Asian Yogācāra (1983: 99, 105, 112, and passim).4

4 Sponberg argues that this thesis of a development from the pivotal to the progressive resolves some of the ambiguities in K’uei-chi’s treatment of the three natures in his commentary on the Ch’eng-wei-shih-lun (Cheng weishi lun), the textual focus of Sponberg’s
This preference for the pivotal model is not surprising. It has the virtue of offering an account of the Three Natures doctrine that is philosophically coherent. Moreover, it aligns the Three Natures with an understanding of emptiness that has come to dominate Western accounts of Mahāyāna thought, one that takes its inspiration from Nāgārjuna’s statement, in the MMK, that what he calls emptiness is (nothing other than) Dependent Origination.\(^5\) In keeping with this understanding of emptiness, the Perfected Nature, on the pivotal model, simply represents the Dependent Nature as such, that is, as rightly seen. Or, as Boquist puts it, the Perfected Nature is the Dependent Nature minus the Imagined Nature (Boquist 1993: 48 and passim). Accordingly, the difference between the second and third natures becomes, as Nagao Gadjin puts it, “very subtle and delicate” (Nagao 1983: 14). Not only does the pivotal model have the ecumenical appeal of aligning one of the defining tenets of the Yogācāra school with the central insight of Nāgārjuna’s Mādhyamika, but its notion of the Dependent as the ontological foundation of enlightenment also aligns with the generally world-affirming sensibilities of (most) modern interpreters.\(^6\) By contrast, the progressive model’s implication that one needs to abandon the phenomenal world to attain a vision of the suchness of reality, rather like the “idealistic” interpretation of Yogācāra’s “representation only” doctrine, is alien to modern Western common sense.\(^7\) As a general comment, I would say that it is precisely these features of the pivotal – those that make it attractive to the modern interpreter – that should give us pause.

Apart from this general hermeneutical consideration, the hegemony of the pivotal model is suspect from a purely exegetical standpoint. On the basis of a careful consideration of the statements of the doctrine in several foundational Yogācāra-Vijñānavāda texts, Joy Cecile Brennan has recently argued, convincingly in my view, that the textual support for the pivotal model is far more tenuous than its proponents admit. What she

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\(^5\) MMK 24:18ab: \(yaḥ pratītyasamutpādaḥ, śūnyatāṃ tāṃ pracakṣmahe.\)
\(^6\) On the world-affirming orientation of modern interpreters of Buddhism, see McMahan 2008: ch. 8.
\(^7\) Cf. Schmithausen’s remark regarding the latter in Schmithausen 2005: 49.
finds in nearly all of the foundational texts that she surveys, rather, is a version of Sponberg’s progressive model – she prefers to call it the “path” model – which correlates the three natures with three fundamental activities comprising the path to awakening, namely, thoroughly knowing, abandoning, and directly realizing (parijñā, prahāṇa, and sākṣāt-kriyā, respectively). The latter triad hearkens back to the Dhammacakkappavattanasutta, which correlates the activities of thoroughly knowing, abandoning, and directly realizing with the first three Noble Truths. Thus, according to this schema, the Imagined Nature, like the truth of suffering, is to be thoroughly known; the Dependent Nature, in keeping with the truth of the arising of suffering, is to be abandoned, and the Perfected Nature, like the truth of the cessation of suffering, is to be directly realized (Brennan 2018: 623, 626, 628 and passim).8 The second of these correlations – of the Dependent Nature with the activity of abandonment – flatly contradicts the above-mentioned corollary of the pivotal model that, as Sponberg puts it, “there can be no question of rejecting the Dependent” (Sponberg 1983: 101). The pivotal model, although being incompatible with the path model in its pure form, nevertheless is able to establish a textual foothold, as it were, thanks to a later conceptual modification to this schema. Both the Mahāyānasamgraha and the sub-commentary on the Mahāyānasūtrālāṃkāra make a distinction between a pure and a defiled aspect of the Dependent Nature, and, furthermore, restrict the activity of abandonment to the latter. But, as Brennan observes, this restriction represents “an extreme minority view” in relation to the foundational Yogācāra texts she surveys (Brennan 2018: 633). She regards it, moreover, “as a conceptual innovation, not as a clarification or inference” (Brennan 2018: 632; see also Funahashi 1976: 153–154).

The textual evidence from the classical Yogācāra-Vijñānavāda works that Brennan marshals is persuasive in challenging the hegemony of the pivotal model. Below I will strengthen the case she makes for the progressive/path model by considering the influence of the Mahāyāna

8 Thus understood, the Three Natures represents a reformulation of the Buddhist path that incorporates the distinctively Mahāyāna insight into the emptiness of dharmas (Brennan 2018: 623, 645 and passim).
concept of the “forbearance based on an awareness of the non-arising of dharmas” (*anutpattika-dharma-kṣānti*) on the formation of the doctrine, particularly as reflected in the *Saṃdhinirmocanasūtra* (SNS) and the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*. This concept foregrounds the gap separating the Dependent and Perfected Natures, a gap whose virtual disappearance is the telltale mark of the pivotal model.

At the same time, however, I would like to qualify Brennan’s contention that the path theory represents an essential or intrinsic (Brennan 2018: 624, 637) feature of the Three Natures doctrine. Against the implication of this view that the pivotal theory represents a deviation, I will suggest that the earliest statements of the Three Natures are more ambiguous and polyvalent than I think she acknowledges. The main thesis of this article is that the conceptual developments from which the Three Natures theory originates can be traced back to an ambiguity inherent in the relation between mental construction and reality. The mapping of the three “path processes” of thoroughly knowing, abandoning, and directly realizing onto the Three Natures, accordingly, most likely came afterwards. I suspect that this mapping was a more or less ad hoc correlation in the Abhidharma spirit – the Four Noble Truths were used elsewhere to schematize other lists, even if less influentially. This is not to deny that the three path processes provided a compelling and influential interpretive framework for the Three Natures doctrine, only that the correlation was probably not the direct expression of a putative original purpose of the Three Natures (cf. Brennan 2018: 640).

As we shall see below, both interpretations can find support in statements found in the SNS, the earliest extant statement of the Three Natures doctrine. Later Yogācāra thinkers will develop more or less coherent

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9 This disagreement might come down to a difference in aim and methodology. Brennan characterizes her work as “conceptual rather than historical” (2018: 625, n. 6). She explicitly states that her aim is not to investigate the origins of the Three Natures doctrine (2018: 625, n. 6), precisely the topic of the present article.

10 For example, the *Jñānaprasthāna* of the Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma tradition correlates four formulaic expressions of false denial (*apavāda*) to the Four Noble Truths. See Takahashi 2013: 571–572. The Five-Vastu Fragment of the VinŚg relates the list of five vastūni to the Four Noble Truths (see Kramer 2005: 20, 148–149), although the correspondences are not one-to-one, e.g., *vikalpa* is included in all the Noble Truths except the third.
interpretations of the Three Natures as they integrate the Three Natures doctrine with other key tenets of mature Yogācāra-Vijñānavāda thought, in particular, the storehouse consciousness (ālayavijñāna) and the doctrine of “representation only” (vijñaptimātra). Tensions and ambiguities nevertheless remain. For example, as Mario D’Amato observes, there are statements in the Madhyāntavibhāga (MAV) that support both interpretations (D’Amato 2012: 17). While “most of the text’s claims tend to the pivotal model,”¹¹ the commentary on MAV 3.10a nevertheless speaks of “understanding and abandoning” the Dependent Nature, a statement that obviously supports Brennan’s path model (D’Amato 2012: 17–18).¹² A similar tension can be seen even in the Trisvabhāvanirdeśa (TSN), arguably one of the most systematic and philosophically developed statements of the Three Natures.¹³ The second and third verses of this short treatise describe the Imagined Nature as the appearance, the Dependent


¹² MAVBh on 3.10a, Nagao (1964: 41): parikalpitasya pariṇāme; paratantrasya pariņāme pariṇāme prāhāne ca; parinispānasya pariṇāme, prāpti-sākṣāt-karane ca – evam atra pariṇāme-prāhāne-sākṣātkarane mārgga-satya-vidyāvasthānam iti veditatavyaṃ. “The truth of the path is laid out in terms of thoroughly understanding, abandoning, and realizing – that is, thoroughly understanding the Imagined; thoroughly understanding and abandoning the Dependent; and thoroughly understanding, attaining, and directly realizing the Perfected” (tr. D’Amato 2012: 148, with slight modifications). Note the inclusion of “attaining” (prāpti) among the three path processes associated with the Perfected. Although it doesn’t add much in terms of meaning to the concept of direct realization, its addition preserves the symmetry of the increasing number of processes as one progresses through the natures without carrying over the second process, abandonment, to the Perfected.

¹³ Matthew Kapstein adduces reasons for questioning Vasubandhu’s authorship of this text and indeed its inclusion among the works of the classical phase of Yogācāra thought represented by the works of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu. Kapstein speculates that the TSN was the product of the movement of tantric Buddhism in the 11th century (2018: 26 and passim).
Nature as what appears, and the Perfected Nature as the non-existence of the appearance.\textsuperscript{14} Verses 20 and 21 declare the Perfected Nature to be “non-different” in character from the Dependent, and vice versa. These are all statements that favor the pivotal model over the progressive.\textsuperscript{15} Nevertheless, verses 31–32, in the context of a discussion of the conventional properties of the natures in accordance with different stages (v. 22), correlates the Three Natures to Brennan’s three path processes, namely, knowledge, abandonment, and attainment (\textit{parijña}, \textit{praḥaṇa}, and \textit{prāpti} = \textit{sākṣātkriyā}, respectively). Applying the three path processes to the famous image of the magic elephant, Vasubandhu (or whoever wrote the TSN) glosses, in verse 34, abandonment as “the disappearance of the appearance of the [elephant],” having earlier (v. 28) correlated the elephant’s appearance with the Dependent Nature (Brennan 2018: 635).\textsuperscript{16} Noting that both models can find support in the TSN, Matthew Kapstein argues that this treatise can be read “as an attempt to reconcile the pivotal and progressive models” (2018: 21). And yet, as evinced by scholarly disagreements over which of these models predominates in the text, tension and ambiguity between the two models remains in spite of the attempted reconciliation.\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{14} TSN 2–3; La Vallée Poussin 1933: 154: \textit{yat khyāti paratantro 'san, yathā khyāti sa kalpi tah / pratayādhīnavrtyatvat, kalpanāmātrabhāvavatah}. (2)

\textit{tasya khyātur yathākhyāṇam, yā sadāvidyamānatā / jñeyah sa pariniṣpannah, svabhāvo 'nanyathāvatah}. (3)

\textsuperscript{15} Noting that the text also declares the Imagined Nature to be non-different from the Perfected (v. 19), Jonathan Gold interprets the TSN’s understanding of the Three Natures as three mutually implicative perspectives on a single unified reality, a vision of perspectivalism that goes beyond the pivotal model, which sees only the Imagined Nature and the Perfected Nature as perspectives and the Dependent Nature as their ontological basis (2015: 299, n. 11). He remarks that “integrated model” or “crystalline model” would be a more appropriate designation for this interpretation than “pivotal model” (2015: 150; 299, n. 11). Kapstein (2018: 21) takes this discrepancy between the “integrated” view of the TSN and the classic pivotal model (as expressed in Vasubandhu’s \textit{Triṃśikā}) as one reason to doubt the traditional attribution of the TSN to Vasubandhu.

\textsuperscript{16} TSN, v. 34b: \textit{vigamaś ca tadākṛteh}. Cf. TSN v. 28b: \textit{paratantras tadākṛtiḥ}. Note the discrepancy between the identification of the Dependent Nature here in v. 28 with appearance and the identification of the Dependent Nature with “what appears” (\textit{yat khyāti}) in v. 2.

\textsuperscript{17} McNamara (2011: 8–10 and passim) and Brennan (2018: 635) read the TSN in terms of the progressive model; Gold (2015: 148–158 and passim), who reads the TSN as forming “an elegant coherent system” with Vasubandhu’s \textit{Triṃśikā}, reads it as consistent with
My aim in this article is not to defend the priority or authenticity of either of these models. Rather, it is to trace both models back to an ambiguity preserved in an earlier stage of Yogācāra thought before the Three Natures theory was fully integrated with the doctrines of the ālaya-vijñāna and representation only (vijñānaptimātra). Retrieving this earlier stage in the development of the Three Natures theory usefully foregrounds the hermeneutical gap between an earlier “abhidharmic” stage of Yogācāra thought when the formulation and correlation of lists predominated,18 on the one hand, and the later effort, beginning with the classic works of Asanga and Vasubandhu (and arguably extending to the interpretive work of contemporary scholars of Buddhist “philosophy”), to weave the various elements of Yogācāra thought into a comprehensive and coherent philosophical system. The later commentators were more like bricoleurs than engineers, to invoke Levi-Strauss’s famous distinction, in that they were not giving direct expression to a philosophical vision using conceptual elements designed expressly for that purpose, but rather were working over existing materials, namely, the abhidharmic lists, that were the products of a distinct intellectual culture or “style of thinking.” If my conjecture that the Three Natures doctrine has its roots in an abhidharmic style of thinking is correct, then it is hardly surprising that the doctrine would be under-determined with the pivotal model articulated in the latter text. Both McNamara and Gold, however, acknowledge the TSN passages supporting the other model. Gold insists that the verses supporting the progressive model articulate a “useful method of contemplation” that nevertheless remains subordinate to the pivotal model (2015: 299, n. 11). McNamara, for his part, argues that if one abandons the assumption that the TSN offers a perspective on the Three Natures consistent with the Triṃś, (a corollary to the traditional ascription of TSN to Vasubandhu), the TSN is more straightforwardly interpreted in terms of the progressive model (2011: 9–10). Brennan, whose discussion of the TSN is more abbreviated than either Gold or McNamara, nevertheless concedes that the TSN’s articulation of the three natures path theory is “indirect” (2018: 635).

18 Relevant here would be Florin Deleanu’s observation that the earliest stratum of the Yogācārabhūmi, the Maulyo bhūmayah, reflects, apart from the Bodhisattvabhūmi, “a traditional Śrāvakayānika outlook” (2006: 168, 181–182 and passim). And even the Bodhisattvabhūmi, moreover, typically grounds its characteristically Mahāyāna claims, the concept of emptiness in particular, in the traditional Śrāvakayāna framework of the earlier Śrāvakabhūmi (Deleanu 2006: 165–166 and passim).
respect to philosophical models like the pivotal or the progressive. In any case, the retrieval of an earlier stage of Yogācāra thought will disabuse us of the presumption that any single model of the Three Natures, whether the progressive, the pivotal, or some variant, represents a putative original intent of the list of Three Natures.

Two schemas in the Tattvārtha chapter of the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*

An important text to consider in investigating the origins of the Three Natures Doctrine is the Tattvārthapāṭala (TattvP) of the Bodhisattvabhūmi, the latter being one of the treatises comprising the massive, stratified compilation known as the Yogācārabhūmi. According to Lambert Schmithausen, the Bodhisattvabhūmi belongs to the earliest stratum or “Basic Section” (the *maulīyo bhūmayaḥ*) of the Yogācārabhūmi (Schmithausen 2017: 267–268). Like the other texts comprising this oldest stratum of the Yogācārabhūmi, the TattvP predates the formulation of three characteristic tenets of the Yogācāra school, namely, the storehouse consciousness (*ālayavijñāna*); mind or manifestation only (*citta-, vijñapti-mātra*); and finally, our topic, the Three Natures (Schmithausen 2017: 268). Although it does not contain an explicit statement of the Three Natures, however, it can nevertheless be seen as preserving

19 One of the anonymous *JIABS* reviewers drew my attention to the danger of using terms like “ambiguity” and “uncertainty” to describe the amenability of the Three Natures doctrine to multiple philosophical interpretations. Such language might be taken to imply an unintended lack of clarity on the part of early Yogācāra thinkers and thus a negative value judgment. I am grateful to this reviewer for suggesting a helpful distinction between ambiguity and under-determination, where the latter need not imply a lack of clarity. When I do use the term “ambiguity” in the pages that follow, it should not be taken to imply a negative value judgment.

20 For the argument that the Yogācārabhūmi is a compilation that was formed gradually over time, against the traditional view of the text as the single-authored work of Asaṅga, see Schmithausen 1968.

21 In his finer-grained hypothetical analysis of the stratification of the Yogācārabhūmi, Florin Deleanu argues for the priority of the Śrāvakabhūmi over the Bodhisattvabhūmi (2006: 155–157 and passim), the former representing the earliest stratum of the *Maulīyo bhūmayaḥ* and therefore of the Yogācārabhūmi. Deleanu presents evidence of the Bodhisattvabhūmi’s reliance on the teachings of the Śrāvakabhūmi (Deleanu 2006: 162–167, esp. 166–167).
a record of the process leading up to this central Yogācāra doctrine (Aramaki 1976b: 17; Takemura 1995: 54).

My working hypothesis is that the TattvP contains three distinct discourses that will later be combined to form the Three Natures doctrine as we know it. The first of these constituent discourses, as indicated by the term tattva in the treatise’s title, arguably forms the treatise’s chief preoccupation, namely, an analysis of the nature of reality. We might term this first discursive element the metaphysical or ontological. The second discourse, which I will call the soteriological, concerns the gno-seological stages in the bodhisattva’s path to Buddhahood; this second discourse forms the basis of Brennan’s path model. The third discourse concerns the stages of the Buddha’s dispensation, and I shall refer to it, fittingly enough, as the dispensational. It is correlated with a rough typology of individuals: the ordinary unenlightened person, the śrāvaka or pratyekabuddha who has realized the truths of the Buddha’s first dispensation, and, finally, the bodhisattva, who embodies the teachings of the Mahāyāna. The second and third of discourses – the soteriological and the dispensational – tend to be combined according to a kind of “ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny” principle: the provisional truths of the Hīnayāna represent preliminary stages through which the bodhisattva passes on his path to buddhahood. Nevertheless, the soteriological and the dispensational discourses correspond to distinct schemas. The schema pertaining to the Bodhisattva’s path is relatively fine-grained, traditionally analyzed into seventeen levels or bhūmis. The dispensational, by contrast, maps naturally onto a simple threefold schema – the conventional truths of everyday deluded existence (the null category, as it were); the provisional truths of the Buddha’s first, Hīnayāna dispensation; and, finally, the truths of the Mahāyāna. I hypothesize that the tripartite structure of the Three Natures doctrine derives from this third, dispensational discourse; what might be called its context of understanding derives from the second, the discourse of the path; and its specific content derives from the first, the discourse on ontology. Now this ontology, as I shall argue below, is marked by a fundamental ambiguity, an ambiguity, furthermore, that is partially concealed by the clarity of the tripartite schema deriving from the dispensational.
A central theme of the TattvP, perhaps the central theme, is that all dharmas have an inexpressible essence (sarvadhrmaṇān nirabhilāp-ya-svabhāvatā). This claim that all dharmas have a reality or essence, albeit one that lies beyond the reach of language and conception, distinguishes this text’s understanding of emptiness from the annihilationist claim that “absolutely everything is non-existent” (Willis 1979: 160; Dutt 1966: 31; Takahashi 2005: 98: sarveṇa sarvaṃ nāṣṭīti). Put differently, the concept of an inexpressible essence or the “thing as such” (vas- tu-mātra) represents the Middle Way between, on the one hand, taking the referents of words as existing essences (samāropa) and, on the other, denying words any foundation in reality whatsoever (apavāda) (Takemura 1995: 54: 13–16; Deleanu 2006: 166; Dutt 1966: 31; Takahashi 2005: 98; Willis 1979: 160). Underlying the distinction between the text’s middle position and the annihilationist extreme is a particular understanding of emptiness in terms of absence: to say that a phenomenon is empty of essence is like saying that something is not found in a certain place, that the place is empty of the sought-after thing. Thus emptiness is rightly understood when one recognizes that while that of which something is empty (yena hi śūnyaṃ) does not exist, that which is empty (yac ca śūnyam) does. The latter – what remains (avaśiṣṭam) – is none other than the basis or locus (āśraya) of the designations like form, and so on (Takemura 1995: 55). At one point the text states that conceptual construction (vikalpa) and the things (vastu) that are its basis mutually condition each other such that a previous vikalpa causes the present vastu and the present vastu, in turn, causes the next vikalpa. At the same time

22 This understanding of emptiness hearkens back to a pre-Mahāyāna view preserved in the Cūḷasuññatasutta in the Pali Canon (M.iii.147ff.). See Nagao 1978: 67–69; Takahashi 2012: 98–99; Deleanu 2006: 163.


24 Dutt 1966: 36, ll. 4–8; Takahashi 2005: 110, ll. 6–10: taccaitad dvayaṃ bhavati samāsataḥ vikalpaśca vikalpādhiṣṭhānam vikalpālambanaḥca vastu. taccaited ubhayam anādikālikam cāṇyonyahetukāra veditavyam. pūrvakovikalpe pratyutpattasvayam vikalpālambanāya vastunāḥ prādurbhāyā pratyutpānam punar vikalpālambanām vas- tuprādurbhātamanpratyutpattasya tadālambanasya [vikalpasva] prādurbhāvya hetuḥ. “And, briefly, this [process] consists of two [elements]: conception and the thing serving...
that it participates in this loop of mutual causation with *vikalpa*, the thing or *vastu* “exists in the ultimate reality with the inexpressible nature” (Takahashi 2001: 39) or possesses an inexpressible essence (Takahashi 2012: 97).

Takemura Makio identifies three “moments” (*keiki*, 契機) implicit in the TattvP’s analysis of reality, namely: (1) what is expressed by language; (2) the basis of linguistic expression; and (3) absolute reality, inexpressible suchness or *dharmatā* (Takemura 1995: 55). Takemura’s three moments can be correlated, respectively, to the terms used in the foregoing analysis, namely *vikalpa*, *vastu*, and the *vastu-mātra*. Takemura goes on to suggest that these three moments provide the model for the Three Natures schema of later Yogācāra; thus linguistic expression, its basis, and absolute reality correspond to the Imagined, Dependent, and Perfected Natures, respectively (Takemura 1995: 55–56). He concedes, however, that the distinction between the basis of linguistic expression and absolute reality is ambiguous and the tripartite schema, accordingly, uncertain (Takemura 1995: 57). To the extent that this distinction between the basis of linguistic expression and suchness is not made, the tripartite schema collapses into a dual contrast between the individual identities falsely attributed to things on the basis of their designations, on the one hand, and their underlying inexpressible suchness, on the other (Schmithausen 2014: 357). There are therefore two possible schemas for associating reality with conceptual construction: one that includes the three elements named above (linguistic expression, its basis, and absolute reality) and another that includes only *vikalpa* on the one side and its underlying inexpressible suchness, on the other. Schmithausen correlates these two schemas to the two halves of the text: the “two nature” schema is found in the first half; the more nuanced analysis, in which inexpressible suchness underlies a stratum of conceptually conditioned things (*vastu*), in the second (2014: 356–357). The tension between these two schemas turns on the ambiguity of the concept of the *vastu*, which at once

as the locus and basis of conception. These two are to be known as causing each other [in a sequence] without a temporal beginning. A previous conception is the cause for the arising of the presently existing thing forming the basis of conception; and that thing, which has arisen, is in turn the cause for the arising of the conception forming the basis of the [future thing].” Cf. Willis 1979: 169–170; Takahashi 2001: 40.
refers to the “thing” standing in a relationship of mutual causation with discursive thought (in the threefold schema) and the “thing as such” (vastu-mātra) that coincides with inexpressible suchness (in the twofold schema). To anticipate our discussion below, one could perhaps see the amenability of the Three Natures to two competing interpretations as ultimately rooted in this ambiguity of the TattvP’s concept of the vastu.\footnote{This tension between the vastu as conditioned by discursive thought and vastu-mātra as tathatā might reflect the same fundamental problematic underlying the dispute, analyzed in a seminal article of Frauwallner (1951), between two early 6th century Indian missionaries to China, Bodhiruci and Ratnamati. Their disagreement concerned the basis of knowledge, Bodhiruci maintaining that knowledge is based on the substratum consciousness (ālayavijñāna), Ratnamati that it is based on tathātā. A generation or two later this disagreement will come to a head in the split between the schools of Xuanzang and Paramārtha, the latter having refined Ratnamati’s position with the concept of the unde-filed consciousness (amalavijñāna) (Frauwallner 1951: 148–149). Frauwallner suggested that this intra-Yogācāra dispute reflects a broader problematic in Indian philosophy, namely, an antimony between, on the one hand, highest reality (whether the Vedāntic brahman, the Sāṃkhyan puruṣa, or the Buddhist dharmadhātu), conceived as mental (non-physical) but as eternal and immutable, and, on the other, knowledge, which, as a mental process, is necessarily mutable (Frauwallner 1951: 149–152 and passim; cf. Radich 2016: 253–255). The tension enshrined within the Three Natures doctrine thus might be placed in the wider context of this problematic described by Frauwallner. I am grateful to one of the anonymous reviewers of this article for suggesting the relevance of Frauwallner’s analysis.} That is, the pivotal theory could be seen as corresponding to the position that the vastu as the locus of designation coincides with the vastu-mātra, such that the latter is simply the former stripped of its predicates, predicates which are ultimately adventitious to it. The progressive theory, by contrast, would correspond to the position that there is a gap between the vastu as the locus of designation and the vastu-mātra: to the extent that the former not only conditions, but is also conditioned by, conceptual construction, this first vastu must in some sense be negated or superseded in order to realize the second.\footnote{Ikeda Michihiro, in the context of a critique of the views of Hotori Rishō, asserts that the TattvP’s concept of vastu is incompatible with Hotori’s concept of the destruction or nullification of the Dependent Nature (Ikeda 1996: 10). Ikeda’s position seems to be premised on the view that the inexpressible vastu of the TattvP, on the one hand, and the nimitta identified with the Dependent Nature by the VinŚg, on the other, cannot be conceived as completely different realities (Ikeda 1996: 10), such that the destruction of the latter would entail the destruction of the former. Ikeda seems to be assuming what I have called the two-member schema of the TattvP’s ontology. Ironically, the same assumption...}
Forbearance based on the awareness of the non-arising of dharmas

I have suggested that the interpretive conflict between Sponberg’s pivotal and progressive models can ultimately be traced back to a basic ambiguity in the TattvP’s ontology. What I would like to argue now is that the correlation and integration of the text’s analysis of the levels of reality with the dispensational schema mentioned above – namely, that of the conventional truth of the deluded, the teachings of the Buddha’s first dispensation, and those of his Mahāyāna dispensation – will have the effect of widening the gap between the second and third levels of reality, that of the vastu as the basis of predication and that of the vastu-mātra coinciding with absolute suchness.

A slightly more elaborate version of the dispensational schema – with four terms instead of three – is found at the very beginning of the TattvP. The text distinguishes between the types of knowledge corresponding to four groups of people, (1) ordinary beings, (2) philosophers/logicians, (3) śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas, and (4) buddhas and bodhisattvas. The relevant categories for the present discussion are the third and fourth. The knowledge of śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas consists of the central truths of the Buddha’s first dispensation, namely: the Four Noble Truths, No-Self (i.e., that there is no person apart from the aggregates), and Dependent Origination (Dutt 1966: 26, ll. 3–7; Takahashi 2005: 87, ll. 1–6; cf. Willis 1979: 151). The truths apprehended by the fourth group – buddhas and bodhisattvas – are the selflessness of dharmas, the inexpressible nature of dharmas, and finally suchness (tathatā), understood as the sameness of the essence of verbal designation and what is known non-discursively (prajñaptivādasvabhāva-nirvikalpajñeya-sama) (Dutt 1966: 26, ll. 11–14; Takahashi 2005: 87–88, ll. 10–1; Willis 1979: 151–152).

At the heart of this contrast between the respective cognitions of the śrāvaka and the bodhisattva is the familiar Mahāyāna understanding of its teaching regarding the selflessness of all phenomena (dharma-nairātmya) as at once an extension and deepening of the selflessness of

is evident in Hotori’s (1983: 230) remark that the understanding of the vastu in terms of the Dependent Nature – in the context of the SNS’s comparison of conditioned phenomena to the objects conjured up by a magician from grass, leaves, and wood, etc. (SNS 1.4, Lamotte 1935: 170–171) – represents a departure from its original meaning.
persons (pudgala-nairātmya) taught by the Hīnayāna schools (see, e.g., Lopez 1988). The Tattvārtha Chapter’s three-level analysis of reality, described above, nicely accommodates the Mahāyāna understanding of dharma-nairātmya as an extension of pudgala-nairātmya: the relation between the person and aggregates is extended or transposed to the relation between the dharmas – a class that of course includes the five aggregates – and reality as such (or the thing in itself – vastu-mātra). Just as the person is manifest only if the aggregates are present, so too do the dharmas appear only if this vastu is present (Takahashi 2012: 97). One could perhaps argue, then, that the contrast between the selflessness of persons and the selflessness of dharmas – that is, between the doctrines of No-self and emptiness – is implicit in the TattvP’s three-level analysis of reality. Intriguingly, there is a text from the Sautrāntika tradition, the Tattvasiddhi, which makes such a correlation more or less explicit. In what might appear to be an early precursor of the Three Natures Doctrine, the Tattvasiddhi distinguishes three types of mind: the mind of provisional designations (仮名心), the dharma-mind (法心), and the emptiness mind (空心) (Funahashi 1976: 151). The “provisional designations” of the first of these refers to entities like the self that are the products of misrecognition: ordinary people apprehend the aggregates as self – under the alias, as it were, of the self (Funahashi 1976: 151; Takemura 1995: 53). The term “dharma” in the Tattvasiddhi’s second term refers to realities like the five aggregates that exist relative to the provisional designations. Finally, the “emptiness” of the third term refers to what one sees (or what remains) when the two previous categories are deconstructed and sublated: when persons or beings are deconstructed such that there is a “not seeing” of the person when one apprehends the aggregates, that is the emptiness of the provisional designations; when the dharmas are deconstructed, that is the emptiness of dharmas (Funahashi 1976: 152–153; Takemura 1995: 53). As Funahashi Naoya argues, the first of these, the extinguishing or sublation of the mind of provisional designations, corresponds to the selflessness of persons (pudgalanairātmya), the second, the extinguishing of the dharma mind, to the selflessness of dharmas (dharma-nairātmya) (Funahashi 1976: 153).27

27 Somewhat confusingly, the text correlates the “emptiness of provisional designations” with the “view of emptiness” (空観) and the “emptiness of dharmas” with the
Having linked the sublations of the mind of provisional designations and the dharma mind to the selflessness of persons and of dharmas, respectively, Funahashi goes on to draw a parallel between the sublation of the first two “minds” in the *Tattvasiddhi* and the non-nature of the Imagined and Dependent Characteristics of the SNS, respectively (Funahashi 1976: 154). The parallel presupposes an understanding of the Three Natures doctrine in line with the progressive model, inasmuch as the sublation of dharma mind by the emptiness mind implies the sublation of the Dependent Nature by the Perfected Nature. When we come to the third term of the parallel, the emptiness mind/Perfected Nature, however, the analogy breaks down, as the emptiness mind of the *Tattvasiddhi* is to be sublated – this Funahashi explains as a reified concept of emptiness giving way to true emptiness – whereas the Perfected Nature is final (Funahashi 1976: 154). At any rate, because of the obscurity of the circumstances surrounding the *Tattvasiddhi*, a text that survives only in Chinese translation, it is not possible to determine the extent of its influence, if any, on Yogācāra thought (Funahashi 1976: 155; Takemura 1995: 54).

As this brief exposition of Funahashi’s argument shows, what links the three minds of the *Tattvasiddhi* and the Three Natures of Yogācāra is the “dispensational” contrast between the selflessness of persons and the selflessness of dharmas. Understood in the context of this parallel, the selflessness of dharmas is understood as a “not-seeing” of dharmas in emptiness analogous to the “not-seeing” of the person in the aggregates. Now even if the *Tattvasiddhi*’s schema of the three minds did not have a direct influence on the Three Natures doctrine, the idea lying at the basis of this parallel, namely, a “progressive” understanding of the two kinds of selflessness, quite plausibly did. Of course, dharmānairātmya does not necessarily imply the sublation of the Dependent Nature by the Perfected; to see dharmas as selfless (or empty) can simply mean that one sees them as dependently originated. There is, however, an early Mahāyāna doctrine allied with the dharmānairātmya that gives direct expression to the idea that Dependent Origination does not represent the final truth of reality. This is what as known as “forbearance

“view of no self” (無我観), the opposite of what one might expect (Funahashi 1976: 153; Takemura 1995: 53).
based on [an awareness of] the non-arising of phenomena” (anuttapatti-dharma-kṣānti; 無生法忍), a teaching forming an integral part of the vision of emptiness expressed in the Prajñāpāramitā literature. 28

This Mahāyāna doctrine figures prominently in Aramaki Noritoshi’s account of the formation of the Three Natures doctrine. Specifically, it represents one of the two principal sources that Aramaki identifies for the doctrine, the other being the tradition of spiritual practice (yogācāra) carried forward from primitive Buddhism (Aramaki 1976a: 20; 1976b: 31). Both of these sources are brought together in the Bodhisattvabhūmi. While the forbearance based on an awareness of the non-arising of phenomena comes directly from the Prajñāpāramitā sūtras, the second source, the tradition of spiritual practice, comes by way of the Ten Bhūmi Sūtra (Daśabhūmikasūtra). According to the latter text, the forbearance based on an awareness of the non-arising of phenomena takes place after attaining the sixth stage or bhūmi on the bodhisattva path (Aramaki 1976a: 33). 29 Its attainment marks a decisive break with the mode of practice leading up to that point. It is compared to waking up from a dream in which one was on the verge of drowning in a large torrent, whereupon the torrent, together with the effort entailed in surviving it, evanesces; or, after having lugged a boat across land to get it to the water’s edge, having it catch the wind and sail off across the water (Aramaki 1976a: 33; Cleary 1986: 77, 79).

In the Prajñāpāramitā sūtras, the forbearance teaching is based on an acute awareness of the extent to which phenomena are constituted by the ephemeral and insubstantial words that manifest them. When the advanced bodhisattva comes to realize that every phenomenon is only a name, that it enters into consciousness only by way of a fleeting word, (s)he realizes that phenomena, like the images seen in a dream, are not the kind of things that arise and cease (Aramaki 1976a: 31–32). Or, in

28 Prima facie, the notion of forbearance or patience (kṣānti) with respect to the non-arising of dharmas is opaque. It begins to make sense, however, when one recognizes that the realization of the non-arising of dharmas was thought to occasion fear (Buescher 2008: 166, n. 4).

29 Cf. Aramaki 1968: 34, n. 9 (citing the Daśabhūmikasūtra): bodhisattvah ... ṣaṣṭhīṃ bodhisattvabhūmim avatārati / sa daśabhū śhīr dharmasamanābhir avatārati / ... yaduta sarvadharmānimittasamatayā ca ... sarvadharmānuitpādasamatayā ca ...
the more succinct formulation of the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā Pāramitā*, “For something that is of the nature of a dream, there is no arising or ceasing” (Aramaki 1976a: 32).

The forbearance based on the awareness of the non-arising of dhammas is implicit in the contrast, found at the beginning of the TattvāP, between the respective knowledges of the śrāvaka and the bodhisattva. As we saw above, the text mentions the dependently originated nature of all conditioned states alongside *skandhamātravāda* as the content of the śrāvaka’s knowledge of reality, knowledge that, by implication, is superseded by the bodhisattva’s superior insight. An insight into the non-arising of dhammas would be precisely the kind of knowledge that deepens and supersedes Dependent Origination in much the same way that the selflessness of dhammas (which is mentioned here as one of the truths realized by buddhas and bodhisattvas) deepens and supersedes the selflessness of persons. And while the forbearance based on the awareness of the non-arising of dhammas isn’t explicitly mentioned here, it does appear later in the fourth and final section of the treatise in the context of a discussion of the “four investigations” (*catarah prāyaścītaḥ*) and the corresponding “four cognitions of things as they really are” (*catvāri yathābhūta-paṇṇānāni*), a cluster of meditative practices and corresponding cognitive attainments that belongs to the advanced stages of the bodhisattva path (Deleanu 2013: 894). The two lists are rather scholastic, and I refrain from giving a thorough exposition of them here so as to avoid bogging down the present discussion with irrelevant detail. Suffice it to say that they incorporate the distinctive ontology of the Bodhisattva-bhūmi, particularly its signature teaching of the inexpressible thing in itself (*vastu-mātra*) – in the first investigation the bodhisattva apprehends the name as a mere name (*nāma-mātra*); in the second, the thing (*vastu*) as the thing-in-itself (*vastu-mātra*) (Dutt 1966: 36–37; Takahashi 2005: 112; Willis 1979: 171; Deleanu 2013: 894, n. 31) – and they yield an insight into the nonsubstantial nature of dependently arisen phenomena (specifically, in the third of the four cognitions of things as they really are) (Dutt 1966: 37, ll. 8–10; Takahashi 2005: 113, ll. 4–6; cf. Willis 1979: 172). This insight in turn forms the basis of an awareness that things are not generated, that is, an awareness of the non-arising of dhammas (Dutt 1966: 37–38, ll. 25–1; Takahashi 2005: 114, ll. 10–11; Willis
Central to the TattvP’s understanding of the non-arising of phenomena is its performative nature. That is, to attain (or enter into) a state of samādhi or nonconceptual knowledge (nirvikalpaka-jñāna) is to put an end to precisely those conceptions (vikalpa) which, as we saw above, give rise to the things serving as the basis for future conceptions. Or, as the text itself puts it,

The forbearance based on an awareness of the non-arising of dharmas, understood in its performative dimension, supports an interpretation of the Three Natures doctrine in terms of the progressive model: to realize the Perfected Nature is to curtail the mental activity that causes the arising of phenomena. The Dependent Nature, the implied counterpart of the arising of suffering in the Four Noble Truths, is not simply known and appreciated but is in fact abandoned.

Connecting the TattvP’s analysis of reality with the three natures of the SNS

As mentioned above, the Three Natures doctrine is not found in the TattvP, even if the basic conceptual ingredients to the doctrine are. Not coincidentally, the text’s analysis of the levels of reality is not integrated with the tripartite dispensational schema. An integration of what I have been calling the ontological, soteriological, and dispositional discourses

in the Three Natures doctrine can be found in what can be regarded as the prototypical statement of the Three Natures doctrine, that of the *Saṃdhinirmocanasūtra* (SNS) (Takemura 1995: 72).

As scholars like Aramaki, Buescher, Schmithausen, and Takemura have argued, the statement of the Three Natures doctrine in SNS, Chapter VI, along with the discussion what Boquist calls its “inverted counterpart,” the three “naturelessnesses” in SNS VII, can be regarded as a development of the analysis of reality found in the TattvP (Aramaki 1976b: 17; Buescher 2008: 162 and passim; Schmithausen 2014: 356; Takemura 1995: 54–57). The connection between the Three Characteristics of the SNS and the ontology of the vastu in the TattvP is not immediately obvious, however, owing to the fact that the characteristic concepts of the latter – specifically, vastu, vastu-mātra, and vikalpa – are not found in the definitions of the Imagined, Dependent, and Perfected Characteristics in SNS VI. We can, however, establish a link between the analysis of reality in the TattvP and the Three Characteristics of the SNS indirectly, first, by examining the former in light of the doctrine the Five Vastus set forth in the *Viniścayasaṃgrahaṇī* (VinSg) section of the *Yogācārabhūmi*, and, second, by way of a parallel with the Three Natures found in the “Maitreya’s Questions” chapter of the *Prajñāpāramitā in 25,000 lines* (MQ). Both the Five-Vastu fragment of the VinSg and the MQ likely postdate the analysis of the Three Characteristics in the SNS, so I am (obviously) not claiming that these texts themselves represent a historical “missing link” between the TattvP and the SNS. Nevertheless, I would like to suggest, closely following the analysis of Takahashi Koichi, that the theory of the Three Characteristics in the SNS presupposes the concepts of nimitta, nāma, vikalpa, and tathatā, technical terms which were later systematized in the Five-Vastu theory of the VinSg (Takahashi 2005: 58–59). So the Five-Vastu fragment of the VinSg and

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31 On the chronology of the VinSg (itself a heterogeneous and stratified text) relative to the other books of the *Yogācārabhūmi* and the SNS, see, e.g., Deleanu 2006: 155, 178–183; Kramer 2005: 52–60. The section of the VinSg that contains the Five-Vastu fragment, the *Bodhisattvabhūmiviniścaya*, cites nearly the entire text of the SNS, so we can be certain that the final redaction of the former, and probably the core content as well, postdates the latter. As for the chronology of the MQ relative to the SNS, see Deleanu 2006: 157, n. 157; Takemura 1995: 52.
the MQ, although themselves later than the SNS, provide indirect evidence for a stage of Yogācāra thought leading from the thought of the TattvP to the Three Natures (Takahashi 2005: 60). In this section I shall discuss the Five-Vastu fragment of the VinSg and the MQ in turn.

The Five-Vastu fragment of the VinSg presents the Five Vastus as a prerequisite to understanding what is meant by reality (tattvārtha) in the Bodhisattvabhūmi. We can perhaps regard the list of Five Vastus – nimitta, nāma, vikalpa, tathatā, and samyagjñāna – as an attempt, if not to resolve, at least to order and name the ambiguities in the TattvP’s analysis of reality. In particular, the two sides of the latter’s concept of the vastu, namely, the vastu as the basis of linguistic expression and the vastu as the inexpressible reality coinciding with absolute suchness, correspond, respectively, to nimitta and the tathatā in the list of Five Vastus (Takahashi 2012: 90; 2001: 39–40; Kramer 2005: 54). In other words, nimitta is the vastu that becomes the basis of linguistic expression, tathatā the vastu (= vastu-mātra) that does not (Takahashi 2005: 226). Moreover, two other vastus on this list, nāma and vikalpa, can be understood as corresponding to different perspectives on the somewhat ambiguous relation between language and reality, to be specific, whether conception and language are adventitious to reality or, alternatively, causally grounded in reality. The vikalpa-vastu would appear to represent the causal side of this relation – recall that in the TattvP, vikalpa and vastu (= nimitta) stand in a relation of reciprocal causation (Takahashi 2012: 90; Kramer 2005: 37–38). Nāma, by contrast, suggests the adventitious aspect of this relation. This way of understanding the relationship between nāma and vikalpa is suggested by fact that the VinSg defines nimitta as the basis (padasthāna) of designation (i.e., nāma) while elsewhere describing nimitta as the object (gocara) of vikalpa. The intentional

relation that *vikalpa* has to its referent (*nimitta*) suggests a more intimate, indeed constitutive, relation than the purely extrinsic causal relation that the *nimitta-vastu* has to verbal designation (*nāma*).\(^{34}\)

Following Takahashi, we can then correlate the Three Characteristics of the SNS with three of the *vastus*: *nāma* with the Imagined Characteristic, *nimitta* with the Dependent, and *tathatā* with the Perfected (Takahashi 2006: 88–89). The first and third of these correlations are fairly straightforward and unproblematic: The SNS defines the Imagined Characteristic in terms of the names and conventions (*nāma* and *saṃketa*) by which essence and distinction (*svabhāva* and *viśeṣa*) are ascribed to phenomena (Lamotte 1934: 297, 300; cf. Boquist 1993: 31). And it identifies the Perfected Characteristic with the true nature of phenomena (*dharmānāṃ tathatā*) (Lamotte 1934: 297, 301). The connection between the Dependent Nature and *nimitta-vastu* is a little less straightforward, however, since neither term is used in the formal definition of Dependent Characteristic set forth in SNS VI, where it is identified with the dependent arising of phenomena (*dharmānāṃ pratītyasamutpādaḥ*).\(^{35}\) In SNS VII, however, the Dependent Characteristic is identified with the concept of *saṃskāra-nimitta* (Takahashi 2006: 91, n. 1; Hyōdō 1990: 28–29), which Lamotte translates as “les objets des opérations intellectuelles” (Lamotte 1935: 203–205 and passim).\(^{36}\) Similar to the way in which the VinSg related *nimitta* to *vikalpa* and *nāma*, the SNS describes the

(of *vikalpa*) – by using two distinct terms for *nimitta*, *rgyu mtshan* for the former sense, *mtshan ma* for the latter.

\(^{34}\) The intimacy of the relation between *vikalpa* and *nimitta* is indicated by the *Viniścayasaṃgrahāni*’s statement that *vikalpa* is neither something other than, nor something not other than, *nimitta* (Kramer 2005: 108–109).

\(^{35}\) Takahashi notes that an early Tibetan manuscript of the SNS from Dunhuang includes in its (fragmentary) definition of the Imagined Characteristic the term *mtshan ma* (= Skt. *nimitta*) where the extant translation would have *saṃketa* (Takahashi 2005: 57; 2006: 88–89). He cites this as variant reading as further support for his larger argument that the SNS’s understanding of the Three Characteristics presupposes the concept of *nimitta* (along with *nāma*, *vikalpa*, and *tathatā*) (Takahashi 2005: 58).

\(^{36}\) Additional support for the association between the concept of *nimitta* and Dependent Origination is the VinSg’s inclusion of Dependent Origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*) in its list of synonyms for *nimitta*. See Kramer 2005: 26, 116–117.
saṃskāra-nimitta as “an object of conception [and] a base of the imagined character” (Takahashi 2006: 91, n. 1). 37

This association between the Dependent Nature and the concept of the vastu as nimitta – that is, the vastu understood as the basis or referent of conceptions – is strengthened by a consideration of the list of the three forms or aspects (ākāra) of reality set forth in the so-called “Maitreya’s Questions” (MQ) chapter of the Prajñāpāramitāsūtra, namely, pari-kalpita, vikalpita, and dharmatā. 38 There, in a rather convoluted passage, the second, vikalpita aspect is defined in terms of the locus at which conceptual designations are made with respect to the vastu that is the basis of conceptual construction (saṃskāra-nimitta vastu) (Takemura 1995: 52). 39 The MQ’s definition of the vikalpita aspect in terms of the saṃskāra-nimitta vastu not only supports the correlation between the Dependent Nature and the vastu understood as the basis of linguistic expression (as mentioned above), but it also seems to presuppose the intimate relation between the concept of vastu (= nimitta) and vikalpa that we saw in the TattvP; after all, this, the second aspect, is designated vikalpita. In the TattvP, it will be recalled, it is said that the previous vikalpa causes the present vastu, which in turn is the cause of the present vikalpa (Takahashi 2001: 40). On the basis of the parallel between the vikalpita aspect of the MQ and the Dependent Character of the SNS, we can perhaps correlate the latter with two of the five vastus, namely, nimitta and vikalpa, which together represent this stratum of reciprocal causation. And it is this line of thought that perhaps informs the association between the Dependent Character and Dependent Origination in SNS VI.

37 Or as Lamotte (1934: 203–205 and passim) translates: “Les objets des opérations intellectuelles (objets qui sont et le domaine ou s’exercent les imaginations, et la base du caractère imaginaire) constituent le caractère dépendant.”

38 From the fact that the MQ is not cited in Yogācāra literature until the commentary on the MŚg, Hyōdō (1990: 34) concludes that MQ’s analysis of the three akāras did not play an important role in the formation of the Three Natures doctrine.

39 Conze and Iida (1968: 238): yā punas tasya saṃskāranimittasya vastuno vikalpamātra-dharmatāyām avasthānatā vikalpa-pratītya-abhīlapanatā, itra idaṁ nāma-saṃjñā-saṃketa-prajñapti-vyavahāro rūpam iti … idaṁ vikalpitaṁ rūpam […].
Two-and-a-half natures

As we have just seen, the concepts of nimitta, nāma, vikalpa, and tathatā – i.e., all but one of the elements (samyag-jñāna) of the later Five-Vastu theory – provide a conceptual bridge between the TattvP’s analysis of reality (vastu) and the Three Characteristics of the SNS. Now, having established a connection between the TattvP’s analysis of reality and the Three Natures doctrine of the SNS, we are able to recognize the fundamental ambiguity of the former in the latter. Specifically, the tension between what I called the three-member and two-member schemas in TattvP’s ontology corresponds to the interpretive uncertainty between the progressive and pivotal models of the Three Natures. As mentioned above, the former tension hinges on the nature of the relation between conception and reality. To the extent that conception conditions reality, a gap opens up between the vastu as nimitta and vastu as tathatā, for the former is conditioned by conception and the latter is not. Or, expressed in the terminology of the SNS, to the extent that the Dependent Nature forms the basis of linguistic expression, it is spoken of as “defiled” and is no longer expressive of the inexpressible nature of things (Hyōdō 1990: 29, 31). Alternatively, to the extent that conception is epiphenomenal and has no causal influence on its basis, the distinction between the two vastus begins to blur and the three-level schema tends towards what I might call a two-and-a-half level model.

There is a passage in SNS VII (VII.10, to be specific) that exhibits this tendency clearly. “If I explain the three naturelessnesses,” the Buddha says there, “it is because beings superimpose the Imagined Nature on [or ascribe the Imagined Nature to] the Dependent and Perfected Natures.” The idea of false ascription here suggests an adventitious relation between

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40 Thus, to the extent that the theory of the Three Natures/Three Characteristics presupposes concepts comprising the Five-Vastu theory, which was in turn based on the TattvP’s analysis of reality, one cannot say that the TattvP was the direct or immediate source of the Three Natures theory (Takahashi 2005: 60, cf. 55).

41 Here following Lamotte’s (1935: 196) French trans.: “[S]i j’expose la triple irréalité, c’est parce que les êtres surimposent la nature imaginaire sur les natures dépendantes et absolues.” Frauwallner (1994: 294) translates the second part of this sentence as “Die Lebewesen schreiben vielmehr dem abhängigen und dem vollkommenen Wesen das vorgestellte Wesen zu […].”
conception and reality, and the mention of both the Perfected and the Dependent Natures as the twin object of imputation evinces a blurring of the distinction between the two. The mention of the Perfected Nature alongside the Dependent here appears almost as an afterthought. Perhaps the most revealing instance of this “shrinking” tendency, however, is found in the pair of similes that the SNS uses to clarify the relations among the Three Characteristics. In the first, the Three Characteristics are compared to three aspects of the experience of a person suffering from cataracts: the Imagined Characteristic corresponds to the affliction itself; the Dependent Characteristic to the objects or floaters that appear before his eyes; and the Perfected Characteristic to what he sees when the affliction is cured (SNS VI.7, Lamotte 1934: 297, 301). The second simile is that of a clear crystal that takes on the appearance of various gemstones depending on the particular color of the background against which the crystal is seen. Here the Imagined Characteristic is compared to the emerald, sapphire, or ruby that is (falsely) seen in the crystal. The Dependent is compared to the crystal itself, and the Perfected Characteristic represents the non-existence of the emerald, sapphire, or ruby in the crystal (SNS VI.8, Lamotte 1934: 297–298, 301–302).

There are a couple of points to be made with respect to the two similes. First, they both highlight the adventitious nature of the relationship between conception and reality: the floaters appearing before the eyes of the cataracts patient have no connection with or foundation in the objective reality before him or her, and the colors reflected in the crystal giving it the appearance of a particular gemstone are purely extrinsic to the crystal. Second, the two analyses do not line up: in the cataracts simile, the fictitious entities, the floaters, are identified with the Dependent Characteristic (and not the Imagined Characteristic as one might expect), whereas in the crystal simile, the emeralds, sapphires, and rubies correspond to the Imagined Characteristic; their substratum, the crystal itself,

42 Boquist (1993: 44), who is committed to an interpretation of the Three Natures in terms of the pivotal model, finds the statement here that the Imagined Nature is superimposed on the Dependent and the Perfected to be “incoherent.” This judgment follows from his commitment to the pivotal model, for according to that model, the sole basis of superimposition is the Dependent Nature, while the Perfected nature simply names the absence of the Imagined in the Dependent.
corresponds to the Dependent.\textsuperscript{43} Third, in each of the similes, in keeping with the principle that a stress of the adventitious nature of the reality-conception relation has the effect of shrinking the three-level schema into a two-and-a-half level schema, one of the correlations appears somewhat forced, as if one were trying to stretch the simile unnaturally to accommodate a third element. Thus, in the cataracts simile, the principal division lies between the Dependent and the Perfected – that is, between the floaters and the visual scene obscured by them. The Imagined Characteristic is the odd one out, and it is somewhat unconvincingly correlated to the general idea of the ailment itself. In the crystal simile, the principal division now lies between the Imagined and the Dependent, that is, between the projected gemstones and the clear crystal. The clear crystal would be a natural analogue to the \textit{vastu-mātra} in the TattvP’s ontology, but here it is identified with the Dependent Characteristic, leaving a gap to be filled by the Perfected. Here, the context of a simile, where the aim is to clarify the relations among the Three Characteristics, precludes the kind of casual evasion of the issue that we saw in the passage from SNS VII.10 above. Forced to specify a distinct analogue for the Perfected Characteristic, the text rather creatively identifies the Perfected Characteristic with the abstract idea of the non-existence of the Imagined Characteristic in the Dependent.\textsuperscript{44} This understanding of the Perfected

\textsuperscript{43} This apparent inconsistency reflects the intuitive connection between the Dependent Nature and the \textit{vastu} idea: whatever in the simile is most clearly or intuitively conceived as an entity or thing will be identified with the Dependent Nature, and the other natures will be specified around this central correlation. It just happens that the idea of objects appearing before the eyes in the first simile attracts the \textit{vastu} idea. And this association has the effect of shifting the caesura between the adventitious and the real to the distinction between the second and third natures.

The plain sense of SNS VI.7, clearly troubles Boquist, who tries to reinterpret the simile so that the Dependent Nature refers to “that which \textit{causes} [my italics] the dimmed images like hairballs, grains of sesame, colored objects etc. to appear (avabhāsat),” rather than the images themselves (1993: 36). Pace Boquist, I think the translation of the middle-voiced verb \textit{avabhāsat} as “cause to appear” (as opposed to the standard translation as “shine”) is a bit forced; I would think that had the author intended the causative sense that Boquist prefers, he would have used the causative form of ava + \textit{bhās}, namely, \textit{avabhāsayati}.

\textsuperscript{44} Ikeda (1996: 7–8) contrasts such an abstract conception of the Perfected Nature, which is found in Yogācāra treatises like the \textit{Abhidharmasamuccaya}, with the TattvP’s understanding of the \textit{vastu} as what remains when adventitious conceptions are stripped
Characteristic as the non-existence of the Imagined Characteristic in the Dependent clearly accords with the pivotal model of the Three Natures. The verse immediately following the crystal simile elaborates on this idea:

There, O Mine of Virtues, the Imagined Characteristic is known on the basis of the names attached to their referents (*nimitta*); the Dependent Characteristic is known on the basis of the attribution of the Imagined Characteristic to the Dependent Characteristic; the Perfected Characteristic is known on the basis of the non-attribution of the Imagined Characteristic to the Dependent Characteristic.45

The affinity between the crystal simile and a pivotal interpretation of the three Natures – the cataracts simile, which runs out of natures, as it were, before it can develop the non-existence idea, is less amenable to it – suggests that the pivotal interpretation rests on two conditions, namely: (1) a stress on the adventitious nature of the conception-reality relation and (2) the identification of Dependent Nature with the thing or reality (*vastu*) serving as the basis of predication (*āśraya*).46 Inasmuch as both of these conditions represent genuine conceptual possibilities inherent in the SNS’s doctrine of the Three Natures, one cannot say, pace Brennan, that the pivotal model is simply inconsistent with the Three Natures away. In other words, he makes a clear, if subtle distinction between, on the one hand, the abstract or conceptual notion of “the non-existence of the Imagined Nature in the Dependent,” and, on the other, the notion of “the Dependent Nature itself where the Imagined nature does not exist” (Ikeda 1996: 8). If this distinction is valid, then SNS VI.8 would evince the beginning of the shift Ikeda sees in the Yogācāra school’s understanding of emptiness away from the realist understanding of emptiness that is characteristic of the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*.

45 Based on Lamotte’s Sanskrit back-translation of SNS VI.9 (Lamotte 1934: 298):

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tatra guṇakara nimittasaṃbaddhanāmāni niśritya parikalpatalakṣaṇaṃ prajñāyate. paratantralakṣaṇe parikalpatalakṣaṇābhiniveśaṃ niśritya paratantralakṣaṇaṃ prajñāyate. paratantralakṣaṇe parikalpatalakṣaṇābhiniveśābhāvaṃ niśritya pariniśpannalakṣaṇaṃ prajñāyate.
\]

46 Motomura (2005: 94), applying his analysis of the relation between the concepts of *vastu* and *nimitta* in the *TattvP* and *VinSg* to the Three Natures schema, notes that if the fundamental reality (*基体*) of the schema is identified with the Dependent Nature, then the Perfected Nature, (ironically!) becomes something conceptual, namely, the fact that conception doesn’t exist in the Dependent Nature. He takes this as a kind of reductio argument against the understanding of the Three Natures theory in the *Yogācārabhūmi* (*TattvP* and *VinSg*) in terms of the pivotal model.
doctrine of early Yogācāra. On the other hand, the two conditions together represent an interpretive decision with respect to the nature of reality and its relation to concept and language, a relation which, as we have seen, is marked by a fundamental ambiguity. Not surprisingly, when the emphases shift we find the pivotal model inadequate for what the SNS says about the three natures.

The following verse (SNS VI.10) evinces this shift. There the Buddha identifies the knowledge of the Imagined Characteristic as it is (yathā-bhūtaṃ) with a knowledge of the characterlessness of phenomena; the knowledge of the Dependent Characteristic as it is with a knowledge of the defiled character of phenomena; and, finally, the knowledge of the Perfected Characteristic with a knowledge of the purified character of phenomena. Then he says,

Bodhisattvas who know the characterlessness of phenomena with respect to the Dependent Characteristic abandon the defiled character of phenomena; and abandoning the defiled character of phenomena, they realize the purified character of phenomena.47

This verse, which describes a sequence from knowing the characterlessness of phenomena, to abandoning the defiled character of phenomena, and finally to realizing the purified character of phenomena, clearly accords with a progressive or path model of the Three Natures (Aramaki 1976b: 31).48 The association here of the Dependent Character with the idea of defilement, however, is noteworthy and requires some unpacking (Hyōdō 1990: 31). It suggests, first of all, that the arising of phenomena is sustained by a tendency that is negated by the knowledge of the


48 Conceptually this passage supports Brennan’s thesis that the three natures correspond to the three “path processes” of thoroughly knowing, abandoning, and directly realizing (Brennan 2018: 628–629). However, only the second, albeit the most consequential, of the three terms in Lamotte’s back-translation, namely, praḥāṇa (prajahati, prahāya), matches its counterpart in the formulaic list of the three path processes found in later Yogācāra texts, namely, pariṇā, prahāṇa, sāksāt-kriyā. This observation suggests that correlation between the three natures and the three path processes is a later systematization of earlier statements like the one here in the SNS.
Imagined Nature as it is. And this tendency is nothing other than the attribution of identifying characteristics to phenomena, characteristics that are misrecognized as belonging to those phenomena essentially. Or, as Brennan eloquently makes the point, “it is the activity of attribution itself that has causal power, not the thing to which this power is attributed” (Brennan 2018: 642). This idea – that causal power resides in the activity of attribution – is only implicit in the association of the Dependent Character with the idea of defilement here in SNS VI.10. But it comes to the fore in the following chapter, specifically, SNS VII.10.

Inasmuch as deluded persons are obstinately attached to the Imagined Nature they falsely attribute to the Dependent and Perfected Natures, the text says, “they are obstinately attached to the future Dependent Nature. And for this reason, they give birth to the future Dependent Nature.”\(^49\)

When cast in the TattvP’s idiom of the relation between \textit{vikalpa} and \textit{vastu}, the idea here that the attribution of identifying characteristics sustains the arising of phenomena corresponds to the idea that the present \textit{vikalpa} conditions the future \textit{vastu} (as the previous \textit{vastu} conditions the present \textit{vikalpa}) (Dutt 1966: 37–38, cited above). When read in light of this parallel, this passage in SNS VII.10 foregrounds the performative dimension of the Three Natures doctrine: the deluded individual’s obstinate attachment to the characteristics falsely projected onto reality (the Imagined Characteristic) sustains the arising of phenomena (the Dependent Characteristic), and, conversely, the bodhisattva’s cessation of projective attribution puts an end to the generation of phenomena. And this cessation of the mental activity sustaining the Dependent Characteristic leads to the realization of the forbearance based on an awareness of the non-arising of phenomena (Aramaki 1976b: 31) or, as the SNS puts it, the realization that, “toutes les choses sont sans nature propre, non-nées, non-détruites, calmes depuis l’origine et essentiellement nirvânées” (Lamotte 1935: 199 and passim).

\(^{49}\) Again following Lamotte’s (1935: 196) French translation: “Dans la mesure de cette obstination, ils s’attachent obstinément à la future nature dépendante. Pour cette raison, ils donnent naissance à la future nature dépendante.”
Concluding remarks

Pace Buescher, I follow Schmithausen in his view that the discussion of the Three Natures in SNS VI and VII is largely independent of the doctrine of “representation only” (vijñaptimātra) introduced in the eighth chapter (VIII.7–9) of this same treatise, the latter possibly representing a later textual stratum (Schmithausen 2014: 358–365; 2017: 268–269; cf. Buescher 2008: 158–171 and passim). That the Three Natures doctrine has yet to be fully integrated with vijñaptimātra is evident in the two similes of SNS VI that we analyzed above. As Hyōdō observes, the cataracts simile lends itself naturally to a vijñaptimātra interpretation. And yet the SNS uses the simile to illustrate a realist understanding of the Three Natures in line with the ontology of the inexpressible vastu of the TattvP. The Perfected Character corresponds to the object that appears before the eye when the eye disease is no more, and this objective reality, in contrast to the floaters produced by the eye disease, does not disturb or mislead (Hyōdō 1990: 30). Similarly, the crystal simile is not used to illustrate the original purity of the mind, as one might expect in a vijñaptimātra/cittamātra context, but rather to show, again in conformity with the realist ontology of the TattvP, the essencelessness of those phenomena that appear as particular things thanks to the distorting effect of language (Hyōdō 1990: 30). Another indication of the original independence of the Three Natures doctrine from that of vijñaptimātra is the objection that Vasubandhu’s commentator Sthiramati voices in introducing the mention of the Three Natures in Trīṃśikā, v. 20 (Hyōdō 1990: 30). “If [all] this were representation only, how would this not be in contradiction to the sutras? For the Three Natures – the Imagined, the Dependent, and the Perfected – are taught in the sutras.”

Underlying this objection is the assumption that the doctrine of representation-only contradicts the realist connotations in the concept of nature (svabhāva) in the prevailing understanding of the Three Natures.

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51 Hyōdō sees the same underlying concern in Vasubandhu’s introductory comment on MAV I.5: “When only false construction exists, how are the three types of essence accepted there?” (Hyōdō 1990: 30). I must confess, however, that Hyōdō’s interrogative
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here can thus be taken as betraying the independent origins of the two doctrines (Hyōdō 1990: 30). At the same time, however, it gives succinct expression to the interpretive challenge taken up, and successfully met, by Yogācāra thinkers like Vasubandhu and Sthiramati. Let me conclude with the observation that while the Three Natures doctrine may indeed originally have been formed independently of vijñaptimātra, it nevertheless contains at its core an idea that will serve as a fruitful basis for the full-blown vijñaptimātra of classical Yogācāra.52 This core idea is none other than the notion of the reciprocal causation of vastu and vikalpa – phenomenal reality and conceptualization – found in the TattvP. As we saw above, to the extent that vikalpa conditions vastu, there exists the possibility of transcending the realm of dependently originated phenomena through the cessation of discursive thought. And it is with this half of the reciprocal causation formula – the generation of vastu by vikalpa – that Vasubandhu introduces a discussion of the three Natures in the Triṃśikā: “By whichever conceptual construction (yena yena vikalpena) this or that thing (yadayad vastu) is constructed. This [thing] is only constructed [or imagined – parikalpita]; it does not exist in itself (svabhāva)” (Triṃś 20).53 In marked contrast to the TattvP, however, where the emphasis was on the causation exerted by objective reality, the vastu, on vikalpa, here the causal efficacy of the vastu is an idea that has been thoroughly eclipsed. In Vasubandhu’s thought, what exerts causal impact on the vikalpa in a cycle of reciprocal causation is not the vastu but rather the seeds of consciousness (vijñāna) contained in (or comprising) the storehouse consciousness, seeds not only of internal but also external matter (Bronkhorst 2000: 84).54

reading of the Sanskrit – abhūtaparikalpamātre sati, yathā trayānāṃ svabhāvānāṃ saṃgraho bhavati (Nagao 1964: 19, ll. 15–16) – is not evident to me.

52 Takahashi makes the same basic point on the basis of the above-mentioned identification of the concept of the Dependent Nature of the SNS and the concept of saṃskāranimitta. Inasmuch as saṃskāra-nimitta (= Dependent Nature) is taken as the product of discriminative thought (vikalpa), there is the possibility of connecting the Three Natures of the SNS with the doctrine of Mind-only (2012: 92).

53 Lévi 1925: 14, ll. 11–12: yena yena vikalpena, yad yad vastu vikalpyate. parikalpita evāsau, svabhāvo na sa vidyate.

54 See Triṃśikā 18 (Lévi 1925: 14, ll. 7–8): sarvabījaṃ hi vijñānaṃ, pariṇāmas tathā tathā; yāty anyonyavasād yena, vikalpah sa sa jāyate. “For all seeds are consciousness, [and] the transformation [of those seeds] proceeds in this way and that. Through their
Abbreviations

M Majjhimanikāya (Pali Text Society edition)
MAV Madhyāntavibhāga. See D’Amato 2012.
MAV Bh Madhyāntavibhāgabbhāsya. See Nagoa 1964.
MQ “Maitreya’s Questions”
MSg Mahāyānasamgraha
MSA Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra
SNS Saṃdhinirmocanasūtra. See Lamotte 1935.
TattvP Tattvārthapātalā (of the Bodhisattvabhūmi)
Triṃś Triṃśikā (of Vasubandhu). See Lévi 1925.
TSN Trisvabhāvanirdesa. See La Vallée Poussin 1933.
VinSg Viniścayasaṃgrahānaṇi (of the Yogācāraṇāṇī)

References


As Jonathan Gold argues, this shift from a realist causal account – whether one based on the TattvP’s vastu concept or one based on the Abhidharma analysis of sensory organ, object, and consciousness – to a “mind-only” causal account based on the ālayavijñāna (see 2015: 156) in no way weakens what Gold takes to be Vasubandhu’s overriding emphasis, running from the AKBh through his Yogācāra works, namely: offering a third-person causal account of experience (the perspective denoted by the Dependent Nature) that serves as the “causal antidote” to the commonsensical notion of the self as cause (the perspective of the Imagined Nature) (2015: 148–169).


