



The Yoga of Dying: Xuanzang on the Nature of Death

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The Yoga of Dying: Xuanzang on the Nature of Death

A dissertation

by

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Abstract

This study reclaims the investigation undertaken by Xuanzang (602-667 C.E.) 玄奘, the translator and peripatetic scholar-monk of the Tang Dynasty, and his translation team, into the nature of dying. It conforms to the chronology of the translation and exegesis of the Buddhist texts, including the ancient *Āgamas*, the recorded discourses of the Buddha, the *Mahāvibhāṣa*, the *Great Abhidharma Commentary*, and the foundational works of the subsequent Abhidharma and Yogācāra scholars, undertaken by Xuanzang, and his coterie of scholars and translators, from 645 to 660 C.E. In his comprehensive analyses and translations of the Indic texts on dying, and in his compilation, *Demonstration of Consciousness-only*, Xuanzang examines the Buddhist teachings on no-self, karma, and reincarnation. In his analysis of the scriptures, he attempts to reconcile the core commitments to the Buddhist doctrines of karma and reincarnation with the tenet of no-self. With the Buddhist theory of the *indriyas*, attested in the ancient *Āgamas*, Xuanzang determines that no enduring or permanent self is lost in dying. The corpus of Abhidharma and Yogācāra Buddhist texts translated by Xuanzang and his coterie describes how, by cultivating the skillful *indriyas*, the spiritual faculties of sentient life, the karma of a sentient being can be improved, as well as the quality of dying and the afterlife. This study uses a source criticism research methodology to investigate the contributions made by Xuanzang on the subject of dying without a self. It finds that within their exegeses and translations of the Abhidharma and Yogācāra texts, Xuanzang and his collaborators, restore the Buddhist tenets of no-self, karma, and reincarnation, and provide the doctrinal basis for deathbed rituals that are practiced across East Asia today.

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Romanization Conventions

This dissertation follows the International Alphabet of Sanskrit Transliteration (IAST), standard Pinyin for Chinese, and Wylie for Tibetan.

Following general scholarly convention, the plural form of a Sanskrit word, for example, *indriya*, will be romanized as *indriyas*, except when referring to a group of *indriyas* that are qualified by a specific number, or when the word appears in a compound form. In this case, the plural form, *indriyāṇi*, will be used. Examples of this are: *pāñca-vedanêndriyāṇi* and *pāñca-karmêndriyāṇi*. In compound words, or *samāśas*, a caret will be placed over the vowel. An example of this is: *karmêndriyāṇi*. The caret indicates a vowel strengthening that results from the euphonic combination, or *saṃdhi*, of two or more Sanskrit words forming a compound word.

An asterisk (*) appearing in front of a Japanese or Chinese book title indicates my English translation of said title. An asterisk appearing in front a Sanskrit word indicates that I have reconstructed the word based upon either the Chinese or Tibetan correlate. In the Tibetan texts used in this study, a slash (/) indicates a *shad*, a Tibetan punctuation mark. A slash also indicates a *daṇḍa*, a Sanskrit punctuation mark.

Introduction

In the final moments of his life, Xuanzang 玄奘 (602-667 C.E.) summons the last of his vital energy and recites two stanzas from the *Tuṣita Buddha Sūtra*.¹ He sits upright, in the meditative lotus position, surrounded by his followers in the Maitreya Buddha Hall of the Great Benevolence Temple 大慈恩寺. According to the eye-witness account of his disciple, Daoshi 道世 (?-683), Xuanzang calmly and resolutely faces his death.² Huili 慧立 (615-?), in his biography of Xuanzang, writes that the redolent scent of incense hangs in the air surrounding the body of Xuanzang for forty-nine days after his death, the period during which the transmigratory being of the deceased attains rebirth. The first-hand reports of his “skillful death” (Chi.: *shansi* 善死) provide corroboration that, in addition to the prodigious achievements of his life, Xuanzang, the pilgrim, scholar-monk, and polymath, was an expert on matters of dying and death. Based on the auspicious signs witnessed by those who were present at his death, it can be said that the attained master, Xuanzang, died well.

This study aims to reclaim the investigation undertaken by Xuanzang into the Brāhmaṇical doctrinal treatises, and the Abhidharma and Yogācāra texts of Indic Buddhism, on the nature of dying and death. It argues that, in their exegeses and translations of the Indic Brāhmaṇical and Buddhist texts, Xuanzang, with a coterie of scholars and scribes, brings Chinese Buddhist studies of dying and death, into a closer alignment with its rich Indic scriptural heritage. This dissertation employs a source criticism methodology to examine the similarities and the differences between the translations of the Indic Abhidharma and Yogācāra texts of Xuanzang and his scribes, with the

¹ For Xuanzang’s deathbed *mise-en-scène*, see Huili’s *Biography of the Tripiṭaka Master* (*Sanzang Fashi zhuan* 三藏法師傳), fascicle 10, at T.2053: 50.277.a10-b10.

² Daoshi’s *Jade Forest of the Dharma Garden* (*Fayuan zhulin* 法苑珠林), fascicle 16, at T.2122:53.406.a03-a15.

versions of the same texts available in Chinese, Tibetan, and Sanskrit. It endeavors to illustrate the efforts made by Xuanzang and his team of scholars, in their exegeses and translations of the Abhidharma and Yogācāra scriptures, to exorcise the “spiritual soul” (Chi.: *shenwo* 神我)³ from Chinese Buddhism.

Xuanzang was ordained as a monk at the age of thirteen in Luoyang, a village in Henan Province in Central China. In his biography of Xuanzang, Huili writes that as novice monk, Xuanzang intently studied the Indic Buddhist texts that were available to monastic scholars in seventh century China. While portions of the body of the Abhidharma and Yogācāra texts were available to him in piecemeal form, Xuanzang was dissatisfied with the fragmentary nature of the documents and concerned about the fidelity of the existing Chinese translations to the Sanskrit texts. After reading portions of the *Basis for Yoga Practitioners* (Skt.: *Yogācārabhūmi*), by Asaṅga, in a translation by Paramātha 真諦 (499-569 C.E.), the sixth-century Chinese translator of the Yogācāra works, Xuanzang determines to travel to India to read the Indic Buddhist texts, in their complete form, in Sanskrit. At the age of twenty-four, he undertakes his famous journey to the Western Regions (Chi.: *Xiyu* 西域),⁴ to study with Indic Buddhist masters, retrieve the sūtras and

³ Michael Radich shows that by the mid-5th century, “*shenwo* had emerged in Chinese Buddhist contexts as a technical term for the *ātman*.” See his article, “Ideas about ‘Consciousness’ in Fifth and Sixth Century Chinese Buddhist Debates on the Survival of Death by the Spirit, and the Chinese Background to **Amalavijñāna*, in *A Distant Mirror: Articulating Indic Ideas in Sixth and Seventh Century Chinese Buddhism* (Hamburg: Hamburg Univ. Press, 2014), ed. Chen-kuo Lin and Michael Radich, 480. Yao Weiqun notes that after the introduction of Xuanzang’s “new translations” 新譯 in the early 7th century, the term was generally reserved for the technical term “psychic person” (*puruṣa*) in the Brahmanical philosophical systems. Yao writes of *puruṣa*: “the psychic person (*puruṣa*) is recognized as a spiritual substance. This singular substance exists independently of the ‘material nature’ (*prakṛti*) of the Sāṃkhya and Yoga school, while it manifests worldly functions through the transformation (*parināma*) of the material nature.” 神我是個被認為是一個精神性的實體，這一實體與數論及瑜伽派中的另一物質性的實體自性並列存在，對自性轉變出世間各種事物起作用。See Yao Weiqun, *Indu Poluomen jiao zhexue yu Fojiao zhexue bijiao yanjiu* 印度婆羅門教哲學與佛教哲學比較研究》(*A Comparative Study on Indian Brāhmaṇical and Buddhist Philosophies*), (Beijing: China Encyclopedia Press, 2004), 72.

⁴ For the modern reception of Xuanzang’s *Records of the Journey to the West* (*Xiyu ji* 西域記), see Benjamin Brose’s article, “Resurrecting Xuanzang: the Modern Travels of a Medieval Monk,” in Kiely and Jessup, eds. *Buddhists and Buddhism in the History of 20th Century China* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 2016), 143-176.

śāstras, and carry them, in his saddlebag, back to China.

After a death-defying passage through the Western Regions of Asia, Xuanzang establishes a residency at the Nālanda University in the Kingdom of Magadha in Northwestern India. During his five years at Nālanda, Xuanzang reads the Buddhist sūtras and *śāstras* in Sanskrit and studies and debates with the Indic Buddhist masters and scholars. At Nālanda University Xuanzang reads the Abhidharma, “The Higher Dharma,” the tradition of Buddhism that comprises the systematic exegesis on the *Āgamas*, the recorded discourses of the Buddha. With the Yogācāra master, Śīlabhadra, Xuanzang reads the scriptures of the Yogācāra, a tradition of Buddhism that describes the theoretical basis for the practice of yoga, or insight meditation. While living in India, Xuanzang discovers the full version of the *Basis of Yoga Practitioners*, the compendium of the practices and tenets of the Yogācāra tradition that is attributed to the fifth-century scholar, Asaṅga. In this text, Xuanzang finds methods by which the sentient being can improve karma, and the quality of dying through the practice of yoga.

Upon his return to China, Xuanzang and his collaborators, ensconced in a palatial translation studio (Chi.: *yiguan* 譯館) within the Imperial court of the Tang Emperors Taizong 唐太宗 (reign: 629-649 C.E.) and Gaozong 唐高宗 (reign: 649-683 C.E.), between the years of 645 and 660 C.E., engage in an ambitious translation project. At the request of the Emperor, Xuanzang is charged with supervising the translation of the Sanskrit texts he retrieved from India, and the retranslations of several Chinese versions of Indic Buddhist texts. Huili acknowledges that, in their massive translation project, Xuanzang and his collaborators endeavor to correct misunderstandings and distortions of the Buddhist doctrines that were introduced into the Abhidharma and Yogācāra texts by translators from previous centuries.⁵ Specifically, Xuanzang and his team, attempt to

⁵ See Huili, *Biography of the Tripitaka Master*, fascicle 1, (T2053:50.222.c05).

expiate the entrenched doctrine of the spiritual soul, or *shenwo*, rendered into the existing Chinese translations of the Abhidharma and Yogācāra texts by earlier scholars. The translations of Xuanzang and his coterie are known as the, “the new translations” (Chi.: *xinyi* 新譯), in modern Buddhist studies scholarship, whereas the Chinese Buddhist texts translated prior to him are termed, “the old translations” (Chi.: *jiuyi* 舊譯).

It is compelling to imagine that the encounters with dying and death experienced by Xuanzang during his travels from China to India and back, informed his inquiry into the nature of mortality. His biographer, Huili, reports that Xuanzang, nearly dying of thirst while crossing the Taklamakan Desert of Central Asia, chants the *Heart Sūtra* as he prepares for death.⁶ While the stories of the existential anxiety of Xuanzang may be apocryphal, it can be reliably stated that, in their exegeses and translation of the Indic Buddhist texts, Xuanzang and his colleagues address weighty philosophical and doctrinal questions that surround the nature of dying and death. These questions include: What is death? What is dying? What is dying well? What is a pious death? This study follows the fundamental questions about dying and death that Xuanzang and his collaborators investigate in their exegeses and translations of the Indic Buddhist texts. In their analyses of the ancient Indic Buddhist scriptures, Xuanzang and his colleagues return to the tenets regarding the impermanence of life and the idea of no-self (Skt.: *anātman*; Chi.: *wuwo* 無我). The doctrine of no-self means that a sentient being cannot be reduced to a singular or unchanging core that becomes reincarnated after death.⁷

⁶ See Huili’s *Biography of the Tripiṭaka Master*, fascicle 1 (T.2053:50.224b24).

⁷ In his 1990 study, *Selfless Persons: Imagery and Thought in Theravāda Buddhism* (Cambridge Univ. Press), 76, Collins describes the doctrine of self (Pāli: *attavada*; Skt.: *ātmavāda*) as rebuked by the Buddha. He writes: “it is the static, unalterable dogma which posits a permanent and reincarnating self of person which is the object of Buddhist censure. Thus, ‘the doctrine of self’ is one of the four forms of grasping (the others are sense-pleasures, (mere) rule-and-ritual, and ‘views.’) Speculation about the [or ‘a’] self (Pāli: *attānudiṭṭhi*; Skt.: *ātmadr̥ṣṭi*) is a term used in the Sūtras for any specific views of self, all of which are rejected tout court.” In his contribution, in “Buddhist Non-Self: The No-Owners Manual,” in the *Oxford Handbook of the Self* (New York: Oxford Univ.

During his investigations on the topic of dying and death in the Indic Buddhist scriptures, Xuanzang determines that death is a form of deprivation, the loss of a certain number of faculties (Skt: *indriyas*; Chi.: *gen* 根) that sustain life. Xuanzang comes to embrace a definition of death that is founded in the theory of the *indriyas*, a detailed explanatory account of the multiple components of sentient life, explicated in the *Āgamas*, and in other early Indic Buddhist texts. For Xuanzang, the conceptualization of death in terms of the loss and deprivation of the *indriyas* is congruent with the tenet of no-self. He and his collaborators, however, face grave difficulty in attempting to reconcile the doctrinal commitment to no-self to the idea of death as a form of deprivation. In his examination of the Buddhist scriptures on the nature of mortality, Xuanzang confronts difficult questions: What is lost in death, if not a person? When a sentient being dies, who, or what, dies? What becomes deceased?

This study conforms to the chronology of the systematic exegesis of dying conducted by Xuanzang, and his coterie of translators and scholars, during the early years of the Tang dynasty (618-907 C.E.). In their exegeses and translations of the texts, Xuanzang and his colleagues make a comprehensive analysis of the Buddhist doctrines on dying, death, and the natures of consciousness and reincarnation. Xuanzang and his collaborators begin their analysis of dying by investigating the *Āgamas*, the recorded discourses of the Buddha, the *Mahāvibhāṣa*, the great commentary on the *Āgamas*, and the foundational doctrinal treatises of the Abhidharma Buddhist scholars of Kaśmir. They examine the doctrinal work of the great Yogācāra Buddhist scholars, and

Press, 2011), 297-98, Siderits writes: “In modern discussions of the Buddha's teachings one sometimes finds it claimed that the Buddha only denied the existence of an empirical self, and not the existence of a self that transcends all possible experience. When, for instance, the Buddha points out that all the psychophysical elements (*skandhas*) lack the sort of permanence that a self would require, this proves that there is no self only given the additional premise that there is no more to the person than the empirically given elements. This would bring the Buddha's teachings more in line with the views of some of the Brāhmaṇical schools, such as Sāṃkhya and Vedānta. But this is not how the Buddhist philosophical tradition understood the Buddha's teachings. They took the doctrine of non-self to mean that there is no self, tout court.”

translate the texts of the two fifth-century scholars, Vasubandhu, and Asaṅga, and the commentaries on the Yogācāra texts written by the sixth-century scholars, Sthiramati, Dignāga and Dharmapāla.⁸ While immersed in an investigation of the ancient Indic texts, Xuanzang and his collaborators also examine the work of their contemporaries, Daoshi, Kuiji 窥基 (632-682 C.E.), and Daoxuan 道宣 (596-667 C.E.), the three philosophers who form the vanguard of Buddhist scholarship during the lifetime of Xuanzang.

Throughout this exhaustive study of the Indic texts and their Chinese exegeses, Xuanzang upholds his commitment to the Buddhist doctrine no-self. Ultimately the analysis of the Brāhmaṇical and Buddhist doctrines on the nature of mortality leads Xuanzang to his definition of the death of a sentient being in terms of the deprivation of a plural constituency of vital faculties, or *indriyas*, rather than the annihilation of a single entity. Notably, Xuanzang comes to determine that nothing in the form of a self is lost in dying or in death. In his exegeses of dying and death, Xuanzang and his colleagues aim to repudiate the existence of a self, *ātman*, or soul⁹ that transcends death and is reincarnated.

Xuanzang, and his translation team, make a concerted effort to banish the “spiritual soul

⁸ Dharmapāla may have been a pupil of Dignāga, see Masaaki Hattori, Dignāga, on *Perception: Being the Pratyakṣapariccheda of Dignāga's Pramāṇasamuccaya from the Sanskrit Fragments and the Tibetan Versions* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard Univ. Press, 1968), 2. Very little of the work of Dharmapāla survives in the original Sanskrit. For bibliographical information on Dharmapāla's corpus as it survives mainly in Chinese, see Tom Tillemans, *Materials for the study of Āryaveda, Dharmapāla, and Candrakīrti: the Catuḥśataka of Āryadeva*, chapters XII and XIII with the commentaries of Dharmapāla and Candrakīrti (Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 2008), 1-2.

⁹ For the stipulation on the semantic range of the Sanskrit word *ātman* as similar to the semantic range of the English word “soul,” see William K. Mahony, “Concepts of the Soul in Indian Religions,” in *Death, Afterlife, and the Soul*, ed., Lawrence E. Sullivan (New York: MacMillan, 1987), 189: “If by soul one denotes a dimension to human life that is distinguished from corporeal existence and that to a large extent determines the nature of the human being, then one could rightly say that the various religions and philosophies of South Asia posit the existence of a soul (the most notable exception being the materialistic views of the Cārvāka and Lokāyata philosophies, which maintain that a person is nothing more than a conglomeration of physical matter.” Mahony translates the Buddhist terminology of *anātman* as “no-soul.”

that survives death” (Chi.: *shen bumie* 神不滅)¹⁰ from the textual corpus of Chinese Buddhism. The Buddhist debates around the existence, or the non-existence of the spiritual soul, span from third to the eighth century C.E.¹¹ The textual dispute, regarding the role of the soul in dying and death, is illustrated in the choices, made by scholars over several centuries, in the translations of the Sanskrit words, *ātman* and *pudgala*, into Chinese. For example, in the Eastern Han dynasty (25-220 C.E.) the Buddhist translator of the Abhidharma texts, An Shigao 安世高 (fl. c. 148-180 C.E.), uses the word, *shen*, to translate the Brāhmaṇical idea of the *ātman*, and the Buddhist conceptualization of the *pudgala*.¹² In his analysis of the translations of the Abhidharma treatises by An Shigao, Lai (1986) isolates two levels of meanings in the use of the word *shen*: first, *shen* describes the permanent *ātman*, soul, or self, and secondly, *shen* describes the part of the sentient being that bears karma from one life to the next. Of the two translation choices made by An Shigao, Lai writes: “If it is the former, then it was a mistake; but if it is the latter, without implying the former, then it is not illegitimate.”¹³

In his study on the emergence of beliefs in the afterlife in early medieval China, Bokenkamp (2007) argues that between the second and the fifth centuries C.E.¹⁴ beliefs in the

¹⁰ For the translation of *shen bu mie* as “the spirit survives death,” see Michael Radich, “A ‘Prehistory’ to Chinese Debates on the Survival of Death by the Spirit, With a Focus on the Term *Shishen* 識神/*Shenshi* 神識,” *Journal of Chinese Religions*, 44.2 (2016), 106.

¹¹ For the history of the term *shen* and its role in the arguments for the survivability of death in the centuries prior to Xuanzang, see Kawano Satoshi 河野訓, “‘Chūu’ ‘shin’ kanyaku kō” 中有神 漢訳考, in *Higashi Ajia Bukkyō kenkyū* 東アジア仏教研究 1 (2003), 6-12; also Walter Liebenthal, “Immortality of the Soul in Chinese Thought,” in *Monumenta Nipponica* 8, no. 1 (1952), 332-38.

¹² Whalen Lai adduces the 3rd-century scholar Chen Hui’s 陳慧 view that the *shen* survives death in Chen’s commentary on An Shigao’s *Yinchi rujing* 陰持入經: “When we examine Chen Hui’s discussion of the ‘indestructible soul,’ we find that this *shen-pu-mie* doctrine pertains to the survival of the *viññāna* at death and its qualified continuance into the womb of its next rebirth.” See Lai’s article, “The Early Chinese Buddhist Understanding of the Psyche: Chen Hui’s Commentary on the *Yin Chih Ju Ching*,” in *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 9, no. 1 (1986), 87.

¹³ Ibid., 89.

¹⁴ Stephen R. Bokenkamp, *Ancestors and Anxiety: Daoism and the Birth of Rebirth in China* (Berkeley: Univ of California Press, 2007).

afterlife and of rebirth became entrenched among both Buddhists and non-Buddhists in China. According to Paxton (1990), this is roughly the same period of time in the Latin West during which “attention began to focus on the resurrection of the dead and their care within the indefinite interim that would precede it.”¹⁵ There is evidence that rites to propitiate the spirits of the war dead were first performed by the Emperor Taizong during the early years of the Tang Dynasty.¹⁶ These rituals are predicated on the notion of an intermediate state or *bardo* (Skt.: *antarābhava*; Chi.: *zhongyou* 中有) that precedes the reincarnation of the deceased into a new corporeal body.

Chinese beliefs in the afterlife and of rebirth operate according to multiple logics and have roots in both Buddhist teachings and pre-Buddhist Chinese antecedents. Stone (2016) refers to the complex of related beliefs in the afterlife and of rebirth following death in early medieval Japan as the “mortuary complex.”¹⁷ As Stone (2016) argues, pre-modern Japanese beliefs in the possibility of improving the course of dying operated according to multiple systems of “deathbed logic.”¹⁸ Stone (2016) describes these systems of “deathbed logic” as “a repertoire of resources that prove useful in dealing with the tensions and inconsistencies when studying approaches to dying and death.”¹⁹

Rituals for the dying and the deceased practiced in early medieval China have deep roots in both Buddhist and pre-Buddhist customs. Nevertheless, core to the deathbed logic that emerges

¹⁵ Frederick S. Paxton, *Christianizing Death: The Creation of a Ritual Process in Early Medieval Europe* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 1990), 24.

¹⁶ See “Tang Taizong's Edict Ordering the Carrying Out of The Way of Rites of Purity for the War Dead” 唐太宗為戰亡人設齋行道詔,” *Guang Hongming ji* 廣弘明集, fascicle 28, T2103:52.329.a08-20; cited in Ōtani Kōshō's *Tōdai no Bukkyō Girei* 唐代の佛教儀礼 (**Tang Dynasty Buddhist Rituals*), vol. 2, 46.

¹⁷ See Jacqueline Stone, *Right Thoughts at the Last Moment: Buddhism and Deathbed Practices in Early Medieval Japan* (Honolulu: Kuroda Institute, Univ. of Hawai'i Press, 2016), 9.

¹⁸ According to Stone, *Right Thoughts at the Last Moment*, 7, foremost among the principles of this deathbed logic was the idea that “the last thought is so powerful as to override the wrongdoings of a lifetime, enabling a superior rebirth, or even liberation itself.”

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.

during the period studied by Bokenkamp (2007) is the belief in a permanent soul that departs the body at the moment of death and continues onto the afterlife. As Yü Ying-shih (1987) shows, by the Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220 C.E.), a variety of terms had emerged to denote the spiritual part of the human that survives death and continues onto the afterlife.²⁰ These terms include “cloud soul” (Chi.: *hun* 魂), “white soul” (Chi.: *po* 魄),²¹ “pnema” (Chi.: *ling* 靈), and “spirit” (Chi.: *shen* 神).

In the fifth century, the translators of the Abhidharma and Yogācāra texts from the Prajñā schools (Chi.: *Bore zong* 般若宗) of Chinese Buddhism, in the context of discussions of karma and rebirth, use the word spirit, or *shen*, to denote the *pudgala*. Here the scholars of the Prajñā schools refer to the *pudgala* as the part of sentient being that survives death and continues into the afterlife. In his translation of the *Āgamas*, the fifth-century Buddhist scholar, Gautama Saṃghadeva (Chi.: Qutan Sengqietipo 瞿曇僧伽提婆), uses the word *shen* to describe the element of consciousness (Skt.: *viññāna*) that is transmitted from one life to the next.²²

In their translations of the masterworks of the Indic Abhidharma and Yogācāra traditions, Xuanzang and his coterie of scholars strive to expiate the doctrines of the supernatural spirit, soul,

²⁰ Yü Ying-shih writes of the pre-Buddhist picture: “The general picture...reflects what all our evidence tells us, but no claim is made that the beliefs described constitute in any strict sense a unified belief system, much less the only one, embraced by all the Chinese of the Han empire throughout the four centuries of its existence.” See Yü Ying-shih, “O Soul, Come Back! A Study in The Changing Conceptions of The Soul and Afterlife in Pre-Buddhist China,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 47, no. 2 (1987), 363.

²¹ Yü Ying-shih, “Oh Soul, Come back!” 365: writes of the role of the *hun* and *po* in the death of the human: “At the moment when death first occurs, the living cannot bear to believe that their beloved one has really left them for good. The living must first assume that the departure of the *hun*-soul is only temporary. It is possible, then, that if the departed soul can be summoned back the dead may be brought to life. A person can be pronounced dead when the *fu* 復 (“summons”) ritual has failed to achieve its purpose.” For more on the interaction between the *hun* and *po* souls, see Yü, “Oh Soul, Come Back!” 369-378.

²² For instance, in the *Ekôttarikâgama* 增壹阿含經, translated by Gautama Saṃghadeva in 397 C.E., the “seven abodes of consciousness” (Skt.: *saptaviññāna-sthitayah*) are rendered as “seven abodes of spirit” 七神止處 — see T125:2.7.30-31. Across his translation corpus, Xuanzang renders this Sanskrit terminology using the Chinese character *shi* 識, meaning, “consciousness,” while eschewing the character *shen*.

and person, entrenched within the Chinese Buddhist scriptures.²³ In their seventh-century translations of the Abhidharma and Yogācāra texts, Xuanzang and his team of translators refrain from using the word *shen* 神, unless they are specifically referring to the Brāhmanical *ātman*. The word *shen* is notably missing in their Chinese translations of the Indic texts containing the Buddhist teachings.

In the first English translation of the ninth chapter of the *Treasury of Metaphysics* by Vasubandhu, the Russian Buddhist scholar, Stcherbatsky (1919), like Xuanzang centuries before him, takes the Buddhist *pudgala* to be tantamount to an *ātman*.²⁴ In his translation of the Abhidharma masterwork of Vasubandhu, Stcherbatsky uses the word, soul, to describe the *pudgala*. Implicit in this translation choice is the understanding by Stcherbatsky that the soul is equated to the *pudgala*. Here Stcherbatsky follows the precedent established by Xuanzang and his colleagues that repudiates the use of the word, soul, in Buddhist discussions of dying and death.

The legacy of the translation decisions made by Xuanzang and his coterie of scholars and scribes to distance Buddhism from the notion of the soul is evident in the recent work of Stone (2016) and Watson (2014).²⁵ In her study of deathbed rituals in medieval Japan, Stone (2016) makes the important point, that by using the word, soul, in a discussion of the Buddhist doctrine

²³ According to Radich, “The Survival of Death by the Spirit,” ideas about the survival of death by consciousness in the context of 5th- and 6th-century debates on the perishability or imperishability of *shen*, became deeply intertwined with Yogācāra debates about the purity or impurity of consciousness. For the doctrine of the “immaculate” *amalavijñāna*, postulated by the prolific 6th-century translator Paramārtha, see Radich, “The Doctrine of **Amalavijñāna* in Paramārtha (499-569), and Later Authors to Approximately 800 C.E.,” in *Zinbun*, No. 41, (2008), 45-174; also Yoshimura Makoto 吉村誠, *Chūgoku yuishiki shisō kenkyū: Genjō to Yuishiki gakuō* 中国唯識思想史研究—玄奘と唯識学派 (*A Study of the History of the Chinese Yogācāra Philosophy: Xuanzang and the Weishi School*) (Tokyo: Daizō Shuppan, 2014), 164-183, *passim*.

²⁴ See Fyodor Stcherbatsky, “The Soul Theory of the Buddhists,” in *Bulletin de l'Academie des Sciences de Russie* (1919), 823-958.

²⁵ Alex Watson, “The Self as a Dynamic Constant: Rāmakaṇṭha’s Middle Ground Between a Naiyāyika Eternal Self-Substance and a Buddhist Stream of Consciousness-Moments,” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 42, no. 1 (2014), 173-193.

of dying and death, scholars risk distorting the meaning of the Buddhist teachings. Stone writes: “The no-self doctrine rejects the notion of anything self-existent: unchanging, independent of conditions, existing under its own power.”²⁶ This study takes a methodological cue from scholars ranging from Xuanzang to Stone, by avoiding the term soul in the discussions of the Buddhist texts on dying and death. The word, soul, is used only in discussions of the Brāhmaṇical doctrine of the *ātman*.

In his study of the Buddhist-Brāhmaṇical debates about the self, Watson (2014), crystalizes the question about the birth, death and the transmigration and reincarnation of the self as follows: “The Brāhmaṇical self, with its permanently unchanging essence, dissolves in Buddhism into a diachronic and synchronic plurality. The self, since it endures permanently, beyond death, is what explains reincarnation for the Brāhmaṇical schools. In other words, it is that which means we continue to be the same thing when we have a different body, in a different incarnation, or no body, between incarnations. How then can the Buddhists, in whose teachings reincarnation occupies an important place, explain the process?”²⁷ This study follows the question eloquently posed by Watson (2006) in his examination of the Buddhist-Brāhmaṇical debates.

In their recent work on the influences of Xuanzang on the Buddhist doctrine, Sakuma (2006)²⁸ and Yoshimura (2014)²⁹ employ a source criticism³⁰ based methodology that isolates the

²⁶ Stone, *Right Thoughts at the Last Moment*, 12.

²⁷ Alex Watson, *The Self's Awareness of Itself: Bhaṭṭa Rāmakaṇṭha's Arguments Against the Buddhist Doctrine of No-Self* (Budapest, Hungary: Interpress Co. Ltd., 2006), 174.

²⁸ Sakuma, H., “On doctrinal similarities between Sthiramati and Xuanzang,” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, 29.2 (2006), 357-82.

²⁹ Yoshimura, *A History of the Chinese Yogācāra Philosophy*, 3-5.

³⁰ Following Floss, who derives his definition from Biblical scholarship, this study stipulates that source criticism consists in the investigation of a source, that is “...a written document...in order to shed light on the origin/provenance and contexts of past historical events and/or people.” See his “Form, Source, and Redaction Criticism,” in the *Oxford Handbook of Biblical Studies*, edited by Judith M. Lieu and J. W. Rogerson (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2008), 30.

doctrinal position of Xuanzang and compares his texts with both previous and contemporary authors within the Indic Buddhist tradition, including Sthiramati and Dharmapāla. Source criticism methodology, often used in biblical studies, examines the full body of sources that are used by a translator or an author, to determine the final form of a scripture. Modern source criticism methodology was first employed in the analytical study of the sources of the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Hebrew Bible, in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. This research method involves isolating and identifying the similarities and the differences between the early sources and the doctrine that is represented in the final version of the text. In the Buddhist source criticism method used in this study, the Tibetan and Sanskrit sources, and the earlier Chinese translations of the Indic texts used by Xuanzang in his exegesis of dying and death, are read and compared to the translations by Xuanzang of the same texts. For example, in determining the doctrinal position taken by Xuanzang on the Buddhist *puḍgala*, references that are made to the *puḍgala* by Vasubandhu in the Sanskrit, Tibetan, or earlier Chinese versions of the *Treasury of Abhidharma*, are compared to the translations of the same references to the *puḍgala* in the translation of the *Treasury of Abhidharma* composed by Xuanzang. Where the original Sanskrit texts are not available, recourse is made to the Tibetan translations, or to the earlier Chinese versions of the sūtras and śāstras examined by Xuanzang.

Despite the historical importance of Xuanzang, and his proximity to, and his influence on, the Second Tang Emperor, Taizong, and the Third Tang Emperor, Gaozong, there is no secondary scholarship on the translation corpus of Xuanzang regarding the topics on dying and death. This study is the first exploration of the exegesis and translations of the Indic texts on the topic of dying and death conducted by Xuanzang and his large coterie of Buddhist scholars, commentators, translators, and scribes during the early years of the Tang dynasty. This examination follows the

exploration of Xuanzang into nature of what lives and dies, if not a self.

Using a textual analysis of the corpus of Xuanzang and his colleagues, this study treats the mode of translation employed by Xuanzang as a demonstration of the process by which he, and his Tang Buddhist collaborators, arrive at a conceptualization of dying and death that does not rely upon the presence, or the absence, of a spiritual soul. The first chapter describes the Buddhist enumeration of the *indriyas*, the foundational theory that Xuanzang uses to determine, in meticulous detail, what is lost when a sentient being dies. The second chapter examines the analysis of the Brāhmaṇical scriptures that Xuanzang employs in addressing the entrenched heterodox view of the deprivation of the *ātman* in dying. The third chapter examines the presentations of good, bad, and karmically neutral ways of dying that are illustrated in the Yogācāra portion of the translation corpus of Xuanzang and his collaborators. The final chapter examines the definition provided by Xuanzang in his translation of the Abhidharma and Yogācāra texts that describes how a sentient being, by improving the quality of the spiritual *indriyas*, can obtain a better death and rebirth.

In their exegesis and translations of the Abhidharma and Yogācāra canon, Xuanzang and his colleagues look to the *Āgamas* and examine the teachings of the Buddha on the topic of reincarnation. Xuanzang determines that the Buddha relies upon the theory of the *indriyas* to explain the locus of transmigration of a sentient being, from this life to the next. He then turns to an analysis of the ancient scriptures of the Sāṅkhya and Vaiśeṣika traditions and examines how the theories of karma and the *indriyas* posited by the ancient Brāhmaṇical scholars, square with the ideas held by the contemporary Brāhmaṇical scholars at Nālanda. Xuanzang finds that the Brāhmaṇical scholars, past and present, cling to the notion of an enduring self that bears the karma of the sentient being. Xuanzang determines that, because the karma of Buddhism is mutable, unlike

the permanent and unchanging soul of the Brāhmaṇical tradition, a sentient being can improve the quality of dying and the afterlife. By practicing yoga, and by performing meritorious actions, even a sentient being freighted with bad karma can alter and improve the quality of death and afterlife. In his exegesis of dying, Xuanzang rediscovers the message of the Buddha, that for all sentient beings, karma is not destiny.

Chapter 1: What is Death?

What is death? In 645 C.E., Xuanzang, after sixteen years of travelling from China to India and back, returns home to Chang'an to devote himself to the work of translating the Indic sūtras he gathers during his residency in India. After nearly dying of thirst during a perilous crossing of the Taklamakan desert, Xuanzang turns to Buddhism to understand his existential fear of death. In his efforts to master his fear of dying and death, Xuanzang returns to the ancient Indic scriptures that describe the impermanence of life and the tenet of no-self. Tranquility comes to Xuanzang in his recognition that death marks a transition in the cycle of death and rebirth rather than the end of an enduring or unchanging self. This chapter analyzes the exegetical process undertaken by Xuanzang in his exploration into the nature of death.

During his study of the Indic Buddhist scriptures of dying and death, Xuanzang determines that death is a particular form of deprivation, the loss of a certain number of faculties (Skt.: *indriyas*; Chi.: *gen* 根) that sustain life. The definition of death that Xuanzang comes to endorse, emerges out of his uncompromising commitment to the core Buddhist tenet of no-self. The doctrine of no-self means that a sentient being cannot be reduced to any singular or unchanging core that becomes reincarnated after death. For Xuanzang, the definition of death, as the loss of an immortal soul, is antithetical to the Buddhist ideal of liberation, the relinquishment of clinging to a static, or unchanging self. The doctrine of no-self presents a thorny question, however: What is lost in death if not a self? Simply put, when an individual dies, who, or what dies?

This chapter examines the systematic discussions on the nature of death found in the translations of the early Indic Buddhist literature by Xuanzang. It follows the exegesis of death conducted by Xuanzang and begins with his analysis of the Abhidharma, the elaboration of the the ancient sūtras that contain the teachings of the Buddha. After examining and translating the

Abhidharma texts, Xuanzang turns to the Yogācāra discussions on the theory of the *indriyas*, the doctrine that defines and categorizes the faculties that maintain the vital processes of sentient life. Throughout his exhaustive study of the Indic texts, Xuanzang upholds his commitment to the Buddhist doctrine no-self. Ultimately his analysis leads him to define the death of a sentient being as the deprivation of a plural constituency of vital faculties, or *indriyas*, rather than as the annihilation of any single living entity.

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section presents the translation and explication by Xuanzang of the Abhidharma taxonomy of the twenty-two *indriyas*. It addresses two questions: What are the essential components of life? What is deprived in death? The second section examines the response offered by Xuanzang to the related question: What distinguishes the living organism from the corpse?

Section One: What are the Essential Components of Life?

Xuanzang begins his exploration into the nature of death by examining the essential components of life. In coming to his definition of death, Xuanzang conducts an intensive examination of the theory of the *indriyas*, the doctrine that describes the physical and intrapsychic strengths and abilities that provide the foundational basis for all sentient life. The taxonomies of different *indriyas*, the listings of the faculties that compose all species of sentient life, are attested in the *Āgamas*, and other Buddhist and Brāhmanical texts. For Xuanzang, the *indriyas* are roughly equivalent to the modern-day human genome.³¹ The *indriyas* are the primary elements of life that

³¹ This study employs the term “genome” merely to indicate the range of conspecific traits that are inherited by members of a certain genus of sentient being. In Xuanzang's cosmological understanding, the six genera of sentient beings – namely, celestials, humans, non-human animals, hungry-ghosts, hellish beings, and transitory beings – are each defined by a specific number and type of faculties that is pre-determined by phylogenetics. However, this number and type of faculties will vary within a specific genus based upon the factor of *dhātu* or transmigratory realm. This idea of variability of genetic trait depending upon the specific karmic standing of the individual is not captured under the conventional modern understanding of the inheritability of genetic traits,

are responsible for initiating and sustaining the physical and cognitive functions that allow a sentient being to survive and thrive. The number and the type of *indriyas* that are possessed by a sentient being determines the range of capacities that a sentient being can execute, as well as the conditions that are required for its ongoing survival. Because the *indriyas* are regarded as the essential elements that sustain life, the deterioration of the *indriyas* determines the ultimate demise of a sentient being. The definition of death that Xuanzang comes to endorse during his comprehensive exegesis of the Buddhist and Brāhmaṇical texts, is thus founded on the theory of the *indriyas*.

The word, *indriya*, is derived from the verbal root \sqrt{ind} , which means, “to be powerful.” The word, *indriya*, first appears in the *R̥g Veda*³² and is frequently mentioned in the Hindu and Buddhist literature. In the ancient scriptures, the word *indriya* refers to the spiritual and physical powers that belong to Indra, the supreme deity of the Vedic pantheon. Because the word *indriya* is associated with the name of the most powerful of the Hindu deities, it is synonymous with potency. The doctrine of the *indriyas* is significant within the Buddhist tradition, as in his sermons, the Buddha expounds upon the *indriyas* as the essential components of life.

In an effort to provide an account of death that conforms to the Buddhist teachings, the

according to which “a genetic individual is a genetically homogenous unit.” See Wilson's clear stipulation on the conventional modern scientific notion of genetic individuality in *Biological Individuality: The Identity and Persistence of Living Entities* (New York: Cambridge Studies in Philosophy and Biology, 1999), 64-65. Wilson's view of what constitutes a biological individual is predicated on the idea of numerical identity of all species defined by a discrete genetic code. This entails that “a population of clones is a single genetic individual whether the clones are physically connected or not.” As this study argues, Xuanzang maintains a less rigid definition of “conspecificity” (Skt.: *sabhāgatā*; Chi.: *tongzhong fen* 同眾分) that is predicated on qualitative identity of biological traits within a given species, without implying a strict sense of numerical identity of genome across all members of a species.

³² Mizuno Kōgen 水野弘元 (1901-2006) writes: “the word *indriya* has existed since the time of the *R̥g Vedas*. Initially, it was regarded as a descriptor for or quality of the god Indra. Since Indra possesses predominant power among the gods, he is thus regarded to indicate the ‘sovereign power.’ Later, it [the word] is taken to represent humanity's powers of life, physical force, natural ability, perception, movement, etc.” – see *Mizuno Kōgen Anthology* (ed. Shi Huimin 釋惠敏, 2008), 133.

Abhidharma editors closely examine the nature and characteristics of the *indriyas*. The literature of the Northern transmission of the Buddhist Abhidharma offers the earliest attempt to systematize the contents of the sermons of the Buddha on the topic of the *indriyas* into a logically-ordered taxonomy of the *indriyas*.³³ Skilling observes that “no single discourse in Pāli lists all twenty-two faculties.”³⁴ The list of the twenty-two *indriyas* first appears in the *Jñānaprasthāna śāstra*, the *Treatise on the Basis of Gnosis*, a commentary on sūtra literature dating to the first century B.C.E.³⁵

The taxonomy of the twenty-two *indriyas* is first standardized and codified in the *Mahāvibhāṣa*, a voluminous compendium written by five hundred Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma experts around 150 C.E. The Sarvāstivādin authors of the *Mahāvibhāṣa* present a consolidated list of the twenty-two *indriyas* that are clustered into five discrete sets. Essentially, the Sarvāstivādin scholars catalog the twenty-two *indriyas* and then group them into taxonomic categories that

³³ On the frequent appearance of the Buddha's disputes with the Brahmin Jātiśroṇa 梵志生聞 (studied in chapter 2) in intra-Buddhist doctrinal debates about the nature of the *indriya*, Skilling remarks: “*indriya* does not seem to figure conspicuously, however, in debates between the Buddhist and other Indian traditions, although further research may qualify this statement. Whatever the case, sūtra citation was *hors de propos* in debates with ‘outsiders’ or non-Buddhists; it mattered only in debates among the Buddhists themselves.” See Skilling, “Discourse on the Twenty-Two Faculties. Translated From Śamathadeva’s *Upāyikā-Ṭīkā*,” In L. Shrivak and C. Willemen, eds., *Dharmapracaya: Aspects of Buddhist Studies, Essays in Honour of Professor Narayan Hemandas Samtani* (Delhi: Buddhist World Press, 2012), 430. Skilling hedges slightly on this provocative stance later on, citing Rhys Davids and Stede’s *Pāli Text Society: Pāli-English Dictionary* (London: Routledge and Kegan, 1922, reprint 1972, 122) entry that explains: “this system of 22 *indriyāṇi* reflects a revised and more elaborate form of the 25 (or 23) categories *tattvas* of the Sāṅkhya philosophy.” The present investigation does not assume any direct correlation or historical link between Buddhist or Brāhmaṇical taxonomies of faculties. Rather, in taking a methodological cue from Skilling, “Discourse on the Twenty-Two Faculties,” the examination of the *Jātiśroṇa sūtra* in chapter 2 of this dissertation focuses on the immediate context of the usage of this particular sūtra within intra-Buddhist doctrinal debates, while recognizing the general commensurability of the key term – the *indriya* – in both parties to the broader rationalistic tradition of Buddhist-Brāhmaṇical debate. Disputes aired within the more ecumenical forum of this logical system are believed to withstand the scrutiny of different religious and philosophical traditions, and their logical conclusions believed to stand independently of any religious dogma.

³⁴ Skilling, “Discourse on the Twenty-Two Faculties,” 431.

³⁵ For discussion on the *terminus post quem* of *Jñānaprasthāna śāstra*, see , C. Willemen, Bart Dessein, and Collett Cox, eds., *Sarvāstivāda Buddhist Scholasticism* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 221-229, *passim*; also Frauwallner, *Studies in Abhidharma Literature*, trans. Erich Steinkellner and Sophie Francis Kidd (Albany: SUNY Univ. Press, 1998), 141. Shastri undertook a Sanskrit restoration of the *Jñānaprasthāna* of Kātyāniputra, et al., based upon the Chinese text of Xuanzang — see Santi Bhikṣu Sastri, trans., *Jñānaprasthāna-śāstra of Kātyāyaniputra, Retranslated into Sanskrit From Chinese Version of Hsuan Tsang*, (Santiniketan: Visvabharati, 1955).

correspond to different forms of sentient life. This is the first time a systematic taxonomy of this nature appears in the Buddhist literature. The Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma taxonomy of the *indriyas* thus becomes the standard from the second century to the present day.

In the fourth century, the prodigious Abhidharma scholar, Vasubandhu, reaffirms the ancient doctrine of the twenty-two *indriyas* in his *Treasury of Abhidharma*. While defending the doctrinal edifice of the twenty-two *indriyas* as presented in the *Mahāvibhāṣa*, Vasubandhu takes steps to streamline the taxonomy of twenty-two faculties into ten clear and cohesive verses. Xuanzang, in his translations of the *Mahāvibhāṣa*, and the *Treasury of Abhidharma*, reaffirms the Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma teachings of the faculties, while integrating the rigorous and critical perspectives given by Vasubandhu on the *indriyas* in his writings. Xuanzang relies upon these venerable source materials to come to his determination that death is the deprivation of the *indriyas*.

Xuanzang on the *Indriyas*

In his development of the definition of death, Xuanzang examines the original Abhidharma literature, and the commentary by Vasubandhu, on the subject of the taxonomy of the twenty-two *indriyas*. The doctrine of the *indriyas* that is explicated in the Abhidharma sources provides Xuanzang with the doctrinal foundations for his investigation into the nature of death. In his compilation and translation of the entire *Mahāvibhāṣa*, the *Great Abhidharma Commentary*, Xuanzang codifies a standard taxonomy of the twenty-two *indriyas* into specific sequences and precise categories. Hewing closely to text of the *Mahāvibhāṣa*, Xuanzang enumerates and defines the *indriyas*, and organizes them into a coherent sequence of twenty-two faculties that are contained within five groups. The taxonomy of the *indriyas* derived by Xuanzang is elaborated in

both the Abhidharma and Yogācāra portions of his translation corpus.³⁶ The taxonomy of the twenty-two *indriyas* that is established by Xuanzang becomes the theoretical paradigm, and the inviolable standard, that is followed by all scholars of Buddhism in East Asia.

Xuanzang translates the existing portions of the *Mahāvibhāṣa* in China, and the recovered portions of the *Mahāvibhāṣa* from India, from the original Sanskrit into Chinese, between August 18th, 656 C.E. and July 27th, 659 C.E.³⁷ He completes this project while ensconced in a capacious studio inside the Imperial Palace of the Tang Emperor Gaozong. Xuanzang is assisted by a staff of twenty scribes who transcribe, proofread, and polish the verse and prose of Xuanzang's oral renditions of the texts of the *Mahāvibhāṣa*. His coterie of translators and scribes also endeavor to corroborate Xuanzang's oral translations with the Chinese and Indic source materials. The materials found in the *Mahāvibhāṣa* constitute the most complete presentation of the twenty-two *indriyas* available in any source. Xuanzang's translation of the *Mahāvibhāṣa* is significant in that it makes the doctrine and systematic exegesis of the *indriyas* available for the first time to a Chinese readership.³⁸

³⁶ On the Abhidharma side, the sources transmitted by Xuanzang back to the Capital of Chang'an of China's Tang Dynasty include *Mahāvibhāṣa*, the sourcebook upon which the *Mahāvibhāṣa* is roughly structured, and the *JñāP*, among a number of other works -- constituting the entirety of parts one, two, and four Taishō volumes, Titles No. 1536-44, 1545, and 1558-1563. Colophon of the latter work of Taishō, the **Dhātu-kāya* translated by Xuanzang in 3 fascicles says that this treatise is the fourth of six "legs" of the exegetical literature on the *Jñānaprasthāna*. 界身足論者，說一切有部發智六足之一足也 (T1540:26.625, c10). Completed on Fri., July 14th, 663 唐龍朔三年六月四日, according to the author of this colophon, disciple Kuiji 窺基 (or *Ji*, for short): Japanese pronunciation: Ki). This study refers to him by his full name. For the analysis of the biographical sources see Stanley Weinstein's groundbreaking study -- "A Biographical Study of Tz'ü-ên," *Monumenta Nipponica* 15 (1959), 119-49. The list is mentioned in this work translated by Xuanzang, titled *Treatise on the Categories and Grades*. The list of twenty-two faculties according to Xuanzang's hereafter standard sequence is also found in his translation of Sthiramati's 安惠 *Commentary on the Authentic Doctrine of the Treasury of Abhidharma* 俱舍論實義疏 (Taishō Vol. 29 No. 1561), discovered by Pelliot at Dunhuang in Western Gansu Province of P.R.C. China. The *terminus pro quem* for the cache in the library cave at Dunhuang is disputed, but by the most conservative estimate falls around roughly, ca. late 10th-century.

³⁷ Dates according to colophon (T1545:27.419).

³⁸ The Xuanzang translation of the *Mahāvibhāṣā* is one of three extant texts of roughly the same name, but varying in length, all preserved in the Chinese canon. Xuanzang's text in two-hundred fascicles was translated into Chinese between 656–659 at the translation studio 譯館 inside the Tang Imperial palace. The earlier

The exegesis of the discussions on the twenty-two *indriyas* is found in the section of the Chinese translation of the *Mahāvibhāṣa* by Xuanzang and his coterie, entitled, “Chapter On the Faculties” (Skt.: *Indriya-varga*; Chi.: *Gen naxi* 根納息).³⁹ In this chapter, Xuanzang provides an explicit rationale for the taxonomy of the faculties and takes great pains to do three things: to precisely define each of the twenty-two *indriyas*, to group them into five categories, and to provide a theoretical basis for the taxonomic classification.

Xuanzang on the Earliest Taxonomy of the Twenty-Two Faculties

The full translation of the *Mahāvibhāṣa* by Xuanzang and his team unfurls across more than two hundred papyrus rolls (Chi.: *juan* 卷), or fascicles. The “Chapter on Faculties” occupies one fifth of the entire text, and begins in the one hundred and forty-second roll of the two hundred roll text.

The “Chapter on Faculties” opens with a definition of the word, *indriya*. The text reads: “The *indriya* means the master 主義是根義.”⁴⁰ With this definitive statement, Xuanzang

recensions are the **Vibhāṣā-śāstra* 鞞婆沙論 (Taishō 1547) translated by *Saṅghabhūti/Saṅghabhadra 僧伽跋澄 et al. in 383; and the **Abhidharma-vibhāṣā-śāstra* 阿毘曇毘婆沙論 (Taishō, Vol. 28, No. 1546), translated by Buddhavarman 浮陀跋摩, Daotai 道泰 et al., in 437–439 CE. Radich (2010) arrives at the conclusion that “These three texts are best treated as plural texts in a genre of *vibhāṣā* commentary, rather than as parallel translations of the same text.” There is evidence that more such texts existed and were lost, and that others in the genre were based upon other texts. Also see Charles Willemen, Bart Dessein and Collett Cox, *Sarvāstivāda Buddhist Scholasticism* on “The *Vibhāṣā* Compendia,” 229–39.

³⁹ The full title of this section is “Chapter (*varga*) the Sixth on the Aggregate (*Skandha*) and Faculty (*Indriya*): Section I.A” 根蘊第六中根納息第一之一 runs for more than 71 pages in the modern Japanese Taishō edition (T27, no. 1545, p.728c02-p.796, a17), and is organized into five sections with individual subsections, each counting for one folio in Xuanzang's text: I.A-E; II.A-E; II.A-e; IIIA-B; IV.A-E; V.A. The discussion of faculties in the previous Vibh translations by Buddhavarman 浮陀跋摩 (trans. 437 in sixty fasc.) and by Saṅghabhadra 僧伽跋澄, Zhu Fonian 竺佛念, et al. run for only eight pages each.

⁴⁰ Vibh 142 says: There are those amongst the ranks of the wayfarers (*tīrthikas*, i.e., non-Buddhists) who say that there are one-hundred-and-twenty faculties. Namely, there are two faculties each for vision, audition, and olfaction – six in total. The faculties managing gustation, tactition/proprioception, vitality, along with the five hedonic faculties, along with with the five [skillful] faculties including faith, etc., together amount to twenty-six. Then within each transmigratory destiny (*gati*) there are another twenty [faculties] for a total of one-hundred-and-twenty [faculties]. They say that the jealous gods (*asurās*) count as a sixth destiny. They elaborate that there are one-hundred-and-twenty masters – for example, the masters of heaven, nagas, *asurās*, humans, etc. – the main

references the primordial power of the *indriya* that is built into the very definition of the word.

Following the Sarvāstivādin editors, Xuanzang invokes the cosmology of ancient Buddhism to illustrate the primeval potency of the *indriyas*. The Sarvāstivādin editors use the metaphor of the rulers over the inhabitants of the four continents of the Buddhist world: the Southern *Jambudvīpa* (the Rose-Apple Continent 南瞻部洲), the Western *Godanīya* (the Cow-Granting Continent 西牛貨洲), the *Uttarakuru* (the Northern Continent 北俱盧洲)⁴¹ and the *Pūrvavideha* (the Furthest Easterly Continent 東勝身洲),⁴² to illustrate the elemental power of the *indriyas*.⁴³ This metaphor is employed to make a doctrinal point: while the *indriyas* are powerful, they do not operate independently and ultimately derive their power through cooperative action.

In this simile, each of the twenty-two *indriyas* is likened to a sovereign power that reigns over a domain: the Cakravārtin king rules over human subjects, the Siṃha king rules over the lion kingdom, King Yāma rules over the demon kingdom, and so forth.⁴⁴ The Sarvāstivādin editors

point is that these beings experience a range of one-hundred-and-twenty loci.”復有說：百二十根，謂眼、耳、鼻各二為六。舌、身、意、命及五受根，信等五根總為二十，六趣各二十為百二十，彼說阿素洛為第六趣。This architectonic theory of one-hundred-and-twenty-faculties adduced in Vibh 142 classifies sentient beings in each of six *gatis* on the basis of twenty discrete faculties. In this system, counting twenty faculties per *gati* times six *gatis* amounts to the total of one hundred twenty faculties.

⁴¹ *Monier-Williams Skt. Dictionary*: “the country of the northern Kurus situated in the north of India, and described as the country of eternal beatitude.”

⁴² Xuanzang's translation of this Skt. *toponym* includes the character *shen* 身 meaning “body.” Xuanzang's disciple and prolific Kośa commentator Puguang 普光 takes his Master Xuanzang's favored rendition to also indicate how far “superior in physical features” 勝身洲身形勝 the inhabitants of this continent are. For starters, the average lifespan for humans in this continent is one millenium – see his *Study Notes on the Kośa* (fasc. 8) 俱舍論記 (T182:41.148.b25-6).

⁴³ The literal meaning of these toponyms is given in (parentheses).

⁴⁴ Saṅghabhadra, *Nyāyanusāra*, fasc. 9: We liken it to the Lion King, the chieftains of the villages and towns, the Wheel-turning-king (Cakravārtin), and so forth, because they are the most dominant over the animals, villages, towns, and the four continents [respectively]. 如師子王、及村邑長、轉輪王等。於獸、村邑、四大洲等，極增上故 (T1562:19.377.b07-8). This is a summary of the more elaborated gloss found in the *Mahāvibhāṣa*: These twenty-two faculties are likened to all (i.e., each and every) sentient being[s], although each and every has the meaning of “dominant,” and yet there is the predominant one. We liken to how in the ghostly realm, King Yāma is supreme/predominant among the *tiryāṇc* (e.g., mammalian kingdoms, that is “animals born viviparously”, “those born oviparously” [i.e., the various species of avian creatures], and the insect kingdom (AKBh3.6: “insects such as mosquitoes, moths, centipedes, and other wigglers.” 虫飛蛾蚊蚰蜒等 brought to birth “via spawning in

employ the synecdoche of the king reigning over a domain to illustrate three points. The first is that while the domains of each of the rulers overlap with one another, they are not mutually exhaustive or exclusive. The second is that while each sovereign presides over a specific kingdom, each sovereign can only obtain the full extent of his or her power through interaction with other rulers. The third is that because each kingdom overlaps with others, each king must forge alliances and collaborate with other kings to survive. For example, without an alliance with the Siṃha king, the subjects of the Cakravārtin monarch would be under the constant threat of attacks from lions.

Xuanzang uses this analogy in the *Mahāvibhāṣa* to illustrate three methodological tenets regarding the nature of the *indriyas*. The first is that, while each *indriya* presides over a specific and unique domain, the domains of each *indriya* overlap and are not exclusive of one another. The second is that no *indriya* can operate independently from other *indriyas*. The third point is that the full power of an *indriya* can only be obtained through interaction with other *indriyas*. Although each *indriya*, like each sovereign, is separate and distinct from other *indriyas*, and other sovereigns, the twenty-two *indriyas* and the sovereigns overlap and together empower the capacities of all sentient beings across the Buddhist cosmology. Like the four continents that comprise the entirety of the earth, the five categories of the twenty-two *indriyas* form a taxonomy that encompasses the entire spectrum of life.

moisture 潤生.”) The lion is the supreme king, in the towns and citadels the King is supreme and across the four continents the Cakravārtin is supreme; in the world of sensory desire (Skt.: *kāmadhātu*), Mahēśvara is supreme – across the triple chiliocosm the Brahmā King is supreme; across the three realms the Buddha is the preeminent one. The Buddha is termed the Dharma Master for he alone is peerless.” 如二十二根者，如一切有情，雖皆互有增上緣義。而有勝者。如鬼界中，琰摩王勝傍生趣中，師子王勝，村中主勝，國中王勝。四大洲中，轉輪王勝，於欲界中，自在天勝，千世界中，梵王為勝。於三界中，佛為最勝。佛於一切，有情類中，獨稱法王，無倫匹故 (T1545:27.730.c17-23). This is the most fleshed-out form of the standard gloss.

The Three Methodological Tenets on the Nature of the Faculties

Directly following the metaphor of the four continents in his translation of the *Mahāvibhāṣa*, Xuanzang introduces three methodological tenets regarding the nature of the *indriyas*. Firstly, he states that the *indriyas* constitute the necessary and jointly sufficient conditions for life. Secondly, he posits that each *indriya* obtains its power through coordination with other *indriyas*. Thirdly, he argues that the coordination of at least three *indriyas* is required to sustain life. Xuanzang uses these three methodological principles to specify the relationship of the *indriyas* to karma, the actions performed by a sentient being. These three points provide the methodological framework for understanding the elements of life and are therefore crucially important to the exploration by Xuanzang regarding what brings about the loss of life.

The first tenet holds that the *indriyas* constitute the necessary and jointly sufficient conditions for the survival of a sentient being because they have the quality of “dominance” (Skt.: *adhipati*; Chi.: *zengshang* 增上). The word “dominant” stands for the “ruler” (Skt.: *adhipa*)⁴⁵ and refers to the most powerful and dominant factor among a group of factors that work together to accomplish a specific action. Abhidharma sources classify each *indriya* under an umbrella category of the “dominant condition” (Skt.: *adipati-pratyaya*; Chi.: *zeng shangyuan* 增上緣)⁴⁶ for action. The dominant condition is the power assigned to an *indriya* to execute a specific action. For instance, the visual faculty supplies the dominant, or the necessary condition, for the action of seeing things. The first tenet qualifies the definition of dominance by qualifying that, although an *indriya* may constitute the dominant power needed to execute a certain action, it is not an

⁴⁵ Under the word *adhipa*, *Sir Monier-Williams Sanskrit Dictionary* (hereafter, MW) gives: “a ruler , commander, regent , king.

⁴⁶ 增上是根義 (T28, no. 1547, p. 441, c17).

autonomous source of power.⁴⁷ For example, while the visual faculty is dominant in the action of seeing things, vision requires the coordination of more than one *indriya*.

The second tenet holds that the coordination of multiple *indriyas* provides the necessary and jointly sufficient conditions for the survival of a sentient being. Each *indriya* obtains the power to sustain life *via* the cooperation with other *indriyas*, just as the monarch requires the assistance of others to fully exert his or her power and sustain the existence of the kingdom. Xuanzang makes the point that no single *faculty* works in isolation. He argues that the coordinated actions of specific groupings of *indriyas* are necessary to execute the activities that sustain the life of a sentient being.

The third tenet holds that the ongoing coordination of at least three *indriyas* is essential to life. The consequence of the third tenet is significant because it forms the basis for the definition of death. Here Xuanzang posits that the presence of at least three *indriyas*, working in coordinated action, distinguishes a living sentient being from a dead sentient being. Xuanzang specifies that it is the presence of multiple *indriyas*, in conjunction with their operational bases, the material organs within a body, that differentiates a living organism from a dead body. With the theory of the

⁴⁷ The idea that the faculty informs a “supreme autonomous source of power” (Skt.: *paramaiśvaryam*; Chi.: *zizai li* 自在力) is taken by Abhidharma theorists to be a part of the definition of *indriya* according to the rival Brāhmaṇical traditions of Sāṅkhya and Vaiśeṣika. However, the Buddhist accusation that Sāṅkhya faculties for action cannot form autonomous sources of causal efficacy appears misplaced, since they were not intended as such. In actuality, *Sāṅkhyakārikās* grants that the *indriya* of grasping – literally, two hands *qua indriya* is not a sufficient condition to grasp anything – discussion on these Buddhist anti-Brahmanica polemics is deferred until chapter two, section 2.2.11. The same goes for the two feet (*padau*) *qua* faculty or *pāṇēndriyam*. The vṛtti-commentary transmitted with Paramārtha's text of *Sāṅkhyakārikās* is explicit that the hands, feet, etc., are a metonymy for the faculties of “grasping,” (Skt.: *pāṇēndriyam*, lit., “two hands [*pāṇinī*] *qua* organ”) and “locomotion” (*pādēndriyam*, glossed as “two feet [*pāda*] *qua indriya*, as a whole. Furthermore, according to verse 27 (Dutt 1933, pp. 27-8) the faculty of grasping only executes tasks when it finds itself in conjunction with the mind -- also styled “the coordinating faculty” (Skt.: *saṃkalpakamindriyam*; Chi.: *xin-ping gen* 心平根). In light of such passages in the various commentaries on SK 25-8, the accusation that the Sāṅkhya faculties for action cannot form autonomous sources of causal efficacy is misplaced, since they were not intended as such. Rather, the *indriyam* must cooperate with the mind in order to execute any action. Chapter 2 (Sect. 2) tries to show that this view is partly based upon a mischaracterization, although it features heavily in anti-Brāhmaṇical polemics.

indriyas, Xuanzang comes to determine that the presence of at least three *indriyas*, working in conjunction with the material organs, defines the difference between life and death.⁴⁸

The Abhidharma authorities cited in the *Mahāvibhāṣa* unanimously agree that life consists in specific groupings of multiple *indriyas* that operate simultaneously in a body. Life is specifically differentiated from the corporeal body, and from the material organs, by the operations of the *indriyas*. Xuanzang underscores the idea that the *indriyas* work in conjunction with other *indriyas* and the physical organs of the body. He explicitly draws a line between the living organism and its material corporeality, by stating that life is the participation of plural *indriyas* cooperating throughout the physical body. His translation reads: “Life is not simply having a body” 命者非即身.⁴⁹

The Taxonomy of the Twenty-Two Faculties

In his translation of the *Mahāvibhāṣa*, Xuanzang categorizes the twenty-two *indriyas* into five sets or groupings. While various lists containing the twenty-two *indriyas* are found in earlier sources, the enumeration by Xuanzang is first codified taxonomy of this nature to appear in the Buddhist literature. Most notably, the twenty-two *indriyas* are enumerated in the *Treatise on the Basis of Gnosis* or *Jñānaprasthāna śāstra* (Chi.: *Apidamo fā-zhi lun* 阿毘達磨發智論), the ancient

⁴⁸ Earlier works of Abhidharma prior to Xuanzang had stated at least two, but it is not clear that Xuanzang endorses this doctrine. In the *Jñānaprasthāna śāstra*, forming the most ancient stratum of the Abhidharma literature transmitted by Xuanzang, the view is found that (T1544:26.994.b11-2) “in the realm of sensory desire, how many faculties are born within the continuum at the outset of its life? Reply: those born vivipariously, ovipariously, or born by spawning in moisture, obtain two (namely, aversion and life).” 欲有相續，最初得幾業所生根？答：卵生・胎生・濕生得二。This view is also attested in an Abhidharma work translated into Chinese under the Northern Zhou Dynasty 北周 (557-581), the *Abhidharmahṛdaya* (T1551) (Chi.: *Apitan xin lunjing* 阿毘曇心論經) by one Narēndrayaśas 那連提耶舍. See *Digital-Dictionary of Buddhism* entry for this 6th-century monk “who originally came from Oḍḍiyāna in Northern India, and became one of the most important translators under the Sui [Dynasty] 隋代” (Accessed Jan. 22, 2017).

⁴⁹ *Mahāvibhāṣa*, fasc. 200: T55:27.1003.a01.

work on which the *Mahāvibhāṣa* is a commentary.⁵⁰ They are also listed, although in different orders, in the *Treatise on Dharmas and Skandhas According to the Abhidharma Path* (Skt.: **Abhidharma-dharmaskandha pāda śāstra*; Chi.: *Apidamo fa-yun zu lun* 阿毘達磨法蘊足論), a compendium composed two or three centuries after the death of the Buddha and translated by Xuanzang in 659 C.E. However, the works belonging to this earlier stratum of Abhidharma literature do not provide a definitive categorization, or a consistent order, for the twenty-two *indriyas*.⁵¹ Xuanzang is the first scholar to present the definitions of the twenty-two *indriyas*, and the doctrinal reasons for their categorization, in an organized and systematic way.

The analysis by Xuanzang into the nature of the *indriyas* is anchored in the basic definition of the *indriya* as presented in the earliest systematic discussions in the *Mahāvibhāṣa*. However, Xuanzang also abides by the exegesis of the *Mahāvibhāṣa* composed by Vasubandhu. In his retranslation into classical Chinese of the touchstone work, the *Treasury of Abhidharma*, by Vasubandhu, Xuanzang promotes the clearly enunciated and hierarchically-ranked groupings of the *indriyas* that are defined by the Abhidharma expert. In his translation, Xuanzang expands the taxonomy of the *indriyas* by Vasubandhu to capture the spectrum of life ranging from protozoans to bodhisattvas. Based on an analysis of the twenty-two *indriyas* of Vasubandhu, Xuanzang derives additional groupings of *indriyas* that describe cognitive capacities of sentient beings that are not captured in the taxonomies offered by previous *Mahāvibhāṣa* scholars.

⁵⁰ In addition to Xuanzang's complete translation completed in 659 C.E., we have two earlier Chinese translations of this early Sarvāstivāda treatise -- a recension in forty fascicles (one hundred Taishō pages) Saṅghabhūti and Daotai, which dates from 383 C.E. (its colophon records that this translation was undertaken from June 6th-November 30th, 383 C.E.); and the earliest and shortest recension attributed to Saṅghabhūti [Hôbôgirin] (Saṅghabhūti [Foguang]) 僧伽跋澄, a Kaśmīri cleric active in translating Skt. words in the Northern-Qin-Dynasty cleric. This is the shortest recension of the three and runs fourteen fascicles. The second earliest recension of Daotai comprises forty fascicles, while Xuanzang's is more than three times that length at two hundred fascicles covering an entire Modern Taishō volume (Vol. 27, 1-999).

⁵¹ Skilling, "Discourse on the Twenty-Two Faculties," 431, observes that "no single discourse in Pāli lists all twenty-two faculties."

Xuanzang also clarifies some of the terminology and conceptual distinctions left unclear in the previous Chinese translation of the *Treasury of Abhidharma*, completed in 562 C.E. by Paramārtha.

Xuanzang appeals to the authority of Vasubandhu for the elucidation of several doctrines that underlie his three methodological tenets: firstly, that the *indriyas* are the dominant causal factors in all bodily action; secondly, that the *indriyas* operate cooperatively; and thirdly, that at least three *indriyas* are required for the survival of an organism. Xuanzang enlists the approach of Vasubandhu by spelling out the groupings of *indriyas* that are required to sustain life in different categories of sentient beings. He specifies the groups of baseline *indriyas* that are necessary for the survival of an organism. Additionally, he states that without the sustained coordinated action of three *indriyas*, an organism will die. Hence, Xuanzang follows the methodological approach employed by Vasubandhu in his search for an explanation of what is lost in death.

The Sequence of the Twenty-Two Faculties in Five Groups

The taxonomy of the twenty-two *indriyas* codified by Xuanzang covers the life functions of all sentient organisms. His enumeration of the physical and cognitive capacities of sentient life ranges from descriptions of autonomic functions such as respiration, digestion, and excretion, to the sensory functions such as seeing, hearing, and tasting, to the higher-order cognitive capabilities of attention, learning, and memory. In his translation of the *Mahāvibhāṣa*, Xuanzang divides the twenty-two *indriyas* into five categories: (1) the six *indriyas* of perception that are comprised of the five ordinary senses in conjunction with the mind (Skt.: *ṣaḍindriyam*; Chi.: *liu qing* 六情; *liu gen* 六根), (2) the three embodied *indriyas* that are independent from the sense *indriyas*, (3) the five affective or hedonic *indriyas* (Skt.: *pañca-vedanêndriyāṇi*; Chi.: *wushou gen* 五受根; Chi.:

wu tong-gen 五痛根),⁵² (4) the five cultivatable *indriyas* or the skillful roots (Skt.: *pañcāni kuśalamulāṇi*; Chi.: *wu shan gen* 五善根),⁵³ and (5) the three uncontaminated *indriyas* (Skt.: *anāsravastrīndriyāṇi*; Chi.: *san wulou gen* 三無漏根).⁵⁴ The twenty-two *indriyas* are grouped into five categories as follows:

Faculties 1-6: The six sensory *indriyas*⁵⁵ include tactition and kinesthesia (Skt.: *kāyēndriyam*; Chi.: *shen-gen* 身根, *pi-gen* 皮根),⁵⁶ olfaction (Skt.: *ghrāṇēndriyam*; Chi.: *bi-gen* 鼻根), gustation (Skt.: *jihvēndriyam*; Chi.: *she-gen* 舌根), audition (Skt.: *cakṣurindriyam*; Chi.: *yan gen* 眼根), vision (Skt.: *śrotrēndriyam*; Chi.: *er-gen* 耳根), and mind (Skt.: *manēndriyam*; Chi.: *yi-gen* 意根).⁵⁷ The sense *indriya* of taste accounts for absorption and digestion of “gross” (Skt.: *kavaḍī-kārāhāra*; Chi.: *cushi* 麤食) forms of food, for example rice and sweets. Two other sources of nourishment, piecemeal food (Chi.: *duanshi* 段食) and subtle nutriment, are absorbed *via touch*.

The Sanskrit word *kāyēndriyam*, and its Chinese equivalent, *shen-gen* 身根, are double entendres. They translate most literally as “the bodily faculty,” and simultaneously refer to the

⁵² Sometimes referred to as “five experiential faculties” (Skt.: *pañcā-anubhāvēndriyāṇi*; Chi.: *wushou gen* 五受根), the Chinese characters for both being the same, in order to disambiguate between these five, and the subsequent set of five cultivatable faculties. Xuanzang uses the Chinese word *shou* 受 to refer to both *vedanā* and *anubhāva*.

⁵³ There is a clever but untranslatable pun on the Chinese character *gen* in its two senses as both “faculty/organ” and “root.” It is used to render the Sanskrit words *indriya* and *mūla*, which literally means “root.”

⁵⁴ Dunlin 遁麟 summarizes the formula of Xuanzang: “First the six loci [i.e., sense bases/homes (*āyatana*s)] are itemized, then the bimodally-gendered procreative faculties. After those, vitality and subsequently the five hedonic faculties (i.e., joy, pleasure, suffering, perseverance, and aversion). Then the five skillful faculties including faith, etc., are listed, followed by the three uncontaminated faculties.” 第先說六處；次說男・女；次說命并五受；次說信等、及三無漏根 (X841:53.408.c22-3).

⁵⁵ Also written as *liu chu* 六處, “six loci.”

⁵⁶ *Pi-gen* is the older translation, but Xuanzang takes this to refer to the parallel item in the Sāṃkhya taxonomy of “five faculties of/for action” (Skt.: *pāñca-karmēndriyāṇi*; Chi.: *wu ye-gen* 五業根; also trans. variously as *wu zuo-gen* 五作根; *wu xing-gen* 五行根; *wu shi-gen* 五事根), while he refers to the Buddhist faculty by *shen-gen*, literally, the bodily faculty. The latter is meant to cover not only tactition, but also the kinesthetic capabilities of coordinating movement and the proprioceptive functions.

⁵⁷ The word for the mental faculty is sometimes spelt as *manāyatana* (*mana-āyatana*) in Sanskrit texts.

body with its vital organs, and to the faculty of touch. The first sense of the word refers to the body as a whole, while the latter, more restricted definition of the word, means tactition. In either case, this term stands for the fifth sense. *Kāyēndriyam* plays a dominant role in excretion, kinesthesia, proprioception, digestion, and tactition.⁵⁸ It also plays a major role in the primitive limbic reactions of fight, flight, and freeze. For example, if a snake is threatened by a predator, it responds by lashing its tail. *Kāyēndriyam* is included among the thirteen minimum faculties for non-human animals, and among the eight minimum faculties for humans, including homo sapiens and other species of hominid in the Buddhist universe or “great trichilocosm,” writ large.⁵⁹ The sixth and last sense in this group is the faculty of mind. The *indriya* of mind is included under the rubric of the senses because it possesses the unique ability to process perceptual content that involves more than one type of sensory input.⁶⁰

Faculties 7-9: The three embodied *indriyas* are based in an intact and able body and are

⁵⁸ Depending on the context, Xuanzang sometimes construes the term *kāyēndriyam* (Chi.: *shen-gen* 身根) as a coordinative compound or *dvāndva* (Chi.: *xiangwei-shi* 相違釋) — lit., “the body-with-faculties.” However, Xuanzang construes the term *kāyēndriyam* in the context of the twenty-two-faculty taxonomy as either a dependent compound (*puruṣa*) “the faculty of the body” —or, when construed as an adjectival compound — “the body *qua* faculty.” Fascicle eight of the *Heart-Treatise of Abhidharma* (*Abhidharma-hṛdaya śāstra*) clearly takes this term as a synecdoche for the bodily faculties as a whole. However, this text differs from the Vibh account as far as the precise referent. The *Mahāvibhāṣa* takes the term *kāyēndriyam* as analytically independent from the procreative faculties, while the fourth-century *Abhidharma Heart Treatise* (*Hṛdaya śāstra*) states that “the bodily faculty exists in three forms, the tactile faculty among them. The “three forms” mentioned are the tactile faculty, the male procreative faculty, and the female procreative faculty.” 身根有三種者，身根亦如是。彼說「三種」：身根 男根 女根。(T1552:28.939.c26-7).

⁵⁹ According to Xuanzang's trans. of the *Mahāvibhāṣa*, the triple great trichilocosm — the aggregate of three minor chilocosms — includes the following species of what this study is calling hominids. This vast Buddhist universe includes ample room for extraterrestrial forms of humanity or humanoids. Xuanzang classifies both forms of humanity under the mantle of “ordinary human” (*yi-sheng* 異生), which is meant to indicate the Sanskrit word *prthagjana* — *Monier-Williams Skt. Dictionary*: “an ordinary professing Buddhist.” The editors of the *Mahāvibhāṣa* further describe a number of variant figures for different species of humanoids across the four inhabitable continents. These pertain to the different genetic features between different species of humans beyond just the homo sapiens — that is, the form of human endemic to our “Rose-Colored Continent” of Southern Jambudvīpa 南瞻部洲.

⁶⁰ The mind plays the provisory role in coordinating the five other senses. Mind forms the “the underlying basis of five sensory consciousnesses” 五識所依 in that it supplies a necessary condition (Skt.: *pratyaya*; Chi.: *yuan* 緣) to every act of sensory perception.

independent of the sense *indriyas*. They include the procreative faculties of males (Skt.: *puruṣēndriyam*; Chi.: *nan-gen* 男根), the procreative faculties of females (Skt.: *strīndriyam*; Chi.: *nü-gen* 女根), and the faculty of vitality (Skt.: *jīvitēndriyam*; Chi.: *ming-gen* 命根). The procreative faculties of men and women are responsible for the expression of physical traits that are related to the expression of bimodal gender, such as height, the size and shape of the breasts, the vocal cords, and the formation of the Adam's apple.⁶¹ The procreative faculties that are linked to bimodal gender are constitutionally different from one another and from *kāyēndriyam*, as each forms differently at the molecular level.⁶² The molecular particles that make up the male and

⁶¹ The parallel physical (i.e., physically active) faculty in Sāṅkhya taxonomy of five *karmēndriyāni* (faculties of action) is termed *upastha*. Xuanzang renders this non-Buddhist terminology in a denigrating way – literally, “the locus of sexual pleasure (*yule chu* 娛樂處); while Paramārtha sometimes renders as “human faculty” (*ren-gen* 人根), especially in the context of discussing the Sāṅkhya doctrine – see his *vṛtti* on *Sāṅkhyakārikās* in seventy stanzas, titled *Commentary on the Seventy Golden Stanzas (Jin qishi lun 金七十論)*. The word *upastha* means in Sanskrit sexual organs, “the part which is under” or lap. In the Sāṅkhya taxonomy of five faculties of action, *upastha* means the power of procreation and sexual enjoyment, or the procreative faculty. Yuanhui's 圓暉 interlinear gloss describes the factors upon which the bimodal male/female faculties are dominant in crude terms: the physical size of the man is larger, while the physical size of the woman is smaller. Man's voice is gruff, while the woman's voice is gentle. The man's breasts are smaller, while the woman's breasts are larger.” 男形大、女形小。男言雄。女言細。男乳房小。女乳房大。 See his *Textbook of Sub-commentary on the Verses of the Treasury* (Chi.: *Jushe lun song shu lun-ben* 俱舍論頌疏論本), fascicle 3 (T1823:41.834.a17). Yuanhui was a specialist scholar of the *Abhidharmakośa* who lived in Zhongdayun-si 中大雲寺 under the reign of Tang Xuanzong 玄宗 (r. 713–756).

Saṅghabhadra describes the male-and-female-faculties in dual number (*strīpuruṣendriye*) as “dominant” in two respects. Firstly, they serve to “discriminate between species” 有情差別 (Skt.: *sattvabheda*; Tib.: *sem can gyi pye brag ba*) whether the species of organism evinces bimodally gendered, hermaphroditic, or androgynic traits “as part and parcel of their conspecificity” 同眾分 or *nikāya-sabhāgatā*.

⁶² See the *Treatise According to the Correct Logic of Abhidharma (Abhidharma Nyāyanusāra śāstra)* of Saṅghabhadra, fascicle 8 for this explanation -- T1562:29.373-74. Cf. Xuanzang's original compilation, the *Demonstration of Consciousness Only (CWSL)* subsumes the procreative faculties under *kāyēndriyam*. Across the three transmigratory realms (Skt.: *tridhātu*; Chi.: *sanjie* 三界), only a “minority of sentient beings” evince bimodal gendered faculties (男女根以少分為性). Denizens of the subtle matter and the immaterial realms, such as certain forms of celestial beings (Skt.: *devas*; Chi.: *tian* 天), are androgynitic in that they do not possess the traits characterized by a bimodal gender. These beings are said to be androgynitic, by nature – literally, “of one gender” (Skt.: *ekavyāñjanam*; Chi.: *yi-xing* 一形). *Abhidharmahrdaya* (Chi.: *Apitan xin lun jing* 阿毘曇心論經), fascicle 6, explicitly addresses why this is so: “Question: why do [beings in] the realms of subtle material lack bimodal male/female gendered faculties? Reply: because they find nothing for their sensual enjoyment; the two faculties of olfaction and gustation are also lacking, since those serve to render the body resplendent and grow without impediment. But the two bimodal male/female faculties render the body ugly and unseemly, so they are lacking. There is no faculty of suffering (*duḥkēndriyam*), since there are none of its oppressive effects. Since the sentient being [residing in the realm of subtle matter] gives rise to no afflictions, it lacks the faculty of anxiety (*daurmanasyēndriyam*).” 問曰：何故色界無男女根？答曰：無受用事故，鼻・舌二根亦應無，為端嚴身

female faculties of procreation are different in shape and size from one another and different from the molecular particles that make up *kāyēndriyam*.

Jīvitēndriyam, the faculty of vitality, is required for survival of the body. All sentient beings possess the faculty of *jīvitēndriyam*. Per the Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma taxonomy, *jīvitēndriyam* is responsible for the maintenance of the vital organs and fundamental life-processes such as cardio-pulmonary functioning. The presence of the faculty of *jīvitēndriyam* distinguishes humans and non-human animals from vegetables and plants.⁶³ The *Mahāvibhāṣa* cites the absence of *jīvitēndriyam* in plants as an important difference within the doctrines of Jainism and Buddhism.⁶⁴ The authors of the *Mahāvibhāṣa* record the opinion that *jīvitēndriyam* is the dominant factor in four vital functions: the capacity to transmit conspecific traits by way of the procreative *indriyas*, the ability to induce the timely expression of these traits at specific points in the development of an organism, the maintenance and regeneration of vital organs throughout the life-cycle, and the retention of specific traits that are shared by members of a common phylogenic or genetic

故生無妨。又男・女二根令身醜惡故無。無苦根，非逼迫果故。彼他不惱故，無憂根 (T1551:28.864.b1-4).

⁶³ As elucidated in Schmithausen's authoritative study on *The Problem of the Sentience of Plants in Earliest Buddhism* (Tōkyō: The International Institute for Buddhist Studies, 1991), plants are not considered to be sentient because they do not evince the the vital qualities of *sattvam* or *jīva*.

⁶⁴ The 142nd fascicle of *Mahāvibhāṣa* summarizes the doctrine of the Jainas or Nirgrānthakas 離繫者 (Monier-Williams: “mendicants”) “who postulate a singular “faculty of life” which pervades things inside and outside. For this reason they establish a rule to not drink cold water nor to cut the living grass since it contains life.” 如離繫者，施設一根所謂「命根」，遍內外物。故彼立制不飲冷水，不斷生草，以有命故 (T1545:27.729.a13-15). This belief in the sentience of plants is said to be rooted in the doctrine that even grass and the microorganisms found in water, etc., fall under the “ontological category of living things.” The fifth-century translation of the *Vibhāṣa* attributed to one Saṅghabhadra (for dating of this text see *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism* entry by Michael Radich, accessed Jan. 20 2017) makes the Nirgāntakas into panpsychists – ascribing to them the “postulate that external things possess life and sentience.” 外物計有命想 In his survey of materials on Jainism preserved in Chinese, Tang Yongtong 湯用彤 explains that the Jaina prohibition against consuming vegetables and microorganisms residing in fresh water is rooted in the doctrine that both fall under the ontological category of life (Skt.: *jīvitāpadārtha*; Chi.: *ming ju-yi* 命句義). As Tang describes: “The Jainas postulate the ontological category of life. Life is animus/anima and it's opposed to matter.” 如耆那教立命句義。命者靈魂，與物質對立. See his *Yindu Zhexue-Shi Lue* 印度哲學史略 (*Concise History of Indian Philosophy*) (Wuhan: Wuhan Univ. Press, 2008), 31.

heritage.⁶⁵

Doxography labels Saṅghabhadra as a “neo-Sarvāstivādin” (Chi.: Xin Sapoduobu 新薩婆多部) author, and his opinions, more often than not, diverge from those held by Vasubandhu.⁶⁶ Both Saṅghabhadra and Vasubandhu however, regard *jīvitēndriyam* as the essential factor responsible for the capacity of the biological continuum (Skt.: *saṃtāna*; Chi.: *xiang-xu* 相續) to persevere into the future.⁶⁷ Saṅghabhadra and Vasubandhu parse the definition of *jīvitēndriyam* to indicate that vitality exerts dominance in two ways: by carrying phylogenetic traits tied to “conspecificity” (Skt.: *sabhāgatā*; Chi.: *tong zhong-fen* 同眾分)⁶⁸ onto the next generation (Chi.: *neng jihou* 能繼后) and by maintaining and coordinating the manifestation of those traits in the living organism (AKBh 2.1).⁶⁹ Essentially, Vasubandhu and Saṅghabhadra agree that vitality is the *sine qua non* of life.

A question arises, however: does the *de fide* doctrine on *jīvitēndriyam* violate the methodological tenet held by Xuanzang, that life requires more than one faculty to be sustained? Apart from transitory beings, or *upapādukas*,⁷⁰ this tenet holds for all beings across the triple

⁶⁵ *Mahāvibhāṣa*, fascicle 142: “the faculty of vitality is dominant with respect to two domains: firstly, it makes sure that one can even speak of “possessing faculties”; and secondly, it makes sure that the faculties are not discontinued.” 命根於二處增上：一、令說有根；二、令根不斷 (T1545:27.731.b23-4).

⁶⁶ The brief biographical account of Saṅghabhadra found in Xuanzang's travelogue (fasc. 4) describes how Saṅghabhadra viewed Vasubandhu as deviating from Sarvāstivāda orthodoxy (T51, no. 2087, pp. 891-2).

⁶⁷ For the translation of *saṃtāna* as “continuum” see Jay Garfield, *Engaging Buddhism: Why it Matters to Philosophy* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2014); also Paul Griffiths *On Being Mindless* (LaSalle, Illinois: Open Court, 1986). The Chinese word *xiangxu* 相續 can be construed both verbally in the sense of “continue/persevere,” or nominally, referring to the continuum of life. *Saṃtāna* refers to both animals (fauna) and plants (flora). However, Abhidharma doctrine indicates that a difference between Buddhist and Jaina systems of doctrine is that Buddhism does not hold that flora, including fauna, are sentient beings.

⁶⁸ Stanza 2.41 of Vasubandhu's Treasury glosses *sābhagatā* as “sameness of species” (Skt.: *sattvasāmyam*).

⁶⁹ For Skt. text of Vasubandhu's Treasury see Pradhan, ed., *Abhidharmakośa*, 38.

⁷⁰ Under *upapāduka*, Sir. Monier-Williams *Skt. Dictionary* gives: “a superhuman being, a god, demon.” Xuanzang's Chinese designation for this class of beings is *huasheng* 化生—transitional beings. This is the same word that Xuanzang uses for the fourth kind of mortal rebirth — *via* karmic transformation.

chiliocosm, the entirety of the known universe according to Buddhist cosmology. The precursors to the *Mahāvibhāṣa*, the *Abhidharmahṛdaya* texts, contain examples of minimal forms of transmigratory beings, between incarnations, that bear only the faculty of vitality. In general, the *upapādukas*, apparitional beings, that are defined by their spectral appearance, represent the most attenuated forms of life in the Abhidharma corpus.⁷¹ Apart from these particular forms of life described in earlier texts, all sentient beings bear at least three *indriyas*.⁷²

Upapādukas are found in all three transmigratory realms, the *kāmadhātu*, the *rūpadhātu*, and the *arūpadhātu*.⁷³ This category of life includes the fantastical creatures of Hindu and Buddhist mythology such as the *apsarās* (Chi.: *feitian-nūshen* 飛天女神), *kavalinkas* (Chi.: *jialingpiqie* 迦

⁷¹ The *Abhidharma Heart Treatise* (Skt.: *Abhidharmahṛdaya śāstra*; *Apitan xin lun* 阿毗曇心論) of Saṅghadeva characterizes certain transmigratory *upapādukas* between incarnations as “solely bearing the one – the faculty of vitality.” The *Treatise Containing the Essential Juice of the Abhidharma* (**Abhidharmāmṛta-rasa-śāstra*, **Abhidharmāmṛta-sāstra*; Chi.: *Apitan ganluwei lun* 阿毘曇甘露味論), a text in two rolls translated into Chinese during the Northern-Wei Dynasty, attributed to the Sarvāstivādin Master Ghoṣaka 瞿沙, one of the members of the Great Sarvastivadin Council of 318 C.E., states that *upapādukas* “in the immaterial realm initially it [the *upapāduka*] obtains a single faculty of vitality” 無色界最初得一命根 (T1553:28.972a01). In short, the “singularly endowed” *upapāduka* is found in some earlier Abhidharma works transmitted into China, but Xuanzang eschews it, even if it appears to be an implication of a hemistich in Vasubandhu's Treasury that reads: “the vitality alone is karmically matured (*vipāka*)” 命唯是異熟 (*śa/drūpeṣumekamuttare* AK 2.14d). Saṅghabhadra takes the “only” (Skt.: *eva*) to qualify a forlorn class of *upapāduka* whose only remaining or “residual faculty” 餘殘根 is that which binds them to another bodily rebirth. However, the *Treatise On the Juice of Abhidharma* 阿毘曇甘露味論 takes the verse presented also in *Samyuktābhidharma-hṛdaya-śāstra* 雜阿毘曇心論 to mean that this most spectral form of *upapāduka* can survive between bodies with “solely the one.”

⁷² Abhidharma treatises prior to Xuanzang say that some forms of *upapādukas* and certain non-human animals, such as insects, are born without a mental faculty or *manêndriyam*. One could rule out such examples as atypical in that no Abhidharma authority would consider those most attenuated forms of life to manifest full-fledged “sentience (*sattvam*).” Furthermore, there is no evidence to suggest that Xuanzang endorses this doctrine, unless one judges him only by the word of Saṅghabhadra, whom he translates along with other numerous other authors who disagree with Saṅghabhadra. Xuanzang's trans. of Vasubandhu and the Yogācāra works all abide by his third methodological tenet that the conditions for life, however rudimentary, are at least threefold.

⁷³ A quatrain enumerating the numbers of faculties born by *upapādukas* in the *Samyuktābhidharma-hṛdaya*, attributed to the Sarvāstivādin council member Dharmatrāta (T1552:28.940.c15-16). The forth hemistich of this quatrain reads that “[when the *upapādukas* are initially born]...they have six in the *rūpadhātu* and one in the *arūpadhātu*.” 色六無色一 The six faculties pertaining to *upapādukas* in the *rūpadhātu* are the “five physical [sensory] faculties, vitality, and one faculty of procreation, if bimodally gendered; if hemaphroditic, eight.” 五色根及命根；一形七二形八. This text also says in the previous line of verse that non-human animals and *upapādukas* in the *kāmadhātu* can survive while bearing only the two faculties of *kāyêndriyam* and *jīvītêndriyam* (T28, no., 1552, p. 940, c15).

陵頻伽), the *gandharvas* (Chi.: *qiantapo* 乾闥婆; 捷闥婆),⁷⁴ the *garuḍas* (Chi.: *qielouluo* 迦樓羅), and the *nāgas* (Chi.: *naqie* 娜迦). *Upapādukas* bear from six to three *indriyas*, the fewest number of faculties borne by any variety of life form.

The apparitional *upapādukas* are discarnate, in that they do not bear the physical and sensory *indriyas* that come with incarnation in a corporeal body. They are alive in a minimal sense because they bear *jīvitēndriyam*. Additionally, they possess a rudimentary form of a mental faculty that supports an attenuated limbic and vascular system, along with the single sensory faculty of olfaction with which they sense and absorb nutrients in the surrounding environment. Vasubandhu states that *gandharvas* do not bear viscera that contain blood, bones, or flesh; they are “merely mind” (Skt.: *manomayah*; Chi.: *wei yi-cheng* 唯意成; AK 3.40cd).⁷⁵ Presumably, apparitional beings are sentient, but in an minimal way, as they possess only the four faculties of olfaction, mind, aversion, and vitality.

Vasubandhu’s assignation of six to three faculties to the *upapāduka* is derived from *The Treatise on the Heart of Unified Abhidharma* (Skt.: *Samyukābhidharma-hṛdaya* 雜阿毘曇心論). The prose commentary found in this source depicts the *upapādukas* as the most minimal form of existence that is recognized as living. The text posits that *upapādukas* possess a full complement of five senses. Saṅghabhadra (Chi.: Zhongxian 眾賢),⁷⁶ in his prose commentary on the

⁷⁴ Lamotte writes: “Les Gandharva sont des artistes divins qui jouissent d’un Bonheur égal à celui des dieux; ils possèdent la sagesse (*prajñā*) et savent distinguer le beau du laid” — see his *Da zhidu lun* translation, *La Traité de la grande vertu de sagesse* (Louvain: Institut Orientaliste de Louvain, 1944), 614.

⁷⁵ Pradhan, ed., *Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya* (K.P. Jayaswal Research Institute 1967), 158.

⁷⁶ The surviving works of Saṅghabhadra include two voluminous Abhidharma sourcebook the *Nyāyanusāra śāstra* and the *Treatise Clarifying Tenets* 顯宗論. Both texts are close exegesis and rebuttals of the *Treasury of Abhidharma* (AK) by Vasubandhu and the attendant *bhāṣya* auto-commentary (AKBh). *Nyāyanusāra* follows the same topical chapter order as Vasubandhu’s *Abhidharmakośa*, while each chapter adheres to the sequence of Vasubandhu’s core stanzas comprising the *Abhidharmakośa*. *Clarification of Tenets*, on the other hand, diverges from this explicit organizational trajectory by presenting the same chapter topics and stanzas in a different order. Xuanzang’s trans. of the former is comprised of sixty fascicles, while his translation of the latter is comprised of eighty fascicles.

gandharvas, found in the *Treatise Illuminating Tenets* (**Abhidharma-samayapradīpika*; Chi.: *Xianzong lun* 顯宗論),⁷⁷ and in his *Abhidharma Treatise Conforming to Logic* (Skt.: *Abhidharma-Nyāyanusāra śāstra*; Chi.: *Shun zhengli men lun* 順正理門論), disagrees that *upapādukas* can possess all five senses. Vasubandhu also rejects the idea that the *upapādukas* are fully sentient.⁷⁸

Faculties 10-14: The five hedonic faculties include joy (Skt.: *muditēndriyam*; Chi.: *xi-gen* 喜根), suffering (Skt.: *duḥkhēndriyam*; Chi.: *ku-gen* 苦根), pleasure (Skt.: *suḥkhēndriyam*; Chi.: *le-gen* 樂根), anxiety (Skt.: *daurmanasyēndriyam*; Chi.: *you-gen* 憂根), and aversion (Skt.: *upekṣēndriyam*; Chi.: *she-gen* 捨根).⁷⁹ Xuanzang, following the glosses of Vasubandhu on the five hedonic faculties, regards these faculties as rooted in the faculties of ordinary sensation.

The hedonic faculties cooperate to register an affective or emotional response to a sensory stimulus. For example, the sensory faculty of tactition, and the affective faculty of aversion, work together to engender the subjective feeling of pain. While each of the five hedonic *indriyas* is distinct in the Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma taxonomies, Xuanzang, in the interest of parsimony, subsumes anxiety under the faculty of suffering, and joy under the faculty of pleasure.⁸⁰ The faculty of pleasure is defined as the dominant function in the production of sensory pleasure *via* the five organs: the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body. In his taxonomy, Xuanzang treats emotions such as joy and anxiety as affective responses to stimuli.

⁷⁷ This text survives in Derge Tibetan translation under title *Chos mngon pa mdzod kyi bstan bcos kyi tshig le'ur byas pa'i rnam par bshad pa*, D, Abhidharma (*mngon pa*) section, Work no. 4091, vol. 141.

⁷⁸ Pradhan, *Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya*, 48.

⁷⁹ Rendered as *hu-gen* 護根 in earlier translation of the *Jñānaprasthāna* into classical Chinese by Saṅghadeva and (Zhu) Fonian between June 6th-November 30th, 383 CE.

⁸⁰ C.f., *CWSL*, fascicle five [p. 27 c11]: “Moreover, the faculty of suffering is coextensive with consciousness. These other kinds of anxiety are provisionally titled ‘anxiety.’ Other kinds of anxiety fall under the faculty of suffering, because they harm the body and mind. Although they are subsumed under the faculty of suffering, they are still termed ‘anxiety.’” 又彼苦根，意識俱者，是餘憂類，假說為憂。或彼苦根，損身心故。雖苦根攝，而亦名憂 (T1585:31.27.c11-13).

The faculty of aversion is described by Skilling as the “faculty of indifference.”⁸¹ The *indriya* of aversion monitors sensations that are “neither painful nor pleasurable” 不苦不樂.⁸² In the CWSL, Xuanzang states that the difference between pain and pleasure is only a matter of degree. Xuanzang states: “That which is closer to joy lends benefit to the body and the mind” 如近分喜，益身心故。According to the explanatory glosses of the CWSL, pain comes from “what harms and distresses the mind and body” 損害身心。The faculty of pain is responsible for registering a negative response to a sensory stimulus.⁸³

Faculties 15-19: The five cultivatable or skillful *indriyas* (Skt.: *pāñcāṇi vedanēndriyāṇi*;

⁸¹ Skilling, “Discourse on Twenty-Two Faculties,” 426.

⁸² Xuanzang's Chinese translation of the Sanskrit terminology—*upekṣēndriyam*—involves a clever but untranslatable pun on the dual senses of the character she as both “aversion” and “to eschew.” Xuanzang uses this double entendre in order to emphasize the two important functions of this faculty. The former sense of “**aversion**” indicates the instinctual behavioral response to an aversive stimulus. The presence of this form of aversion explains the “gut reaction” in response to painful stimuli. For example, if you burn your finger in scalding water, your automatic response is to flinch, even before the full sensation of “pain” is registered. The sense of “**to eschew**” indicates the important function of this faculty within the context of moral psychology. Specifically, it manifests the “retiring” sense of indifference or non-attachment achieved by eschewing the sensual pleasures to be had within the *kāmadhātu* – “the realm of desire” in which humans and non-human animals reside. This latter, more elevated sense of aversion indicates attainment of an equanimity neither perturbed by bodily aches and pains nor stimulated by sensual pleasures see *Notes on the Treasury of Abhidharma* 俱舍論記 (fasc. 3). Xuanzang's disciple Puguang 普光 (645?–664), which describes the sense of the word she or *upekṣā* within the context of monastic discipline and meditation: “There are setbacks in the concentration [i.e., meditation (*samādhi*)] and monastic discipline (*śīla*), hence backsliding does happen. If within the locus of skillfulness there arise delusions stemming from these setbacks, those [delusions] are thus effaced [by way of the faculty of aversion]. If not for setbacks faced when focalizing skills, we say that “there are no setbacks in the locus [of skillfulness]. Although there are certainly differences between meditation and discipline, their loci both squarely reside in aversion (*upekṣā*).” 定戒有退失，故有退捨。若善處中，非由退起惑，故捨。若惡處中，惑先成故。非由退捨故說 處中無退失捨。唯命終捨同。然定戒分捨，處中全捨。 (T1821:41.241.c21-23). The manuscript upon which Taishō edition is based dates from 1135 (6th month, Hōen Reign).

⁸³ The relevant passage in CWSL 5 says: “anxiety is categorized (*saṃgraha*) with the faculty of suffering but it's still called ‘anxiety’ (*daurmanasyam*) 雖苦根攝而亦名憂。Kuiji's *Study Notes on the Demonstration of Consciousness Only* (*Cheng weishi lun shu ji* 成唯識論述記, hereafter CWSL-SJ) elaborates: “that which has mental consciousness as its basis finds its locus to be mixed together with other sensations. The faculties of anxiety in the human and the deva (‘heavenly being’ or celestial) resemble each other in the fact that they reside in the mental consciousness (*manovijñāna*) which induces stress. Both are spoken of as ‘the faculty of anxiety,’ but, in fact, neither are simply the sensations of anxiety.” 意識俱者，與餘雜受處。及人天中憂根相似，亦在意識逼迫受故。說彼苦根為憂；實非「憂」受。In this explanation, certain classes of celestial beings who have become adapted to the relatively benign environment of the spheres of the subtle material realm have come to possess a faculty of subtle aversion or *upekṣēndriyam* in lieu of the ordinary bodily faculty of *kāyēndriyam*. However, Vasubandhu's *Treasury of Abhidharma* (AK 2.9) is clear that this marvelously evolved form of *upekṣēndriyam* is in fact just another form of *kāyēndriyam*, albeit one that is relatively immune to “painful stimuli.”

Chi.: *wu shou-gen* 五受根)⁸⁴ include faith (Skt.: *śraddhēndriyam*; Chi.: *xin-gen* 信根), perseverance (Skt.: *vīryēndriyam*; Chi.: *qin-gen* 勤根), mindfulness (Skt.: *smṛtīndriyam*; Chi.: *nian-gen* 念根), concentration (Chi.: *samādhīndriyam*; Skt.: *ding-gen* 定根), and wisdom (Skt.: *prajñēndriyam*; Chi.: *hui-gen* 慧根). Also known as the wholesome roots, these faculties are considered cultivatable because they emerge from the hedonic faculties when nurtured properly. Developing the *indriyas* of faith, perseverance, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom involves the disciplined practice of a sentient being.

Following the standard Abhidharma gloss, Saṃghabhadra, likens the faculty of wisdom to “the sword that slices through delusion to reveal things are they really are” (Skt.: *yathābhūtam*; Chi.: *ru-shi* 如實). This gloss recalls the *Mahāvibhāṣa* definition of wisdom as “that which is supreme by virtue of understanding” 以解為勝.⁸⁵ The Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma scholars treat the faculty of wisdom as an instrumental means by which the final goal of *nirvāṇa*, the emancipation from the cycle of death and rebirth, can be achieved. *Nirvāṇa* is obtained by enlisting the faculty of wisdom for analytical observation. However, the Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma doctrine holds that the Buddha relinquishes the mortal body and its embodied faculties in realizing “ultimate *nirvāṇa* without remainder” (Skt.: *anupadhi-śeṣa-nirvāṇa*; Chi.: *wuyu niepan* 無餘涅槃). Envisioned thusly, final *nirvāṇa* is not a result of the skillful exercise of faculties. To demonstrate this idea, the Sarvāstivāda scholars appeal to the principle of non-reflexivity. Just as a knife is not able to

⁸⁴ Also referred to as the “five skillful roots.” The Chinese word *gen* contains an untranslatable pun that exploits the two senses of word – “faculty” and “root.” The same pun applies to the Sanskrit word *mūla*, which can mean both “root” and “*indriya*”. One of the doctrinal hallmarks of the Vibhājyavādin tradition (whose name literally means “the makers of distinctions” 分別論者) is that these five faculties are essentially “uncontaminated” (Skt.: *anāsrava*) or morally “pure” by nature. However, the Vibh editors’ ultimate ruling rejects this stance. The determines the five hedonic faculties to be morally indeterminate or neutral (Skt.: *avyākṛta*; Chi.: *wuji* 無記). The importance of this ruling is that the moral valences of these faculties can tilt either way. This hinges upon the specific moral quality of their execution, and whether it is “skillful” (Skt.: *kuśala*; Chi.: *shan* 善), “unskillful” (Skt.: *akuśala*; Chi.: *bu-shan* 不善) or “neutral.”

⁸⁵ *Mahāvibhāṣa*, fascicle 142, T1545:27.733.a03.

cut itself, nirvāṇa cannot be a faculty because it brings about the cessation of all embodied faculties.⁸⁶

Faculties 20-22: The three uncontaminated faculties (Skt.: *anāsravastrīndriyāṇi*; Chi.: *san wulou-gen* 三無漏根) include the faculty capable of knowing what is to be known and heretofore unknown (Skt.: *ājñāsyāmīndriyam*; Chi.: *weizhi-dangzhi-gen* 未知當知根),⁸⁷ the faculty capable of knowing what is already known (Skt.: *sājñātāvīndriyam*; Chi.: *yizhi-gen* 已知根), and the faculty capable of knowing what is not yet known and what is already known (Skt.: *ājñātāvīndriyam*; Chi.: *juzhi-gen* 具知根; *wuzhi-gen* 無知根).⁸⁸ These faculties are described as uncontaminated or undefiled (Skt.: *anāsrava*; Chi.: *wulou* 無漏) because they share a wholesome nature that is incorruptible. The three uncontaminated faculties can do no harm.

The three undefiled faculties describe the achievements of gnosis, the comprehensive knowledge of past, present, and future lives. The development of the faculties of gnosis is gained through following the path of insight, the path of cultivation and the path of no more training (Skt.: *aśaikṣya*; Chi.: *wu-xue* 無學). The realization of all three of these faculties is the state of “savanthood” (Skt.: *sājñātāvin*). When realized in this sequence, the three uncontaminated

⁸⁶ See *Vibhāṣa* of Saṅghabhūti (Chi.: *Bì posha lun* 鞞婆沙論) fascicle 4, T1547:28.447.b27-9.

⁸⁷ This is the faculty required by a meditative practitioner in the path of insight (Skt.: *darśana-mārga*; Chi.: *jiandao* 見道), who is occupied in coming to know what she heretofore did not know.

⁸⁸ The latter designation is the earlier Chi. term for this faculty capable of simultaneously knowing events in the past, present, and future. The negative suffix *wu* 無 imbeds a double-negative — hence, the literal meaning is “the faculty not failing to know either [past or future] 無所不知根.” Keng renders these two faculties — the penultimate and final faculties in the list of twenty-two faculties — as the “faculty of having learned (Skt.: *ājñātēndriyam*; Chi.: *yi zhigen* 已知根)” and the “faculty of revolving to come to know something unknown (Skt.: *ājñāsyāmīndriyam*; Chi.: *zhiweizhi gen* 知未知根 or *weizhi yuzhi gen* 未知欲知根). See Ching Keng, *Yogācāra Buddhism Transmitted or Transformed: Paramārtha (499-569) and His Chinese Interpreters*, (Ph.D. diss.) (Harvard Univ., Cambridge, Mass. 2009), 92. Dunlin 遁麟 cites Saṅghabhadra's opinion that these three are each adjectival compounds or *kārmadhāryas* 持業釋: i.e., “the faculty which knows that which is heretofore unknown” (see Dunlin's *Subglosses on Yuanhui's Commentary on the Treasury* 俱舍頌疏記, fascicle 3, (X841:53.409c05). Dunlin was a disciple of Yuanhui 圓暉, a specialist scholar of the *Abhidharmakośa* who lived in Zhongdayun Temple 中大雲寺 under the reign of Tang Xuanzong 玄宗 (r. 713–756).

faculties bring about omniscience, the state of knowing the past, present, and future pervasively. The third faculty in this triumvirate, the faculty of knowing that which is not yet known and what is already known, is possessed by enlightened beings who have omniscience, and an unimpeded capacity for compassion and empathy for the suffering of other sentient creatures.⁸⁹ In the words of Vasubandhu: “[the three uncontaminated *indriyas*] are dominant in the achievement of the the ultimate achievement of nirvāṇa, etc.” (AK 2.4c-d).⁹⁰ Commentators on this line of verse, including Vasubandhu, take the “etc.” at the end of the verse to refer to the “analytical cessation of delusions” (Skt.: *pratisamkhyānirodha*; Chi.: *ze-mie* 擇滅).⁹¹

According to the *Mahāvibhāṣa*, the twenty-two *indriyas* grouped into the five categories of the faculties of sensory perception, the embodied faculties, the hedonic faculties, the wholesome roots and the uncontaminated faculties, provide an exhaustive enumeration of the essential components of sentient life and a complete classification of all life forms. The taxonomy enumerated by Xuanzang thus provides the theoretical foundation for an understanding of all forms of sentient life that is based upon the teachings of the Buddha.

With this detailed theoretical framework on the table, Xuanzang goes on to determine the number and type of *indriyas* that are necessary for the survival of different categories of sentient beings. He does this by drawing upon the *Treasury of Abhidharma* while counterbalancing Vasubandhu’s definitions of the *indriyas* against those of Vasubandhu’s prolific commentator, Saṅghabhadra.

⁸⁹ In his *Clarification of Tenets*, Saṅghabhadra clarifies that this designation of savanhood applies only to those “free from the yoke of sensory desire (*kāmāvacāra*)” — namely, those sentient beings who are untethered by attachments to achieving sensory desires and have since “graduated to the two higher realms” 往上二界. He proceeds to explain that “this tether of the *kāmadhātu* admits of the other nineteen.” 欲界繫有餘十九根 (T1563:29.797.b20).

⁹⁰ Skt. text of Pradhan, ed., *Abhidharmakośa*, 40, reads: *Uttarotarasaṃprāptir nirvāṇādyādhipatyataḥ*//4cd//

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 40.

The Six Categories of Sentient Life and the Twenty-Two Faculties

In his translations of the works of Vasubandhu and Saṅghabhadra, Xuanzang first refines the definitions of the twenty-two *indriyas*, and then classifies all forms of sentient life into six groups or genera. The twenty-two *indriyas* form the basic units of the classification system by Xuanzang. In his taxonomy of all sentient life, Xuanzang uses two variables: the number of *indriyas* with which a form of sentient life is endowed at birth, and the number of *indriyas* that a sentient being, with training and practice, is capable of realizing during life. The types and numbers of innate and potential *indriyas* provide the two indices upon which Xuanzang classifies every sentient being in the universe.

In his taxonomy of all forms of sentient life, Xuanzang conforms to the standard Buddhist doctrine that holds that all living beings reside in one of six *gatis*⁹² (Chi.: *liuqu* 六趣) or “transmigratory paths” (Chi.: *liudao* 六道).⁹³ The six transmigratory paths correspond to the six regions demarcated on the famous Buddhist wheel of dying and reincarnation. Each of the six regions of the Buddhist wheel are populated exclusively by one genus of sentient being. Xuanzang

⁹² *Gati* refers to both incarnate and discarnate beings. The Chinese character that Xuanzang employs, *qu* 趣, is close to the most generic and literal meaning of the Sanskrit word, *gati*: “going, moving, gait, deportment, motion in general.” According to *Monier William's Sanskrit Dictionary*, the word *gati* signifies the transmigratory “mode of passage” of a sentient being's life or afterlife. *Monier-William's Dictionary* also gives the meaning more specific to Brāhmaṇical religious and philosophical systems: “the course of the soul through numerous forms of life, metempsychosis, condition of a person undergoing this migration.”

⁹³ As section 1.7.3 discusses in detail, *Mahāvibhāṣa* attributes the alternate rubric of six *gatis*, excluding *upapādukas*, but including *asurās*, to the non-Buddhists or *tīrthikas*, although the rubric of six including asuras (variously translated as “Jealous/Fighting Gods/Demigods,” *does* appear in later texts of East Asian Provenance – e.g., *Sūtra of Ten Kings*. For the appearance of six *gatis* in this “pseudepigraphical” sūtra see Stephen Teiser, *The Scripture on the Ten Kings: and the Making of Purgatory in Medieval Chinese Buddhism* (Univ. of Hawaii Press, 2003). Teiser has also studied the adaptation of six *gatis* in the Buddhist Wheel of Saṃsāra, see Teiser, *Reinventing the wheel: Paintings of Rebirth in Medieval Buddhist temples* (Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 2006), 319. Based on the index to this monograph (p. 314), Teiser gives 18 references to paths of rebirth numbering five, whereas he devotes 24 references to paths of rebirth numbering 6. Backchecking each of the page references given in this index reveals that all of Teiser's references to five *gatis* find Indo-Tibetan provenance, while all of the references to 6 find Sinitic provenance (including Dunhuang Mogao Grottoes). Teiser also reproduces a Tokugawa-period (1669) diagram-scroll of the realms in ten directions 十方界, which is a much later doctrine found in sinitic Huayan Buddhism (Japanese: *Kegon*) – Teiser, *Reinventing the Wheel*, 248.

uses the general nomenclature of the “six transmigratory destinies” (Skt.: *gatis*) to refer to the six genera of sentient beings. His *Mahāvibhāṣa* glosses the word, *gati*, as “the place in which one will be reborn.”⁹⁴ Vasubandhu sometimes refers to five *gatis*, as he excludes the *upapādukas*, ostensibly because he considers the attenuated *upapādukas* to be barely alive.

Vasubandhu lays out the taxonomy that encompasses the full range of sentient beings in Chapter Three of the *Treasury of Abhidharma*. In the opening three *ślokas* (AK 3.1-3cd) of this chapter, Vasubandhu describes the six genera of all living things. The six categories are intended to capture the full spectrum of sentient life and include: humans, non-human animals, celestials (Skt.: *devas*; Chi.: *tian* 天), hungry ghosts (Skt.: *pretas*; Chi.: *e-gui* 餓鬼),⁹⁵ hellish beings (Skt.: *nārakas*; Chi.: *naluog* 捺落迦),⁹⁶ and transitional beings (Skt.: *upapādukas*; Chi.: *huasheng* 化生).

The simplicity and concision of the versified account of the spectrum of life by Vasubandhu is unprecedented in the earlier strata of Abhidharma literature. The recitation by Vasubandhu, of the ranges of the *indriyas* that determine the nature of each species, takes the form of octosyllabic quatrains, with four beats, or *morae*, to the hemistich, and four octosyllabic hemistiches to the quatrain. These stanzas render the otherwise dense doctrine of the *indriyas* accessible to, and easily memorized by, students of Abhidharma.

Vasubandhu condenses the bewildering detail presented in the earlier sources into a clear, concise, and systematic taxonomy. The four categories of humans, non-human animals, celestials,

⁹⁴ *Mahāvibhāṣa*, fascicle 150: 所往義是趣義. T.1545:27.865.b07

⁹⁵ Skt.: *Pra + ita*, literally meaning “gone forth, departed.”

⁹⁶ *Mahāvibhāṣa*, fascicle 172, gives a folk etymology of the word *naraka*, which takes the *nāra* (*nara* is usually spelled with short-first syllable), while the *taddhita*-suffix ([-ka]) stands for “being bad.” In fact, it's just an *taddhita*-suffix (suffix standing for an exocentric *bahu-vr̥hi* compound – lit., “[he who] belongs in hell.”) *Monier-Williams Skt. Dictionary* also gives “demon.”

and transitional beings are subdivided into three environmental realms, or *dhātus*: the *kāmadhātu*, the *rūpadhātu*, and the *arūpadhātu*. The other two categories, hungry ghosts and hellish beings, reside in the subterranean regions of the *kāmadhātu* only.

The Spectrum of Life Forms in Terms of the Three *Dhātus*

What comprises the spectrum of life? Xuanzang follows the *Treasury of Abhidharma* by Vasubandhu in his investigation of the six categories of beings that characterize the spectrum of ⁹⁷life forms in the Buddhist universe. Vasubandhu bases the six categories on three factors: the minimum number of faculties possessed by a specific form of sentient life, the maximum number of faculties that a form of sentient life can actualize, and the sequence of the faculties possessed by a specific sentient being.

Vasubandhu lists the six categories of sentient beings in descending order, from the most robust forms of life who possess the greatest number of faculties, to the most attenuated forms of beings who possess the fewest number of faculties. The list spans spiritually-advanced humans who possess close to the maximum number of *indriyas*, to the *upapādukas*, who survive with only three *indriyas*. The first four categories of beings in the taxonomy of Vasubandhu exist in the *kāmadhātu*. Hungry ghosts and hell-borne beings (Skt.: *nārakas*), the legions of the “damned” (“le damné”), exist only in the *kāmadhātu*. *Upapādukas*, humans, and celestials exist in all three realms. All heterotrophs are considered to be biological continua, or *saṃtānas*. Plants are considered to be *saṃtānas*, but in contrast to animals, are not considered to be sentient beings. The difference between a sentient *saṃtāna* and an insensate *saṃtāna* is the presence in an organism of the sixth sensory *indriya* of mind.

⁹⁷ Translation from Lamotte, *La traité de la grande vertu de sagesse (Mahāprajñāpāramitā Śāstra)* (Louvain: Institut Orientaliste de Louvain, 1944).

The Three *Dhātus*

Xuanzang follows the taxonomy of Vasubandhu in his enumeration of the six categories of sentient life forms into three environmental realms (Skt.: *dhātus*): the *kāmadhātu* (Chi.: *yujie* 欲界), the realm of sentient beings bearing five ordinary senses, the *rūpadhātu* (Chi.: *se-jie* 色界), the realm of “pure” or “subtle matter” (Skt.: *rūpaprasāda*; Chi.: *qing-jing se* 清淨色), and the *arūpadhātu*, the immaterial realm. The descriptions by Xuanzang of the three *dhātus* is as follows:

- (1) The *kāmadhātu* is defined as the world of sensory desire. The *kāmadhātu* is inhabited by all forms of animals, both human and non-human. According to the first stanza of the “Investigation of the World,” chapter three of Vasubandhu’s *Treasury of Abhidharma*, the *kāmadhātu* is subdivided into twenty divisions (Skt.: *dvīpas*; Chi.: *fen* 分),⁹⁸ six celestial spheres and fourteen terrestrial spheres. The fourteen terrestrial spheres constitute the surface of the earth, and the eight spheres of subterranean hells. In concrete spatial terms, Vasubandhu measures the extent of the *kāmadhātu* as “sixteen-hundred-thousand leagues from top to bottom, all supported by the wind disc

⁹⁸ Xuanzang’s elision of the term *dvīpa*, which he generally renders as *fen* 分, is *metri causa* in 3.1ab. Xuanzang’s translation of Saṅghabhadra’s *Clarification of Tenets*, fasc. 12 (T1563:29.829.b03) provides the most detailed gloss on the *kāmadhātu* part of the celestial regions, based upon Vasubandhu AKBh 3.1: “The one celestial part [of the *kāmadhātu*] refers to the six heavens of the desire realm: first, the four heavens of the Mahārāja Brāhmā King and his celestial retinue; second, the Trayatrimśika heavens; third, the Yāma Heavens; fourth, the Tuṣita Heaven; fifth, the heaven of the automatic reception of one’s sensual desires; and sixth, the heavens for other’s and one’s own sensual enjoyment.” 天一分者：調六欲天。一、四大王眾天。二、三十三天。三、夜摩天。四、覩史多天。五、樂變化天。六、他化自在天 (T1562:29.456.a26-b3). These [six] together as the *kāmadhātu* includes the various hellish passages [below the earth], etc., and including the sensory world (*bhājanaloka*), it amounts to ten loci. The hellish (i.e., the aggregate of sixteen burning and freezing hells), together with the continents [on the earth] are divided into twenty separate divisions.” 如是欲界地獄趣等，并器世間總有十處。地獄洲異分為二十。Further on, Saṅghabhadra’s *Clarification of Tenets* adds: “These twelve divisions (*dvīpas*) together with the six heavens of the desire realm, the animal kingdom (*tiryagyonī*), and the hungry ghosts (*pretas*), forms twenty [divisions]. (Paraphrasing AKBh 3.1-3) “the *sattvaloka* extends from the heaven where one can partake of the pleasures created in other heavens on high, to the hells of unmitigated suffering down below [the surface of the earth]. The sensory world (i.e., the material ‘container’ of sentient life) extends from the [outlying] wind disc and it is a comprehensive classification (*saṃgraha*) for the *kāmadhātu*.” 如是十二并六欲天·傍生·餓鬼處成二十。若有情界從自在天至無間獄。若器世界乃至風輪皆欲界攝 (T1563:29.829.b12-13).

below.”⁹⁹ This space is also commonly referred to as “this Sahā world of ours” (Chi.: *Shapo shijie* 娑婆世界), or the “dusty world” (Chi.: *chenshi* 塵世). The word Sahā is derived from the Sanskrit root \sqrt{sah} and means, “the world to be endured.” The Chinese translation is a transliteration of the Sanskrit word. The dusty karmic world extends from the eight hot, and eight cold, hells below the earth, to the rarified Brahmā heavens (Chi.: *Fantian* 梵天) above the earth, and covers the four continents inhabited by human and non-human animals. The surface of the earth is said to include Mt. Sumeru, the seven surrounding territories, the eight seas, and the ring of iron mountains. The earth and its atmosphere make up one smaller or “lesser world” (Chi.: *xiao shijie* 小世界). The lesser world extends from the earth out towards the six concentric heavens of the *kāmadhātu*. One thousand of the lesser worlds form a small chiliocosm (Chi.: *xiao qian shijie* 小千世界), one thousand small chiliocosms form a medium chiliocosm (Chi.: *zhong qian shijie* 中千世界), and one thousand medium chiliocosms form one great chiliocosm (Chi.: *da qian shijie* 大千世界).¹⁰⁰ This vast space, the great trichilocosm, makes room in the Buddhist cosmos for the possibility of extraterrestrial life.

Within this elaborate cosmology, the nomenclature of *prthagjana* denotes the “ordinary professing Buddhist”¹⁰¹ who lives in any one of the three *dhātus*. As Vasubandhu sarcastically puts it: “There are still idiots (Skt.: *bālas*) [i.e., ‘ordinary people’] in the

⁹⁹ AK 3.45c-d. See Pradhan, ed., *Abhidharmakośa*, 157.

¹⁰⁰ See Xuanzang's trans. of AKBh, fascicle 10, T1558:29.61.a05-7.

¹⁰¹ Translation based upon entry in *Sir Monier William's Skt. Dictionary*.

arūpadhātu”(AK 2.10c-d)¹⁰² Presumably, Vasubandhu is alluding to the humans “of inferior intelligence” who reside in the immaterial spheres. Paramārtha translates the words *prthagjana* and *bāla*, with the Chinese word, *fan-fu* 凡夫, or ordinary human. In general, Xuanzang uses the term *yisheng* 異生, which means “he/she born in a distinctive way,” to refer to the forms of humanity who reside in all three *dhātus*.

- (2) The *rūpadhātu* is defined as the cosmic realm of subtle matter (Skt.: *rūpaprasāda*). The vast majority of celestial beings live in the *rūpadhātu*. The *rūpadhātu* is made of seventeen celestial spheres (Chi.: *sejie shiqi tian* 色界十七天). Unlike their compatriots in the *kāmadhātu*, humanoid and celestial sentient beings who reside in the *rūpadhātu* do not have olfactory and gustatory sense faculties or bimodally gendered procreative faculties. Both genera of sentient beings, humans and celestials, obtain nutrition *via* tactition. The celestial realms of the *rūpadhātu* are host to both humans and celestial beings, but not to any of the karmically “inferior” (Chi.: *lie* 劣) transmigratory stations (Skt.: *saṃsthanas*; Chi.: *chu* 處) of the *pretas*, *nārakas*, or the so-called “demigods,” or *asurās*. Celestial beings born into the Heaven of Extensive Rewards (Skt.: *Brhat-Phala*; Chi.: *Guang guo tian* 廣果天) in the *rūpadhātu* abide in a zombie-like trance state that is “devoid of thought and sensation” (Skt.: *asaṃjñika*; Chi.: *wuxiang tian* 無想天). The human beings in the *rūpadhātu* are reborn into various stations of the Pure Buddha Lands (Skt.: *Buddhakṣetras*; Chi.: *Fo-cha* 佛刹).

¹⁰² Pradhan, *Abhidharmakośa*, 52.

According to the later Mahāyāna Pure Land teachings that are followed by Xuanzang and many of the Tang Dynasty scholars, these androgynic human beings are said to sprout forth from inside a lotus blossom that rests atop a pedestal on the crystalline lake bedecked with seven kinds of jewels. In general, sentient beings, human or otherwise, who live in the *rūpadhātu* have substantially longer life expectancies than those residing in the *kāmadhātu*.

Vasubandhu reports that, unlike the minority of celestials who reside within the Trayatrimśika Heavens and the Brahmā heavens of the *kāmadhātu*, the celestial denizens of the *rūpadhātu* live for 16,000 aeons. The Trayatrimśika is viewed as one of the vaunted stations of celestial reincarnation for humans in the *kāmadhātu*, particularly among the aristocratic lay patrons of Buddhism during the Tang Dynasty.

- (3) The *arūpadhātu*, or the immaterial realm, is defined as physically unbounded. The *arūpadhātu* occupies more than the three dimensions of the *kāmadhātu*, as indicated by the designation of non-spatiality or *adeśa*. The translation of the term for “non-spatial” by Xuanzang means, “without hard edges” (Chi.: *wu fangfen* 無方分). The immaterial world of the *arūpadhātu* is understood to be “non-spatial” in the sense that the ultimate nature of the *arūpadhātu* is not constrained by the mundane notions of space found on earth. This means that the spatial nature of the *arūpadhātu* can not be fully apprehended by earthlings. In his translation of the Sanskrit word, *adeśa*,

Xuanzang avers that rarified forms of sentient beings, like apparitions, are able to pass through bodies. Vasubandhu reports that life lasts 20,000 great *kalpas* in the first heaven of the immaterial realm, 40,000 in the second heaven, 60,000 in the third heaven, and 80,000 great *kalpas* in the fourth of these heavens.¹⁰³ For the highest of these four meditation heavens in the immaterial spheres, the average lifespan is estimated to be thirty-five quintillion human years.

Only the most attenuated and spiritually advanced life forms are adapted to life in the vaunted *arūpadhātu*. Some of the famous Hindu deities reside in the *arūpadhātu*, including Viṣṇu and Kṛṣṇa. The Sarvāstivāda theorists, clearly enthralled with the *arūpadhātu*, authored numerous and detailed accounts of the immaterial realm. They describe the *arūpadhātu* as a space consisting of four the concentric spheres, or the meditation, or *dhyāna* heavens (Chi.: *si chan tian* 四禪天). These four meditation heavens form the heavenly abodes of humans, devas, and intermediate beings. However, Xuanzang, in his cosmological explanations, emphasizes that even in the most rarified immaterial heavens, sentient beings are all united by common conspecific traits that are rooted in *sabhāgatā* factors, and expressed in the faculty of vitality and the faculty of mind.

¹⁰³ For Vasubandhu's estimations of average lifespan in the *rūpadhātu*, see AK 3.80. For Skt. text see Pradhan, ed., *Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya*, 173; Xuanzang's translation of 3.80 at T1558:29.61.b22-c4.

The nomenclature of the immaterial realm does not necessarily imply that its denizens lack physical bodies. It is true that beings born in both the *rūpadhātu* and *arūpadhātu* do not possess the ordinary ocular or auditory organs. However, they do have subtle, or rarified bodies, that are considered to be physically lighter than the bodies of humans.

In Chapter Three, “On the Discrimination of Worldly Things” (Skt.: *Loka-nirdeśa*; Chi.: *Fenbie shi pin* 分別世品) of the *Treasury of Abhidharma*, Vasubandhu begins with a description of ordinary humans and goes on to elaborate upon forms of non-human life, such as non-human animals, and hellish beings (Skt.: *nārakas*) that are “inferior” (Chi.: *lie* 劣), to “superior” (Chi.: *sheng* 勝) humans. The *Treasury of Abhidharma* also describes examples of enlightened beings that inhabit the rarified realms of subtle material. In his standard listing Vasubandhu contains five *gatis*, whereas other Chinese Buddhist texts include the *asurās*, or jealous gods, in a separate *gati*.

The transmigratory realm within which a sentient being resides is crucial to the classification scheme of Vasubandhu. This is because the number of *indriyas* possessed by a organism can refer to more than one cluster of *indriyas*. For example, a group of five *indriyas* can include different types of *indriyas*. Additionally, because a specific cluster of *indriyas* may be adaptive to an specific environmental realm, different forms of the same species may have different collections of *indriyas*.

The three environments form a hierarchy of realms of rebirth that divide members of the same genus into three species that are based upon their spiritual standings. The three *dhātus* do not contain all of the five or six paths of reincarnation that are available to organisms. While the *kāmadhātu* contains all six forms of life, the *rūpadhātu* and *arūpadhātu* are home to only the celestials, humanoids, and intermediate beings. The celestial and humans are considered to be the

more advanced forms of reincarnated sentient life within the Buddhist cosmology. *Upapādukas* are the transient form assumed by sentient beings between bodily reincarnations. The lesser of the three forms of rebirth exist only on earth and include reincarnations in the forms of hell-dwellers 地獄, hungry ghosts, or non-human animals (Chi.: *chusheng* 畜生; *bangsheng* 傍生).¹⁰⁴ The lower class of animalia excludes humans and devas, as humans and devas are the only mammals found in all three transmigratory realms. Humans that are more evolved inhabit the subtle matter and immaterial realms. Animals considered to be reincarnated into the less desirable forms, reside in the aquatic and terrestrial areas of the earth, a total region comprised of either seven, according to Asaṅga, or eight, according to Vasubandhu, concentric rings of iron mountains,¹⁰⁵ four continents and four oceans.

The Six Genera in Terms of Faculties

In his corpus of Abhidharma translations, Xuanzang adheres to the order and enumeration of the six genera as presented in the first twenty-two stanzas in the second chapter of the *Treasury of Abhidharma* by Vasubandhu. The taxonomy of life formulated by Xuanzang is as follows:

- (1) Humans (Skt.: *manuṣya* or *nara*; Chi.: *ren* 人) have nine innate faculties and can realize up to nineteen faculties with cultivation. Humans occupy all three realms: the *kāmadhātu*, the *rūpadhātu*, and the *arūpadhātu*. Vasubandhu uses the term, *human*, to

¹⁰⁴ The former is the older Chi. translation for the Skt. word introduced by Kumarajiva in the 5th century. The latter is Xuanzang's Chi. translation.

¹⁰⁵ The *Treasury of Abhidharma* of Vasubandhu and the *Yogācārabhūmi* of Asaṅga are in lock step in maintaining that the *kāmadhātu* extends from the eight hot and eight cold hells below the earth to the Brahmā heavens 梵天 above the earth. The surface of the earth is said to cover Mount Sumeru and its seven surrounding territories, the eight seas, and the rings of iron mountains. The only discrepancy between the two thinkers' explanations of *kāmadhātu* is that the *Kośa* states that there exist eight rings of iron mountains, whereas the *Yogācārabhūmi* states that there exist only seven -- see Kajiyama Yūichi, "Buddhist Cosmology as Presented in the Yogācārabhūmi," G. Nagao. and J. Silk, (eds.) *Wisdom, Compassion, and the Search for Understanding: The Buddhist Studies Legacy of Gadjin M.* (Honolulu: Univ. of Hawai'i Press, 2000), 193.

describes homo sapiens, and other more highly-evolved species of humans. Vasubandhu and Xuanzang use the terms, *nara* or *ren*, to describe homo sapiens, as well as other humans who inhabit the extraterrestrial realms, the subtle material realms, and the immaterial realms.

The minimum number of faculties required for human survival in the *kāmadhātu* is three: the embodied faculty of *kāyēndriyam*, mind, and vitality. However, Vasubandhu and Saṅghabhadra generally speak of the “nine faculties native to the human” (Chi.: *jiu gen jusheng* 九根俱生). These nine faculties include the five senses (1-5), the mind (6), the male or female procreative faculties (7-8), and the faculty of vitality (9). Humans in the *kāmadhātu* generally do not live past one hundred years.

Humans in the middle realm, the *rūpadhātu*, possess from eight to twenty-one faculties (9-16). The minimum number of eight includes the three embodied faculties necessary for survival in this realm: tactition (5), aversion (14), and vitality (9). The maximum number of twenty-one faculties includes this grouping, along with the five skillful faculties of faith (15), concentration (18), spiritual vigor (16), recollection (17), and wisdom (19). The faculty of tactition is required for survival, as forms of humanity in the *rūpadhātu* absorb nutrition *via* touch. The five skillful faculties denote the spiritual prerequisite for rebirth in this realm. The maximum number of twenty-one faculties that are realizable by humans in this realm excludes only the faculty of procreation.

Humans in the highest realm, the *arūpadhātu*, possess from three to twenty-one faculties. The minimum number of three faculties include aversion, vitality, and the bodily faculty of

kāyēndriyam.¹⁰⁶ As in the *rūpadhātu*, the maximum number of twenty-one faculties excludes only procreation.

The three uncontaminated faculties (20-22) are available only to the humans residing in the upper two realms of *rūpadhātu* and *arūpadhātu*. Humans in the “middle realm” (Chi.: *zhongjie* 中界) of pure matter have from eight to twenty-one faculties. The maximum number of twenty-one faculties also applies to humans across the highest realm of *arūpadhātu*.

(2) Non-human animals or *tiryāṇc*¹⁰⁷/*tiryagyoni*¹⁰⁸ (Chi.: *bangsheng* 傍生; *chusheng* 畜生),¹⁰⁹ have from thirteen to nineteen faculties.¹¹⁰ The *Mahāvibhāṣa* explicitly

¹⁰⁶ But it would not be doctrinally correct to say that beings in the *arūpadhātu* have no bodies. They have incorporeal bodies, subtle bodies, but are not bodiless. Vasubandhu is clear that species of sentient being adapted to the rarified environment of the *arūpadhātu* evince the embodied faculty of aversion. This doctrine recalls the definition of the faculty of aversion as *kāyēndriyam* sans pain/pleasure conditions. This substitution is discussed in sect. 1.5.

¹⁰⁷ MW gives under the most general meaning of the word: “going horizontally,” an animal (amphibious animal, bird, reptile, or insect). His Skt.-Eng. dictionary also gives, “(m.) the organic world (including plants) under a specialized meaning in Jainism.”

¹⁰⁸ Monier-William’s entry under *tiryagyoni* reflects two senses of the word relevant for Buddhism namely.. the womb of an animal, animal creation, The third sense of “organic nature (including plants)” applies to Jainism, but not Buddhism.

¹⁰⁹ The prolific translator of Indic texts into Chinese, Kumārajīva 鳩摩羅什 (344–413), uses the Chinese words *chusheng* 畜生.

¹¹⁰ The *Mahāvibhāṣa* (T1545:27.p767-68) states that non-human animals (i.e., *tiryāṇc*) run from a scale of the maximum nineteen down to the minimum thirteen. But which nineteen faculties demarcate the limit for non-human animals? The *Mahāvibhāṣa* counts all of the twenty-two applicable, “with the exception of the three faculties of higher gnosis – that is to say, the complete set of seven physical faculties.” 十九者，調除三無漏根，即具七色根者。The text goes on: “The thirteen refer to the body, vitality, and mind along with the five hedonic faculties (*pañca-vedanēndriyāṇi*). These match up to five faculties, which are identical to those six faculties initially deserted during the course of gradually dying. The same goes for the non-human animals as for the realm of hungry ghosts (*pretas*).” 十三者，調身 命 意 五受信等五根，即漸命終，先捨六色根者，如說傍生。鬼界亦爾。 *Jñānaprasthāna śāstra* (T1543:26.873.c27-28), trans. Zhu Fonian, et al.: “*tiryāṇc* have a maximum of nineteen and minimum of thirteen faculties. The same goes for *pretas*. Those who have severed the skillful roots have a maximum of thirteen and minimum of eight.” 畜生，若極多十九，若極少十三。餓鬼亦如是。斷善根，若極多十三，若極少八。The *Mahāvibhāṣa* elaborates about the assignment of a maximum of nineteen and a minimum of thirteen faculties to *tiryāṇc*: “Non-human animals (*tiryāṇc*) have nineteen [faculties] at the maximum and thirteen at the minimum. The number nineteen excludes the three uncontaminated roots (i.e., the faculties of higher-gnosis, which non-human animals are incapable of attaining), and it is equivalent to ‘fully possessing seven physical faculties.’ At the maximum, the number nineteen refers to body, mind, along with five hedonic faculties – it is equivalent to those six physical faculties initially deserted during the course of gradually dying. The very same applies in the case of non-human animals as for the realm of hungry ghosts (*pretas*).” 傍生

specifies the thirteen faculties that provide the baseline for the survival and propagation of non-human animals, or *tiryāṇc*. The assignment of thirteen faculties to non-human animals first appears in *Treatise on the Basis of Gnosis* (*Jñānaprasthāna śāstra*, fasc. 15). The thirteen faculties are: the five ordinary senses of vision, audition, olfaction, gustation and tactition, a coordinative mind to direct the senses (1-6), the two embodied faculties of male or female procreation (7) and vitality (8) and the five hedonic faculties of joy, suffering, pain, pleasure, and aversion (9-13).¹¹¹ Importantly, the existence of the faculty of mind in non-human animals implies that they have been regarded as sentient creatures since the time of the early Buddhist sūtras.

Humans have the same number of thirteen baseline faculties as those possessed by non-human animals. In addition to the thirteen faculties with the sentient mind, humans have the five hedonic faculties of joy, suffering, pain, pleasure, and subtle aversion to sensory stimuli. In this

極多十九極少十三；十九者，謂除三無漏根，即具七色根者。十三者，謂身•命•意•五受、信等五根。即漸命終，先捨六色根者；如說傍生，鬼界亦爾 (T1545:27.767b13-17).

¹¹¹ These assignments are corroborated by the earlier Chinese trans. of of *Jñānaprasthāna* (Chi.: *Bajian du lun* 八韃度論) compiled by Zhu Fonian, et al., which reads: “How many faculties are initially active within the sentient being residing in the realm of sensual desire? Reply: those born oviparously, viviparously, or via intercourse can each generate two faculties: namely, proprioception and vitality. Those born of karmic transformation have either six, seven, or eight – six if non-gendered; seven if androgynitic; eight if bimodally gendered.”受欲界有，幾根最初得行？答曰：卵生 胎生 合會生二：身根•命根也。化生或六 七 八。無形六；一形七；二形八 (T26, no. 1543, p. 870, c03-5). By “viviparously born,” this text means to indicate mammals, excluding humans. By born through intercourse, the text indicates “humans and the celestials in the six heavens of the desire realm” 六欲天. By contrast, an earlier Abhidharma sourcebook titled *Abhidharmahṛdaya* 阿毘曇心論經 (trans. by Narēndrayāsas 那連提耶舍 [517–589]) offers the diverging view that animals may run down to only two, since “those born vivipariously, ovipariously, or through spawning [the kingdom of insects or insecta], are sometimes sustained by only “two retributive faculties” during gestation -- namely, *kāyēndriyam* and *jīvītēndriyam*. These two are the residual factors expressing inherited karma from a past life, since they are the factors of *vipāka* or “karmic maturation” (a topic to which more space is devoted in Chap. 2 of this dissertation, “Karma and Faculties.”) Without getting into the bewildering detail of different assignments to the different forms of non-human animals, suffice it to note here that the pair of faculties – aversion and vitality – is already manifest during gestation, although there are disagreements about precisely which point during the course of which trimester. This text unequivocally states in the sixth fascicle that the mental faculty is missing from this form of animal, since it is not included among their native faculties with which they are born. Due to their gestational development, these animals are not born with the faculty of mind. It would entail that non-human animals can survive simply by virtue of possessing a limbic system and vitality. [0864c12] 若眾生根次第生，卵生濕生胎生。彼初念二根報生身根、及命根。意根彼是穢污 (T28, no. 1551, p. 864, c12-14).

section of the *Mahāvibhāṣa*, Xuanzang translates the Sanskrit word *sattvam*, or, “sentience,” as “those having feelings” (Chi.: *you-qing* 有情).¹¹² This translation includes the category of non-human animals among “those having feelings” (Chi.: *youqing* 有情) or sentient beings. In the taxonomy of Xuanzang, all animals, whether they are human or non-human, are sensitive beings, and in contrast to plants, are capable of having feelings. As elucidated in Schmithausen’s (1991) study on *The Problem of the Sentience of Plants in Earliest Buddhism*, plants are not considered to be sentient because they do not evince the the vital qualities of *sattvam* or *jīva*.¹¹³

(3) Gods or celestials (Skt.: *devas*) require a minimum of three faculties to survive but can possess a maximum number of nineteen faculties.¹¹⁴ The minimum number of three faculties borne by the *devas* are mind, aversion, and vitality. These three faculties are

¹¹² Previous famous translators of Indic words into classical Chinese, such as Kumārajīva and Paramārtha, use the term *zhongsheng* 眾生 which literally means “myriad of living beings.”

¹¹³ The reviewer for *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (JRAS), Karel Werner, summarizes Schmithausen’s (1991) major findings: “defining the problem from the angle of ethical precepts which require followers of Buddhism to abstain from killing or injuring living beings, he bases his understanding of what is a living or animate being on whether it is capable of ‘sentience,’ i.e., of perception and sensation. As the prevailing Buddhist position does not admit plants as sentient beings, they are not included in the above restrictive precept. However, since the Vedic Jaina and post-Vedic Hindu sources admit sentience in plants and even seeds and elements, such as water and earth, the author wonders whether perhaps the earliest Buddhist position was not the same or similar, especially because explicit positions in the matter were formulated comparatively late.” – see Werner, “Book Review: The Problem of the Sentience of Plants in Earliest Buddhism by Lambert Schmithausen (Tōkyō, The International Institute for Buddhist Studies, 1991).” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 9, no. 1 (1999), 183.

¹¹⁴ The bodies of the divine kinds within the Brāhma palace of the Brāhma heavens of the rūpyadhātu are known for possessing the greatest number of faculties among the deva kingdoms. *Mahāvibhāṣa* 172 describes them: “the bodies of four divine kings (of the Brāhma Heaven) contains at a minimum, seventeen, and at a maximum, nineteen. Celestials within the heavens of the thirty-three, the Yāma Heavens (under the *kāmadhātu*), the Tuṣita Heaven (DDB: ‘pure land in the fourth heaven in the realm of desire 欲界’ [accessed Feb. 21 2017]), then heavens where one can partake in one’s own pleasure, and the heavens where one can partake of the pleasures created in other heavens are all the same.” 四天王身，若極多十九，若極少十七。三十三天、炎天、兜術天、化自在天、他化自在天亦復如是 (T1543:26.874.a03)

The [celestials of the] Brāhmaloka-devas 梵加夷 have a maximum of sixteen and a minimum of fifteen. It’s the same for the Heaven of Radiant Sound (within the pure material realm of subtle matter). 梵加夷天，若極多十六，若極少十五。光音天亦復如是。

For [celestials within] the heaven of universal purity (within the *rūpyadhātu*), there are a minimum of fourteen and a maximum of sixteen. 遍淨天，若極多十六，若極少十四。

For [celestials within] the heaven of spiritual fructification, there are a minimum of thirteen and a maximum of sixteen. 果實天，若極多十六，若極少十三 (T1543:26.874.a1-9).

described as invariable (Skt.: *anvita*) or compresent (Skt.: *samanvāgata*; Chi.: *chengjiu* 成就) because they comprise the cluster of rudimentary faculties that are required to sustain life. The gods and celestials are notable for perservering throughout their lengthy lives with only three faculties. Because the devas do not possess the hedonic faculties of suffering, anxiety, or the procreative faculties, they can only realize nineteen faculties.

Celestial beings inhabit all three karmic realms: the *kāmadhātu*, the *rūpadhātu*, and the *arūpadhātu*.¹¹⁵ The regions populated by the celestials stretch from the six desire heavens in the *kāmadhātu* to the outer regions of the immaterial heavens in the *arupadhātu*. Rather than relying upon the relatively crude faculty of tactition to sense objects in their benign environments, devas use the the faculty of subtle aversion, or *kāyēndriyam* without the valence of pain and pleasure. Because of this, these highly evolved creatures are immune to intense feelings of pleasure or pain. Additionally, devas in the the *rūpadhātu* and the *arūpadhātu* do not have the sensory faculties required to ingest gross or piecemeal forms of food and must take their nutrition through the faculty of subtle aversion. The most evolved of all the celestials in the *kāmadhātu* live in the *trayastrimśa*

¹¹⁵ The ancient Āgama literature, recording the discourses of the historical Buddha, detail the spatial extentions of these celestial regions. According to the account in *Dirghāgama*, the Palace of the Yāma Heaven exists between the thousand spheres of heavens where one can partake in enjoyment and the thousand spheres of heavens of Brahmins (Skt.: *Brahma-loka*; Chi.: *Fan Jiayi* 梵迦夷; the first level of the first of the four meditation or *dhyāna* heavens 四禪天 of the realm of subtle matter 色界). This whole region is six thousand *yojanas* 由旬 in breadth. With A.L. Basham's estimate that a yojana is about nine miles long, that amounts to roughly fifty-four thousand miles. Buddha says in the *Dirghāgama* (fasc. 18), that is, “Section One of Part Four, the Span and Record of the World: Chapter the First on Rose-Apple-Continent (Jambudvīpa).” 〈第四分世記經閻浮提州品第一〉), [Taishō, Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 115, registers a24-9]: “The outlying heavens of the thirty-three celestials are twice as big as the Yāma heavens, while the Tuṣita heavens are twice as big as the Yāma heavens, while the heavens where one can partake in pleasure for oneself are twice as big as the Tuṣita heavens, while the heavens where one can partake in the pleasure of others are twice as big as the those where one can partake in pleasure for one's own sake, while the heavens inhabited by the Brahmakāyika celestials (an epithet meaning, ‘[celestials] with a Brahman-like body’) are twice as big as those where one can fully partake in pleasure for oneself.” 過三十三天由旬一倍有焰摩天宮，過焰摩天宮由旬一倍有兜率天宮，過兜率天宮由旬一倍有化自在天宮，過化自在天宮由旬一倍有他化自在天宮，過他化自在天宮由旬一倍有梵加 (emend: 迦) 夷天宮(T1:1.p.115.a25-8).

刀剎天/三十三天,¹¹⁶ the outermost region of the *kāmadhātu*, and the furthest point from the Sahā world that is still within the triple chiliocosm. The baser forms of devas live in the *Brāhma-loka*, the lowest sphere within the *kāmadhātu*. The *Brāhma-loka* is the abode of the belligerent “jealous gods,” or *asurās*, that are depicted frequently in Buddhist painting and sculpture.¹¹⁷ Despite later texts that treat the *asurās* as an independent class of beings, the canonical Abhidharma regards them as members of the broader genus of the devas.¹¹⁸ Celestials occupying the lower heavens of the *kāmadhātu*, such as the *asurās* of the *Brahma-loka*, possess between seventeen to nineteen

¹¹⁶ *Mahāvibhāṣa*, fasc. 170 depicts the triple-thirty heavens as places “of extremely high-altitude and concentric mountain ridges” 高山頂次第 (T1545:27.868.b13).

¹¹⁷ Saṅghabhadra's ultimate verdict that there is no so-called “sixth *gati*” for the *asuras* could hardly be more blunt. “In sum, the *asurās* are simply folded up into the *gati* of *pretas*. There's just no sixth *gati*. It's because no one ever talked about it.” 故阿素洛，唯鬼趣收，亦非第六，曾不說故 (T1562.29.461.b18-9). This judgment on the doctrinal issue of how many *gatis* there are comes at the denouement of his discussion of the relevant verses of Vasubandhu (3.1-3cd) clearly enumerating five *gatis*. By contrast, modern presentations of the Buddhist Wheel of Life often talk about a sixth *gati*. While commenting upon a depiction of the Wheel of Rebirth (cotton tankha painting from Tibet, early twentieth century) featured on the second page of his 2008 book, Teiser remarks: “the Buddhist theory states that forty-nine days after death, the person assumes bodily form again as a sentient being. Whether pleasantly as a god, demigod, or human being, or less happily as an animal, hungry ghosts, or resident of hell” – *Reinventing the Wheel*, 2. By “demigods,” Teiser is speaking about the *asurās*, which he highlights again in Fig. 1.7 as an important detail of a tangka painting from early-twentieth-century Tibet. Said tangka painting does not show a clear “spoke” or line of demarkation between the *devas* and *asurās*, as it very clearly shows between the other four *gatis* demarkated by a clear red line or “spoke” in the wheel. The other five examples of tangka paintings from early-modern Tibet do not exhibit any more than five spokes in the wheel of rebirth, denoting five *gatis*. In one of them, there appears to be a baseline out from the internal wheel within the wheel, but the line appears blurred when trying to track it outwards to the perimeter (Plate 2). There are *asurā* figures fighting on both sides of what appears to be a thin red stub of a line that gets obscured in the clouds surrounding the belligerent *asurās*. Despite the existence of numerous polemics against it within early Abhidharma literature, at the very least it seems fair to say that six *gati* is a non-standard and later doctrine that proliferates in the Mahāyāna.

¹¹⁸ Vibh 172 cites the “heterodox opinion” (*xiejian* 邪見) that *asuras* are categorized under the *gatis* of the devas within the *kāmadhātu* — T1545:27.868.c05-8. Vasubandhu In the succeeding verses, Vasubandhu consistently speaks of only five *gatis* (AK 3.6). However, some Mahāyāna texts sometimes give six *gatis* — a rubric which includes the *asuras* as an independent “sixth” class of beings. Saṅghabhadra pleads ignorance about the exact provenance of the “distorted” sixth *gati* theory: “It's just that the Buddha never spoke about six *gatis*.” *Mahāvibhāṣa*, Vasubandhu's Treasury, and Saṅghabhadra's *Nyāyanusāra* and *Clarification of Tenets* generally say that six *gatis* which counts the *asuras* as separate, is a distorted doctrine, either attributing it to *tīrthikas* or other Abhidharma traditions. According to the *Pāli Text Society Pāli-English Dictionary*, the earlier texts list five *gatis*, and the six appear in later texts: 242-43.

That East Asian sources get confused, is easily illustrated by the DDB entry under “six *gatis*” 六道 which lists the six in the wrong order (*asurās* should be between humans and *devas*, not between animals and humans). There are even later Chinese interpretations of *asurās* as ‘nature spirits.’ Suffice it to say that this is not the way that Vasubandhu or other authors in his tradition go about it.

faculties. The minimum number of seventeen faculties possessed by celestials includes all twenty-two faculties, with the exception of the contaminated hedonic faculty of anxiety, the contaminated embodied faculties of sexual procreation, and the three uncontaminated faculties of higher gnosis.¹¹⁹

Devas inhabiting the *rūpadhātu* reside in one of twenty-two concentric spheres that comprise this vast region. Celestials across the *rūpadhātu*, the region stretching from the outskirts of the Brahma heavens up through the heavens of marvelous spiritual fruits, possess from thirteen to sixteen faculties. The thirteen faculties include the three compresent faculties of mind, aversion, and vitality, along with the five hedonic faculties and the five skillful faculties. The sixteen faculties that can be realized by devas include all of the preceding, with the addition of the two faculties of gnosis, the faculty capable of knowing that which is to be known (Skt.: *ājñāsyāmīndriyam*; Chi.: *weizhi dangzhi gen* 未知當知根) about future lives, and the faculty capable of knowing that which is already known (Skt.: *ājñātāvīndriyam*; Chi.: *yizhi gen* 已知根;) about previous lives.

Celestials in the highest immaterial realms possess between fourteen and sixteen faculties. The maximum number of sixteen faculties belonging to devas in this realm are the same as those residing in the subtle material realms. The cluster of fourteen faculties possessed by this category of devas does not include all of the five hedonic faculties. These celestials bear only the faculties of joy and aversion and do not possess the hedonic faculties of suffering, anxiety and sensory

¹¹⁹ *Mahāvibhāṣa* 150: “Seventeen [faculties] excludes androgynous beings [who do not evince a bimodally-gendered faculty (6-7)], as well as the faculty of anxiety and the three faculties of higher gnosis (20-22). This [exclusion] is because these beings (i.e., those beings bearing seventeen faculties from birth) are born as human beings who have already fully effaced the pollution of sensory desire. For example, there are the four Guardian Kings and the members of their celestial retinue. It’s the same for the *Trayātriṃśika* heavens through heaven where one can partake of the pleasures created in other heavens. In the heavens for the worship of Brahma there are a maximum of sixteen and a minimum of fifteen.” 十七者，調除一形憂根三無漏根。即已離欲染異生。如四大王眾天。三十三天，乃至他化自在天亦爾。梵眾天極多十六極少十五 (T1545:27.767c08-13).

pleasure.¹²⁰ This implies that the most rarified forms of celestials enjoy the fruits of spiritual joy while being unattached to the baser forms of sensory desire.

(4) Hungry ghosts or *pretas* (Chi.: *e-gui* 餓鬼)¹²¹ have from eight to nineteen faculties.¹²²

The *Mahāvibhāṣa* editors assert that the minimum and maximum number of faculties for the *pretas* are the same as those for other terrestrial non-human animals: nineteen at the maximum, excluding the three uncontaminated roots of gnosis, and eight at the minimum, including the five ordinary senses, aversion to pain, a suffering mind, and long-lasting vitality. This is considered to be a very unpleasant assignment of faculties.¹²³

(5) *Pretas* are the only forms of life that can be reincarnated either in a warm-blooded mammalian womb¹²⁴ or via spontaneous karmic transformation. Spontaneous karmic

¹²⁰ *Mahāvibhāṣa*, fasc. 150 (T1545:27.767.c15).

¹²¹ *Pra + ita*, literally meaning “gone forth, departed.”

¹²² In the most ancient stratum of the Sarvāstivāda literature transmitted by Xuanzang, the *Jñānaprasthāna* says, by way of a reply to the question of how many faculties describe each class of sentient being: “Reply: nineteen at the max for hellish beings and eight at the minimum. For the *tiryāṇic* (non-human animal kingdoms), nineteen at the max and thirteen at the minimum – the same goes for the realm of hungry ghosts (*pretas*).” 答：地獄，極多十九；極少八。傍生，極多十九；極少十三，鬼界亦爾。The earlier translation of *Jñānaprasthāna* by Zhu Fonian, et al., corroborates these assignments (Chi: *Apitan bajian du lun* 阿毘曇八犍度論) fasc. 21, (T1543:26.873.c27-29).

¹²³ *Nyāyanusāra*, fascicle 21: “Hungry ghosts refer to those with habitual stinginess and greediness, such that they delight in stealing things from other living things. Also, the hungry ghosts are the object of ancestral sacrifices. They seek things from others in order to survive. Although, their body is weak and debased, withered and enervated, irascible in body and mind. Thus they are termed ‘hungry ghosts.’” 言餓鬼者，謂餘生中，慙盜他物，習慳貪等。又復多是所祀祖宗。又多希求以自存濟。又多怯劣。其形瘦悴，身心輕躁，故名餓鬼 (T1562:29.461.a21-23).

¹²⁴ According to verse 3.9 of Vasubandhu's *Treasury*, that *pretas* are special in this sense in that they can take either of two forms of mortal rebirth: from a mammal's womb, or as the seemingly “spontaneous” emanation of a transitory being assuming a new physical form. The *Tattvasiddhi-śāstra* (fasc. 2) 成實論 of Harivārman, a 4th century Sanskrit author, translated into classical Chinese by Kumārājīva during the 5th century, also attests to this explanation: “some amongst the non-Buddhist paths speak of perdurance of the spirit which takes consciousness as its basis. Hence [in order to differentiate themselves from the non-Buddhist paths] the Buddhist scriptures speak of the four loci for this consciousness: born either viviparously, oviparously, or via [spawning in] moisture, or via karmic transformation. There are upapādukas across each and every one of the various heavens and hells. Pretas are either born via karmic maturation (that is, as the reincarnation of an upapāduka), or viviparously. The remainder of those bearing residual karma are born amongst the [aforementioned] four.” 外道

transformation involves becoming physically reincarnated as an avatar of an *upapāduka* that has been suspended in the intermediate state between bodies.¹²⁵

Pretas live only in the *kāmadhātu*. They are known to be chronically unsatiated and malnourished. They survive in the bodily form of beasts that are distinctive for their pencil-thin necks.

(6) *Nārakas* (Chi.: *Naluoqie* 捺落迦), or hellish beings, have from eight to nineteen faculties, again without the three faculties of higher gnosis.¹²⁶ The *naraka* (sometimes spelled as *nāraka*, with the long vowel) is the genus of the “hell-borne” sentient beings that populate the eight hot and eight cold regions in the *Avīci*, the “uninterrupted hell” (Chi.: *wujian diyu* 無間地獄) that is located 40,000 *yojanas*, roughly 360,000 miles, beneath the surface of the earth.¹²⁷ The average lifespan of this species of extends over ten long courses of suffering. Vasubandhu calculates that the life-expectancy of a *naraka* is a medium-length *kalpa* cycle (Chi.: *yi zhongjie* 一中劫),¹²⁸ a period ranging from three-hundred years to thirty-six million years.¹²⁹

或謂識依神住，故佛說識依此四處。又有四生：卵生・胎生・濕生・化生。諸天地獄一切化生。餓鬼二種胎生・化生。餘殘四生 (T1646:32.250.c28-9).

¹²⁵ The fourth designation of sentient beings born via karmic transformation refers to those *upapādukas* or transitional apparitions that become reincarnated as hungry ghosts. In Vasubandhu's words (AK 3.1), as rendered into Chinese by Xuanzang: “intermediate beings are only born via karmic transformation; the pretas are uniformly of two modes of rebirth – either ovipariously or via karmic transformation” 中有唯化生 鬼通胎化二. The gist of stanza 3.9 is that all sentient beings, including *pretas*, endure a one to seven week state of suspended animation immediately following their death. Being reborn from a womb, however, is only one of the four ways to achieve physical reincarnation on earth, the others being oviparous rebirth from an egg, being reborn as an insect (lit., “via incubation”), and via karmic transformation.

¹²⁶ Tzohar glosses the word *nārakas* as “beings populating the Buddhist hells” – see his article in *Sophia: International Journal of Philosophy and Traditions* (Melbourne: Univ. of Melbourne Department of Philosophy, 2017), titled, “Imagine Being a *Preta*: Early Indian Yogācāra Approaches to Intersubjectivity,” 56.2, 7.

¹²⁷ Spatial measurements from *Mahāvibhāṣa* 172 (T1545:27.865.c27).

¹²⁸ T1558:29.61.c18.

¹²⁹ According to Nakamura Hajime's 中村元 reckoning – see his *Bukkyōgo Daijiten* 仏教語大辞典 (Tōkyō: Tōkyō Shoseki, 1975), 958d.

(7) *Upapāduka* is the genus of sentient beings that inhabit the “intermediate state” (Skt.: *antarābhava*; Chi. *zhong-yin* 中陰; *zhong-you* 中有) between incarnations in a fleshly body.¹³⁰ In his versified form of the standard gloss, Vasubandhu states: “The *antarābhava* is [defined as] the distance between (Skt.: *antarā*) dying (Skt.: *mṛti*) and becoming reborn (Skt.: *utpatti*).” The state of *antarābhāva* is very fragile and is said to last for a maximum of forty-nine days and a minimum of two human weeks.¹³¹ Although the *upapāduka* are the most populous form of life in the universe, they are also the most evanescent, with a maximum lifespan of only seven human weeks.¹³² The best-known forms of *upapādukas* include the *nāgas*, *gāruḍas*, *apsarās*, *kalavinka*, and *gandhārvas*.

Vasubandhu describes the *upapāduka* as the form of being that a sentient organism assumes during the course after death that precedes reincarnation as a human, non-human animal, hell-borne being (Skt.: *nāraka*), hungry ghost, or celestial. In stanza 3.9 of the *Treasury of Abhidharma*, Vasubandhu avers that an *upapāduka* “cannot become another *upapāduka*.” (AK 3.9).¹³³ This means that an *upapāduka* cannot be reincarnated as another *upapāduka*. Vasubandhu states that the *upapāduka* must be reborn by way of one of four modes of mortal incarnation into a fleshy body.

¹³⁰ See AK 3.9dc (according to Xuanzang's text); also *Nyāyanusāra*, fasc. 22, (T1562:29.467.a12). For corresponding Skt. of this stanza see Pradhan, ed., *Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya*, 119.

¹³¹ See Cuevas's (1996) groundbreaking article on the subject of *antarābhava*, “Predecessors and Prototypes: Towards a Conceptual History of the Buddhist *Antarābhava*,” *Numen*, 43.3 (1996): 263-302. The first sentence of his paper provides a succinct gloss on the hotly debated term: “The Buddhist Sanskrit term *antarābhava* refers quite literally to existence (*bhāva*) in an interval (*antarā*) and designates the temporal space between death and subsequent rebirth” — Cuevas, “Conceptual History of Buddhist *Antarābhava*,” 263. This space is understood both as a temporal interval and a spatial locus (*deśa*) between dying and becoming reborn.

¹³² *The Basis for Yoga Practitioners (YBh)* attests to the same assignment of lifespan that is specified in the Abhidharma textbooks of Vasubandhu and Saṅghabhadra.

¹³³ For Skt. text see Shastri, ed., *Sphuṭārthābhidharmakośa*, 402-3; Pradhan, ed., *Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya*, p. 119.

Vasubandhu agrees with the assignments of the minimum and the maximum numbers of faculties of the *upapādukas* found in the earlier **Samyukābhīdharmahṛdaya* (Chi.: *Za apitan xin lun* 雜阿毘曇心論).¹³⁴ Xuanzang adheres to the enumeration by Vasubandhu of these categories as well. They are as follows:

- *Upapādukas* in the *kāmadhātu* possess a minimum of three faculties and a maximum of eight. The minimum number of three faculties include the three compresent bodily faculties of aversion, vitality, and procreation. In general, the body of Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma teachings recognize bimodally gendered, hemaphroditic and androgynic species of *upapādukas*. *Upapādukas* in the *kāmadhātu* can also realize up to five sensory faculties. The maximum number of eight faculties refers to the hermaphroditic forms of *upapādukas* that possess both female and male procreative faculties, the five physical senses and vitality. Other categories of *upapādukas* do not possess gendered faculties and therefore have a maximum of seven faculties. The Abhidharma literature describes this form of

¹³⁴ “The androgynic *upapāduka* contains six [faculties], namely the five physical faculties [vision, hearing, taste, touch, and smell] and vitality. The monadically gendered [*upapāduka*] contains seven; the bimodally gendered, eight. This description applies uniformly across the *kāmadhātu*.” 化生無形六，謂五色根、及命根。一形七；二形八。此一向說欲界 (T1552:28.940.21-22). Dunlin's commentary on AKBh 3 corroborates that the “five physical faculties” mentioned above refer to the five ordinary sense faculties: “Moreover the *upapāduka* necessarily possesses vision, etc., which forms to a total of eight faculties. Hence it should be known that in the final stages of its life, when all of the mental states fade into the past, that is precisely called ‘aversion.’ But it is not the case that we can speak of it as ‘complete,’ or ‘incomplete’ within this final stage.” 又是化生必具眼等，故成八也。應知此中，於命終位，所有諸心，滅入過去，即名為「捨」，非論後位「成」與「不成」。 This work of Dunlin is framed as a sub-commentary on the famous *Commentary on the Stanzas of the Treasury* (*Jushe lun song shu lun ben* 俱舍論頌疏論本) written by his teacher Yuanhui 圓暉. In turn, Saṅghabhadra's rejoinders to Vasubandhu elaborated in his *Abhidharma Treatise Conforming to Logic* (Skt.: *Abhidharma Nyāyanusāra-śāstra*; Chi.: *Apidamo shun zhengli-men lun* 阿毘達磨順正理論) and his *Clarification of Tenets* (Chi.: *Xianzong lun* 顯宗論), come to accept these specific figures as well, with only minor adjustments. In summary, the *upapāduka* necessarily possesses visual, etc., [sensory faculties], and for this reason realizes the eight (five senses + three compresent faculties of mind, vitality, and aversion). Their continued existence ranges from a minimum of three to a maximum of eight. From this we know that when these *upapādukas* in the stage of the end-of-life, the mental states they possess are annihilated and decay into the past – this is what's termed ‘aversion’ (*upekṣā*) no matter if it's fully manifest [in the final stages of life] or not.” (c.f. *Mahāvibhāṣa* 147).

creature as taking the form of a male *gandharva* or an female *apsarā*. This couple takes the form of the spectral celestial musicians that are often depicted in Buddhist iconography.¹³⁵

- *Upapādukas* in the *rūpadhātu* possess a minimum of the three compresent bodily faculties and can achieve a maximum of six faculties including vitality and the five sensory faculties 色界得六根.¹³⁶ The maximum number of six faculties for the *upapādukas* in the *rūpadhātu* is lower than that of the *upapādukas* in the *kāmadhātu*. This is because *upapādukas* in the subtle material realm are androgynic and do not possess the gendered procreative faculties.
- *Upapādukas* in the *arūpadhātu* possess only the three compresent faculties of vitality, mind, and aversion. *Upapāduka* survive for only one generation or life-span because they do not have the faculties of procreation.

On the Question of Five or Six Genera

The question of whether or not the taxonomy of life includes a sixth genus of *asurās* is raised in the later Mahāyāna literature and contested within the modern secondary literature.¹³⁷

¹³⁵ *Apsarās* and *gandharva* spirits show up in the *Ṛg Veda*. However, it is only within the Buddhist Abhidharma literature that they are assigned a gendered role.

¹³⁶ *Samyuktābhidharma-hṛdaya* (fasc. 8), T28, no. 1552, p. 940, c16).

¹³⁷ Stephen Teiser's book on the Wheel of Rebirth in Buddhist temples highlights the sixfold formula, but asserts that is a later formulation found particularly in later, extra-canonical texts – see Teiser, *Reinventing the Wheel: Paintings of Rebirth in Medieval Buddhist Temples* (Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 2006), 208. Teiser, 209, refers to the *asurās* as “demigods.” Schmid refers to both fivefold and sixfold formulas as “standard” and refers to *asuras* as “fighting-gods.” – see his article, “Revisioning the Buddhist Cosmos Shifting Paths of Rebirth in Medieval Chinese Buddhism,” *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 17 (2008), 294. The pictorial example of the wheel of rebirth from Tibet given by Schmid, “Revisioning the Buddhist Cosmos,” clearly displays five *gatis* – that is, a wheel divided into six wedges by five “spokes,” as it were. Schmid concludes that “By the seventh century, other sets of explanatory (i.e., didactic) images [in addition to accepted definitions of both the Five and the Six Paths] came to the fore, namely depictions of Kṣitigarbha with the Six Paths of Rebirth, often accompanied by the Ten Kings of the netherworld, as well as illustrated versions of the Scripture of the Ten Kings.” For the *Scripture of the Ten Kings*, see Teiser, *The Scripture of the Ten Kings* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1994). Nowhere in

The debate centers on whether the category of genera encompassing all forms of life includes embodied forms that are incarnate, and the disembodied forms of life that reside in the afterlife. After detailing the entirety of embodied and disembodied life in terms of the ranges of the faculties, Vasubandhu turns to the topic of five transmigratory realms, or *gatis*, in the “Discrimination of Worldly Things.” The first stanza of the third chapter of the *Treasury of Abhidharma* represents the standard Sarvāstivāda ordering of the *gatis* into five genera. Vasubandhu does this by paring off the intermediate beings and placing them into a sixth category that is separate from the five *gatis*.¹³⁸ In his extensive auto-commentary on his opening stanzas, Vasubandhu states that there are five *gatis* in the *kāmadhātu*, but only two each in the *rūpadhātu* and the *arūpadhātu*.

In the beginning of Chapter Three in the *Treasury of Abhidharma*, Vasubandhu lists the five *gatis* in terms of the three environmental realms (Skt.: *dhātus*). The order of five *gatis* runs from the spiritually “lowliest” (Chi.: lie 劣) to most “refined” (Chi.: sheng 勝) forms of incarnate sentient beings, or from the forlorn hellish beings, or *nārakas*¹³⁹ trapped in tortuous “solitary hells” (Chi.: *gu diyu* 孤地獄), to the humanoid and non-humanoid celestials who roam freely and happily through the six celestial spheres of this *Sahā* world of ours. The continuum that ranges from the *nārakas* to the devas captures the spiritual spectrum of sentient life.

Saṅghabhadra and Vasubandhu mention the rubric of “four lower *gatis*,” which are the

either Chinese version of AKBh is there mentioned a sixth gati or even “sixth paths” 六道. Xuanzang's *Mahāvibhāṣa* ascribes the doctrine that the *asurās* represent a sixth *gati* to the non-Buddhist *tīrthikas*. A quick CBETA search reveals that apart from this mention in explicitly non-Buddhist contexts in *Mahāvibhāṣa* 142, nowhere in Xuanzang's translation corpus, nor in the early normative Abhidharma literature are the *asuras* counted as a sixth *gati*.

¹³⁸ Notably, the terminology of “six *gatis*” 六趣 occurs 17 times in Xuanzang's 600 fasc. rendering of the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras*. It occurs in many formative scriptures including the *Lotus Sūtra*, *Avatamsaka Sūtra*, *Daśabhūmika sūtra*, the *Ratnakuta*, *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*, etc etc. And many other texts, including 7 times in the *Mahāvibhāṣa*, is mentioned in several vinaya texts, appears in the *Mūlamadhāmakakārikās* (3 times) and the 12 *Gate Treatise*, and the *Basis for Yoga Practitioners* 瑜伽師地論, fascicle seventy-six: T1579:30.718.a12-17.

¹³⁹ MW: relating to hell, hellish, infernal.

nārakas, the non-human animals, the *pretas*, and the humans. The six *gatis*, including the *asurās*,¹⁴⁰ are featured in Buddhist depictions of the “wheel of rebirth” which is based upon Chinese pseudepigraphical works, such as those appearing in the cache at Dunhuang Mogao Grottoes, including the infamous Chinese sūtra by the name of the *Sūtra on the Ten Kings* (Chi.: *Shi Wang jing* 十王經).¹⁴¹ By contrast, earlier the Abhidharma authors never mention the six *gatis*,¹⁴² other than within discussions with rival Buddhists and non-Buddhist *tīrthikas*. It is not always clear to which rivals the *Mahāvibhāṣa* refers, but it seems fair to say that the view of six *gatis* is considered to be specious by the earlier Abhidharma scholars. This appears in the *Mahāvibhāṣa* discussion on the *gatis* found in fascicles ten through eleven of the translation by Xuanzang. Saṅghabhadra summarizes the commentary by Vasubandhu on *AKBh* 3.1 as follows: “*Nārakas*, etc., belong to the lower four *gatis*, the entirety of which, along with part of the heavens

¹⁴⁰ Lamotte translates a passage in fascicle ten of the *Da zhidu lun* (T1509:25.135.c5-7) dealing with the status of *asurās* – see *La Traité de la grande vertu de sagesse*, Vol. 3, 614-15. In this passage, the question is addressed: why are the *gandharvas* and *asurās* not explicitly mentioned in the sūtras? See Kumārajīva 鳩摩羅什 trans. T1509: 25, 280a. The response given is that the two are subsumed under the *pretas*: “Question. – S’il en était ainsi, le sūtra ne décrit pas parler non plus des *Gandharva* ni des *Asurā*. pourquoi? Parce que ces êtres sont déjà compris (Skt.: *saṃgrhīta*; Chi.: *she* 攝) dans la destinée des *Preta*.” 問曰：若爾者，犍闥婆、阿修羅亦不應說，何以故？鬼神道中已攝故 (T1509:25.135.c03-4). For more on the status of the sixth *gati* in *Da zhidu lun* see Lamotte, *La Traité de la grande vertu de sagesse* (English trans. by Chodron, 2001) 478, fn. 848.

¹⁴¹ For the provenance of the *Treatise on the Ten Kings* see Teiser, *Scripture of the Ten Kings*; also see Makita Tairyō’s 牧田諦亮(1989) study on East Asian Buddhist pseudepigraphica – *Gikyō Kenkyū* 疑經研究 (Kyōto: Rinsen Book Co. 臨川書店, 1989).

¹⁴² The doctrine of six *gatis* proliferates in the later Mahāyāna literature. But nowhere does Vasubandhu discuss this doctrine in Xuanzang’s translation of the *Treasury of Abhidharma*. Schmid, “Revisioning the Buddhist Cosmos,” cites also “passages in Paramārtha’s and Xuanzang’s *AKBh*” that mention the six *gatis*, but gives only a single citation (T1509, 25: 280a.) to Taishō volume 25, No. 1509. This is a passage from Nagarjuna’s *Prajñāpāramitā* commentary, the *Da zhidu lun* 大智度論, which Schmid cites, verbatim: “Previously one explained [*saṃsāra*] with the Five Paths. Now one adds the path of *asurās*.” 先說五道今益阿修羅道. See **Mahāprajñāpāramitōpadeśa* (*Da zhidu lun*), fascicle thirty — T1509:25.280.a02-3. Schmid, “Revisioning the Buddhist Cosmos,” inaccurately gives Chi. title as *Mahe bore poluomi jing shilun* 摩訶般若波羅蜜經釋論, “Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom,” attrib. Nāgārjuna 龍樹, however Schmid’s footnote gives citation to a different text – most commonly referred to in Chinese as *Da Zhidu lun* – see Lamotte’s translation of this text, *La Traité de la grande vertu de sagesse* (*Mahāprajñāpāramitā śāstra*). Taken out of context, the clipped form of the passage given by Schmid might lead one to construe its message as a positive endorsement of the six *gatis* doctrine. However, in the original work, the cited part of the passage appears in the broader context of the five *gatis* theory, wherein the sixth *gati* of the *asurās* is spoken of as an aside attributed to “some other people.” – see Kumārajīva’s translation 有人言：欲界眾生，應有十一種；先說五道，今益阿修羅道 (T.1509:25.280.a02-3).

and their celestial retinue, all belong to the *kāmadhātu*.¹⁴³ Saṅghabhadra's detailed commentary on the six heavens of the desire sphere, and the twenty-eight major hells, begins with the qualification, that is based upon Vasubandhu's explanation of the *kāmadhātu* as covering members of "the lower four *gatis*," namely, the humans, non-human animals, *pretas*, and *nārakas*. Saṅghabhadra claims that the *kāmadhātu* includes "part of the heavens and their celestial retinue," but only in a restricted sense.¹⁴⁴ Some sentient beings that inhabit the lower four *gatis* may be capable of observing surrounding *gatis*. For example, humans across the four continents can observe certain celestial bodies, including the six heavenly spheres of the *kāmadhātu*. Interestingly, humans can observe forms of *upapādukas* and vice versa. This comprises the full range of the "sensory world" (Skt.: *bhājanaloka*; Chi.: *qi shijian* 器世間) that is observable to human beings in the Jambudvīpa.

***Dhātu* and Conspecificity as Independent Variables**

The taxonomy of the six genera that are categorized by Xuanzang according to the minimum and the maximum number of faculties in a species is based on the two foundational concepts of *dhātu*, and conspecificity (Skt.: *nikāya-sabhāgatā*; Chi.: *tongzhong-fen* 同眾分). *Dhātu* and conspecificity are the two variables that determine the specific number and sequence of the faculties that characterize each individual sentient being. *Dhātu* describes the environment

¹⁴³ See T1558:29.829.b2: "the *kāmadhātu* refers to the four lower *gatis* of the *nārakas*, along with a portion of the devas and their heavenly retinue, together with the *bhājanaloka*." 那落迦等下四趣全、及天一分眷屬中有并器世間，總名欲界。

¹⁴⁴ The "sensory world" or *bhājanaloka* here denotes that part of the heavens observable to humans residing the surface of the earth. Does the sensory world (*bhājanaloka*) include more than just *kāmadhātu*? Xuanzang's version of AKBh 3.1-3 contains the interpolation: "*Rūpadhātu* refers to the totality of the *bhājanaloka* and the world of sentient life (*sattvaloka*)."¹⁴⁴ 器及有情總名色界 (T.1558:29.41.a15). Xuanzang's Chinese translation of Vasubandhu's auto-commentary to AKBh 45a-d reads: "The *sattvaloka* runs from heaven where one can partake of the pleasures created in other heavens [on high], all the way down to the Hell of Uninterrupted Suffering [down below]. The *bhājanaloka* runs from the wind-disc [the water-disc, and the space disc] and is a complete classification (*saṃgraha*) of the *kāmadhātu*." 若有情界，從自在天，至無間獄。若器世界，乃至風輪，皆欲界攝 (T1558:29.41.a12). For the corresponding Sanskrit text see Pradhan, *Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya*, 158.

that a particular species is born into, and conspecificity determines the composition of the body that an organism inhabits during a lifetime. Together, these two variables provide the doctrinal infrastructure for Xuanzang's taxonomy of life. Essentially, Xuanzang, following Vasubandhu, sets up his classification in terms of five and six transmigratory realms or genera. Each genus contains three classes of beings in different realms: those residing in the *kāmadhātu*, the *rūpadhātu*, and *arūpadhātu*. Genus stands for the one of the six categories of life, while the species indicates the unique conspecific traits possessed by the organism within one of the three environmental realms.

Dhātu is an ancient Sanskrit word that refers to the environmental conditions into which a particular sentient creature is born. It is a basic component of the Buddhist teaching on reincarnation. It holds that sentient creatures can transcend the station into which they are born, as well as their genetic limitations, by improving their karma. By accumulating good actions during a lifetime, sentient creatures can attain a happier and more desirable station in the next life. For Xuanzang, biology is not destiny.

The word *conspecificity* (Skt.: *sabhāgatā*), as defined by the Sarvāstivāda scholars, refers to the common traits shared by all members of a given species. From the earlier Sarvāstivāda scholars, Vasubandhu takes the idea that conspecificity determines multiple traits rather than any one singular or essential aspect of an organism. Xuanzang's Chinese definition of the Sanskrit word, *sabhāgatā*, is "the part that is shared in common by all members of the species." The concept of conspecificity appears in the Sarvāstivāda lists of dharma, or the causal factors that impact the development of an organism. Conspecificity refers to the genetic traits of the body into which a sentient being is born and can be considered to be the ancient Buddhist equivalent of the

genome.¹⁴⁵ For example, conspecificity provides the blueprint that determines the bi-podality and the average life expectancy of humans. Conspecificity thus differentiates the human animal from the non-human animal. It further serves to distinguish variables such as gender that function to “differentiate [individuals] within the species” 分別差別 (Skt.: *sattvavikalpa*; Tib.: *sems can gyi khad pa*). It does this by “regulating” (Chi.: *jinzhi* 禁止) the expression of certain conspecific gendered traits.

Each of the six genera are distinguished from one another by their conspecific traits. At the intra-species level they are divided into the three *dhātus*: the *kāmadhātu*, the *rūpadhātu*, and the *arūpadhātu*. Only three of the six genera are found all three *dhātus*: the celestials, the humans and the *upapādukas*. Members of the same genus who share conspecific factors are differentiated again along the basis of their *dhātu*. The variance in the number and the order of the faculties within a genus is due to the fact that each species of sentient uniquely adapts to its specific environmental realm. For example, while humans in each of the three *dhātus* share the common factor of bi-podality, they evince variation in their physical traits depending on the *dhātu* into which they are

¹⁴⁵ Radich's study on the Sarvāstivāda explanations of the Buddha's embodiment, translates *jīvitēndriyam* as “life-force” and the closely related factor of *sabhāgatā* as “mutual identify (sic) [of sentient beings].” (Skt.: *sattva-sabhāgatā*; Chi.: *youqing tongzhong fen* 有情同衆分). See “Embodiments of the Buddha in Sarvāstivāda Doctrine: With Special Reference to the **Mahāvibhāṣa*,” *Annual Report of the International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology*, 13 (2010), 162.. The merit of Radich's prescient translation of *jīvitēndriyam* as life force is that it communicates the material nature of the force of *jīvitēndriyam* (e.g., *f=ma*). This study reserves the words related to “brute physical power and/or force” to *āyur*, simpliciter (*shou* 壽) — the vital power that invests all things with life or animus/anima, and which finds its basis or *āśrayam* in the embodied faculty of vitality. Xuanzang takes 命 to indicate *jīva/jīvītā*, while he reserves the character *shou* for *āyur*. Paramartha's translation of Kosa does not show sensitivity to the analytical distinction between *āyur* and *jīvītā* in AKBh 3.45a-b. Xuanzang's translation choice to reserve the character *shou* for *ayur* shows sensitivity to the distinction between *ayuhṣaṃskāras* and *jīvitasāṃskāras*, which he takes to be important to understanding Vasubandhu's explanation of how to extend life by inducing a surge of “vital impulses” (*āyuhṣaṃskāras*). See Collette Cox's study for discussion on the distinction between *ayuhṣaṃskāras* and *jīvitasāṃskāras*, titled *Disputed Dharmas: Early Buddhist Theories on Existence* (Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 1997), 125-27. Vasubandhu's auto-commentary on his Treasury (AKBh 3.45a-b) ultimately argues that *jīvitēndriyam* is reducible to *āyur*, since the former simply stands for the brute power of the *āyur* it bears. See Pradhan, ed., *Abhidharmakośa*, 73. The only reservation with the translation of *sabhāgatā* as “mutual identity” is that in the Yogācāra context, *sabhāgatā* is stipulated as a more attenuated form of qualitative identity or unity of conspecific traits, rather than the restricted sense of numerical identity of genome.

born. Humans in the *kāmadhātu* have five senses because they need to negotiate the world of sensory desire; humans in the *rūpadhātu* have three senses because they do not require a sense of smell or taste to survive; and humans in the *arūpadhātu* have no ordinary senses because can rely on the faculty of tactition to feed themselves. Additionally, humans express variation in their lifespans according to their *dhātu*. Humans on earth generally live to be less than one hundred years, while humans in the Yāma Heavens (Chi.: *Yanmo tian* 閻魔天) of the *rūpadhātu* enjoy an average life expectancy of two thousand human years.¹⁴⁶

Karma dictates the species, the nature of the environment, and the transmigratory standing into which an organism is reincarnated. It determines both the *dhātu* and the *gati*. In his detailed commentary on the AKBh, Puguang 普光, Xuanzang's collaborator in the translation of the text, writes that conspecificity determines the biological factors of the species in addition to its caste (Skt.: *varṇa*; Chi.: *xing* 姓),¹⁴⁷ or station in life.¹⁴⁸ Xuanzang's usage of the Chinese character *xing* involves a double entendre. This character indicates the two distinct Sanskrit words of *varṇa*, or "caste," and *gotra* or "family."¹⁴⁹ Puguang also includes, under the traits defined by conspecificity, the level of education that a being can attain and the particular vehicle of Buddhism or other religion to which the the individual belongs.

¹⁴⁶ Teiser, *Reinventing the Wheel*, 21 writes: "According to Buddhist scripture, those who are reborn, those who are reborn into Amitāyus's land of bliss are invariably born as male babies...." It is unclear what evidence Teiser bases this claim on. The three scriptures of Sino-Japanese Pure Land tradition repeatedly and emphatically state that the babies born into the Amitāyus pure land are androgynitic – that is, possessing no impure sexual organs. See Gómez, *The Land of Bliss. Sanskrit and Chinese Versions of the Sukhāvatīvyūha Sūtras* (New York: SUNY Univ. Press, 1996), 88-90, passim.

¹⁴⁷ Xuanzang, along with other translators of Indic languages into classical Chinese, use the Chi. character *xing* 姓 to variously translate the Skt. words *gotra*, meaning "family," and *varṇa*, meaning "caste." He also employs another Chinese character —*zhong* 種—to render the Skt. word *gotra*. *Sir. Monier-Williams's Skt. Dictionary* gives various meanings in addition to the literal meaning of the word *gotra* as "herd, family enclosed by the hurdle."

¹⁴⁸ T1821:41.93.a10-12.

¹⁴⁹ *Sir. Monier Williams Skt. Dictionary* gives under *varṇa*: "class of men, tribe, order, caste (probably from contrast of colour between the dark aboriginal tribes and their fair conquerors)."

The Human Sequence of Faculties

In his exegesis of death Xuanzang is particularly interested in the number of faculties required to sustain the survival of different classes of sentient beings, specifically humans. It is significant that Xuanzang's translation of Vasubandhu's "Discrimination of Faculties" begins with the five ordinary senses possessed by humans living in the *kāmadhātu*. Ever the pragmatist, Xuanzang, like Vasubandhu before him, starts with the earth and the ordinary humans who populate it. Vasubandhu's comprehensive exploration of what it means to be human takes him from the ordinary human earthlings (Skt.: *prthagjanas*; Chi.: *yi-sheng* 異生 or *fan-fu* 凡夫)¹⁵⁰ to an investigation of other forms of human life, including embryonic life, non-able-bodied humans, earthly sages, and extraterrestrials.

Xuanzang follows the approach of Vasubandhu by isolating the paradigmatic case for the "able-bodied human" or *paripūrin*.¹⁵¹ Xuanzang translates *paripūrin* as, the "perfect and complete one" (Chi.: *yuan-man zhe* 圓滿者).¹⁵² Vasubandhu's *Treasury of Abhidharma* uses the phrase, "well-bestowed *paripūrin*," to describe the characteristics of the human being whose full range of faculties are "complete" or "perfectly-able-bodied."¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰ Xuanzang treats the latter as exclusively a category of earthbound humans, while he takes the former to include all manner of extraterrestrial humanoids. He nowhere uses the term *fan-fu* for *prthagjana* in the CWSL, and uses the term which he takes as derogatory, very seldomly. See *Mahāvibhāṣa*, fascicle 103 at T1545:27.532.c05.

¹⁵¹ *Monier-Williams Skt. Dictionary* defines *paripūrin* as "granting or bestowing richly." It is the *kṛdanta*-suffix form of from the strong-form of the 6th-class Skt. root *pari-√pur*: meaning "to abound" (intransitive pass.: "to be well bestowed/endowed"). The form of the word with the *kṛdanta*-suffix is taken to be a general epithet for both human and non-human animals that are bestowed with the full array of healthy faculties that are all fully intact.

¹⁵² Fascicle 96 of Xuanzang's *Mahāvibhāṣa* glosses the term *paripūrin* as "s/he bestowed with the full power of the faculties." 具有根力 (T1545:27.498.a27-8).

¹⁵³ The CWSL abides by the clear stipulation on this term stated by Vasubandhu in his AKBh 3.20. Saṅghabhadra also adopts this stipulation. Xuanzang's Chinese version of the AKBh gloss on *paripūrin* runs: "Mahānidānaparyāya-sūtra describes them as 'fully-fledged beings. Only in the *kāmadhātu* are they described as *pudgalas*, but not in the *rūpyadhātu* or the *arūpyadhātu* where there are stillborn beings" 非諸中天及色無色。但據欲界補特伽羅。大緣起經說「具有」故 (T1558:29.48.b5-6). *Nyāyanusāra*, fascicle 25 reads: "The idea here is that the person (*pudgala*) covers all stages. *Paripūrin*, however, excludes the stillborn fetuses, along with the being in the *kalala*, and so on, [pre-natal] stages in the subtle material realms and immaterial realms

The initial four quatrains of Vasubandhu's "Discrimination of the Faculties" enumerate the sequence of faculties with which a human being is born and can ultimately realize through action in life or rebirth. Vasubandhu orders the human faculties according to the sequence codified in the *Mahāvibhāṣa*. The faculties of the human *paripūrīn* include: the five ordinary senses of tactition, olfaction, gustation, audition, and vision (1-5); the sixth sense of the mind (6); the three bodily faculties independent of sensation and the bimodally gendered procreative faculties (7-8); vitality (9); the five hedonic faculties of suffering, pleasure, joy, anxiety, and aversion (10-14); the five skillful faculties of faith, perseverance, mindful recollection, concentration, and wisdom (14-19); and finally, the three faculties of higher gnosis. Vasubandhu's sequence of the human faculties becomes the standard formulation that is adhered to by legions of his successors. For example, Saṅghabhadra, Vasubandhu's contemporary, structures his *Treatise Conforming to the the Correct Logic of Abhidharma*, and his *Clarification of Tenets* around Vasubandhu's core verses on the human sequence (AK 2.1-14) from the beginning of the second chapter of the *Treasury of Abhidharma*.

The Sequence, Order and Dominance of the Faculties of Humans

Vasubandhu begins his exposition of the human sequence of faculties with a precise description of the five ordinary sensory faculties, an explanation for their order, and a discussion about the interaction and cooperation between them. These explanations are encapsulated in the first four quatrains of the second chapter of his *Treasury of Abhidharma*. In his first verse Vasubandhu prioritizes the faculties of vision and audition as crucial for human survival. His auto-commentary explains that these two faculties are of foremost importance because "by way of

(*arūpadhātu*), which are excluded." 此中意說：補特伽羅，歷一切位。名圓滿者。非諸中夭，及色·無色，羯刺藍等，諸位闕故 (T1562:29.481.a06-7).

seeing and hearing, one avoids threats and dangers.”¹⁵⁴ He then states that olfaction, gustation and tactition are indispensable in the consumption and digestion of food, and therefore necessary for survival.

Having dispensed with the five ordinary senses, Vasubandhu homes in on the sixth sense, the mental faculty. He links the mental faculty with the five ordinary senses to form the six senses that comprise the full complement of human sensory capacities. He regards the six senses as the very “root of sentient life” (Skt.: *sattvamūlam*; Chi.: *youqing ben* 有情本). The sixth sense of the mind is significant in that mind plays a provisory role over the five bodily senses by sustaining and coordinating their activities. All sentient creatures are invested with a mental faculty at birth. Essentially, the presence of the sixth faculty of mind separates humans from vegetables. The mental faculty is further defined in terms of its two primary capabilities: the “capability to continue sensory experience, and the “capability to promote independent action.” 謂能續後有、及自在隨行.¹⁵⁵ The mind is described as dominant over these two capabilities as it plays a primary and indispensable role in sustaining sensory experience and independent action. Without the sixth sense of mind, humans would be inert.

Vasubandhu devotes the third quatrain in this quadrat of *ślokas* (AK 1.4a-d) to the five hedonic faculties and *jīvitēndriyam*. The linkage between vitality and the five hedonic faculties in one hemistich is more a matter of *metri causa* than a specific doctrinal point. His auto-commentary on this stanza states that the hedonic faculties form the basis of “hedonic experience” (Skt.: *vedanā*). Hedonic experience consists of painful, pleasurable, and neutral sensations. This group of five faculties (5-9) are united in the common function of registering the affective states of pleasure, pain, suffering, joy, and aversion to stimuli. They are described as the natural growths

¹⁵⁴ AKBh, trans. Xuanzang, fascicle 3, T1558:29.13.b19.

¹⁵⁵ T1558:29.13.c02-3.

that “sprout forth” (Skt.: *prabhava*) from the senses. The final hemistich of this third *śloka* introduces the five skillful faculties of faith, perseverance, mindful recollection, concentration, and wisdom. These five faculties are equally “derived from” (Skt.: *matāḥ*), yet “independent of” (Skt.: *anya*) the six senses. The fourth *śloka* in this series of four quatrains enumerates the final three items in the list of twenty-two faculties that make up the human being, namely, the faculties by which the savant (Skt.: *ājñātavin*) achieves nirvāṇa. Xuanzang's definition of death centers around the faculties of 1-9 in this list. These are the faculties that are destroyed when ordinary human *paripūrīn* in the *kāmadhātu* perishes.

Within the first four verses of the *Treasury of Abhidharma*, Vasubandhu decisively dispenses with the human sequence. He then devotes the balance of Chapter Two, *The Discrimination of the Faculties*, to refining the scope and the function of the twenty-two faculties. The focus of the next fifteen stanzas is on the *paripūrīn* of the *kāmadhātu*. The first stanza begins with a discussion of the five sensory faculties that are specific to the human *paripūrīn* in the *kāmadhātu*. Here Vasubandhu makes the point that the five faculties of vision, audition, olfaction, gustation, and tactition are unique to the *paripūrīn* in the *kāmadhātu*. Importantly, the number five can refer to more than one grouping of individual faculties possessed by a *paripūrīn* in the *rūpadhātu* and *arupadhātu*. However, Vasubandhu is clear that the cluster of five faculties that is comprised of the five ordinary senses, belongs specifically to *paripūrīn* in the *kāmadhātu*. The humans who occupy the two other *dhātus* do not require all five of the ordinary sensory faculties to survive.

Vasubandhu proceeds to describe the number and groupings of faculties that enable the *paripūrīn* to execute the tasks required for survival within the first of the three *dhātus*, the

kāmadhātu. He writes: “the five faculties are dominant over four *arthas*.”¹⁵⁶ *Artha* in this sense indicates a specific task or objective that is designated to a specific faculty. He employs the example of gustation (Skt.: *ghrānēndriyam*; Chi.: *she-gen*) to illustrate how certain faculties play indispensable roles in accomplishing the tasks that are required for an organism to survive. Vasubandhu then lists the four basic tasks that involve coordinated action by the sensory faculties using the specific activity of gustation. The dominant tasks performed by the five ordinary senses are:

- (1) To “guide and nourish” (Skt.: *viṣama-parivarjanāt/viṣama-pari-√vṛt* –lit., “to cause the body to constantly adapt to its environment”; Tib.: *yongs su bsprung ba*, lit., “to generally maintain”; Chi.: *Daoyang shen* 導養身)¹⁵⁷ the body by ingesting and digesting food.
- (2) To “adorn the body” (Skt.: *ātmabhāva-śo-√bhā*; Chi.: *zhuang-yan shen* 莊嚴身) by furnishing the aperture and apparatus for the taking of nourishment, including, but not limited to, the tongue, teeth, and palate.
- (3) To “engender consciousness” (Skt.: *sasamprayogāṇām ut√pat*; Chi.: *sheng-shi* 生識; Tib.: *rnam par shes pa mtshungs ldan*) of a specific type of sensation. For example, the faculty of gustation produces the consciousness (Skt.: *ghrāṇa-vijñāna*; Chi.: *she-shi* 舌識) of different tastes of food.

¹⁵⁶ Xuanzang’s rather compacted rendition of Vasubandhu’s *śloka* 2,1 reads: “The Abhidharma tradition says that five [faculties] are dominant over the four tasks (*arthas*), and that the four faculties are dominant in either of two ways [i.e., by producing purity and/or pollution]. Five [sense faculties] or eight [five ordinary senses + mind, *kāyēndriyam*, and *jīvitēndriyam*] are dominant over purity and impurity (Skt. reads “distress/affliction/pain (*kleśas*) and purification (*vyavadāna*)). But each and every one [of the faculties] works in a dominant way.” 傳說五於四；四根於二種；五·八染淨中；各別為增上。Corresponding Skt. text reads: *Caturṣvartheṣu pañcānāmādhipatyam dvayoḥ kila* // 2.1ab — Pradhan, *Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya*, 38.

¹⁵⁷ The Skt. compound *viṣama-pari-varja* that Vasubandhu uses to describe the second domain within which the senses are dominant comes from the verb *pari-√vṛt* — lit., “constantly adapting in a variegated way.”

- (4) To exercise a unique or “uncommon instrumentality” (Skt.: *asādharaṇakaraṇatva*; Tib.: *thun mong ma yin pa'i rgyu*; Chi. *bu-gong shi* 不共事)¹⁵⁸ through an “uncommon capacity.” (Chi.: *bu-gong gong-neng* 不共功能). The “uncommon” capacity of the gustatory faculty resides in its unique ability to take in, taste, and register the consciousness of nutrients.¹⁵⁹

The dominant tasks performed by each of the five senses are: nourishing and guiding sensory perception, adorning the body, engendering consciousness, and evincing uncommon instrumentality. The idea that each of the five sensory faculties are dominant in four ways adds an important qualification to the second and third methodological tenets of Xuanzang concerning the cooperation of faculties. The third methodological tenet, which holds that at least three faculties must cooperate to accomplish their target actions, can be applied to the faculty of gustation. For example, the faculty of gustation is never held singularly responsible for the provision of nutrition to the body. Moving the mouth and grinding the teeth in order to break down the food into ingestible morsels requires the assistance of the mental faculty in conjunction with *kāyēndriyam*. In the example of gustation, the mental faculty and *kāyēndriyam* work together to digest the “grosser forms of food” (Skt.: *kavaḍī-kārāhāra*; Chi.: *cu shi* 麤食) rendered “piecemeal” (Chi.: *duan shi* 段食) by the mouth and then the bowels.¹⁶⁰

Implicit in Vasubandhu’s example of the faculty of gustation is the essential idea of

¹⁵⁸ Under *sādharaṇa*, Sir. Monier-Williams *Skt. Dictionary* gives. “having or resting on the same support or basis belonging or applicable to many or all, general, common to all, universal, common to [all].” Technically speaking, the word *asādharaṇa* is an exocentric or *samanādhikaraṇa* (“having the same substratum with”) kind of *bahuvrīhi* compound that literally means “whose instrumentality (*karaṇatva*) has a basis which is not the same.” See Gary Tubb and Emery Robert Boose, *Scholastic Sanskrit: A handbook for students* (Columbia Univ. Press, 2007), under “Appositional *Bahuvrīhis*, 128-133, *passim*.

¹⁵⁹ *Nyāyanusāra*, fascicle 9 glosses this as, literally, “those capacities not shared with others” (T1562:29.78.a03).

¹⁶⁰ *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism* gives “[the first of] four kinds of food 四食:” “段食 piecemeal food (or, interpreted as ‘coarse food’ 搏食); physical food that enters the mouth piece by piece – fruits, meats, vegetables, etc.” (DDB, accessed March 22, 2017; April 5, 2017).

dominance as it relates to the faculties. Vasubandhu uses gustation as a paradigmatic case to demonstrate how a sensory faculty fulfills multiple functions in coordinated action with other faculties. The case of *ghrāhnêndriyam*, or gustation, is one example of how the agenda-driven Abhidharma thinkers attempt to avoid confusion between the Buddhist and Sāṅkhya definitions of a faculty. Sāṅkhya has a linear definition that equates one faculty to one activity. Gauḍapada, the earliest Sanskrit commentator on the *Sāṅkhyakārikās*, defines *ghrāhnêndriyam* as “the faculty that eats things.” Notably, Xuanzang translates the faculty of gustation as, “the tongue *qua* faculty.” He uses this translation in his analysis of both the Buddhist and Sāṅkhya taxonomies of the five ordinary senses (Skt.: *pañca-prāṇêndriyāṇi*).¹⁶¹ However, the Abhidharma definition of the faculty of gustation is unlike its Sāṅkhya counterpart, in that the faculty is defined as having the capacity to perform more than one action when working in coordination with other faculties.

Xuanzang follows Vasubandhu’s paradigm that holds that each faculty has multiple capacities that are expressed when one faculty works in conjunction with other faculties. This stands in contrast to Gauḍapada’s definition in which each of the five ordinary senses has a singular and independent ability.¹⁶² This represents a crucial distinction between the Brāhmaṇical and the Buddhist theories of the faculties. Xuanzang, following Vasubandhu and Saṅghabhadra, affirms the Abhidharma Buddhist doctrine that defines each faculty in terms of its “uncommon capacities” (Chi.: *bugong gongneng* 不共功能) the actions that would be impossible to accomplish without the existence of a specific faculty. For example, the vital bodily function of digestion would not

¹⁶¹ These are the same five physical senses recognized by Buddhists, but listed in a different order.

¹⁶² Gauḍapada’s commentary on SK, stanza 29, characterizes the five faculties of action (*pañca-kārmêndriyāṇi*) as “[those] whose common mode of action is instrumentality” (*samānyakāraṇa-vṛtti*). Gauḍapada takes this exocentric or bahuvrīhi-compound to refer to the eleven faculties enumerated in stanzas 26-27 – see *Sāṅkhyakārikās*, ed. Sharma Dutt (Puṇa: The Oriental Book Agency, 1933), 28

be possible without the faculty of gustation.

Vasubandhu provides examples of how different faculties play dominant, or indispensable roles, in accomplishing the basic tasks of living. For example, he states that the visual and mental faculties play dominant roles in the activity of vision, and that *kāyēndriyam* and the mental faculties play dominant roles in the action of walking. Additionally, the three faculties of gnosis coordinate with each other and with the faculties of wisdom and mind to produce the transcendent experience of omniscience of the past, present, and future.

The Range of the Human Faculties

In the first four quatrains of Chapter Two of the *Treasury of Abhidharma*, Vasubandhu stipulates that the total number of faculties realizable by humans in the *kāmadhātu* is nineteen. The first four *ślokas* list each of the twenty-two faculties, beginning with the five sensory faculties and mind and conclude with the three faculties of higher gnosis (19-22) (AK 2.4cd). This list comprises the range of the human faculties.

In Chapter Two of the *Treasury of Abhidharma*, Vasubandhu addresses the circumstances of humans inveigled within the world of sensory desire. This involves a constant search for pleasure and the avoidance of pain. In the seventeenth stanza of chapter two (AK 2.17-ad) Vasubandhu points out that the “four senses, and the five bodily senses, save for vision, form the basis of bodily pleasure.”¹⁶³ This is because the sensory faculties are directed toward objects, or *viṣaya*, that contain pleasure. Xuanzang uses the Chinese character “dust” (Chi.: *chen* 塵) to translate the Sanskrit word, *viṣaya*. In this translation he conveys the idea that *viṣaya* can be both a particular sensory object, and a synecdoche for the sensory domain as a whole. The term “dust”

¹⁶³ The only qualification offered by Vasubandhu is that these four sensory faculties are absent from the bodies of sentient beings within the *arūpadhātu* (T1558:29.17.c14).

emphasizes the idea that objects of sensory desire and the larger “the dusty Sahā world” (Chi.: *chenshi* 塵世) are by definition, defiled.

In the eighteenth stanza of chapter two Vasubandhu states that the human who “possesses the faculty of pleasure [also] possesses four [other] faculties.”¹⁶⁴ The possession of the faculty of pleasure presupposes having a body that contains vitality, *kāyēndriyam*, a mind to process pleasurable sensations, and a faculty of aversion to pain. With the faculty of pleasure (Skt.: *saumanasyēndriyam*) and the faculty of suffering (Skt.: *duḥkhēndriyam*) the total number of human faculties comes to eight: the four sensory faculties that are sensitive to pain, vitality, a mind, and the two initial hedonic faculties of pleasure and pain. The enumeration continues with the three additional hedonic faculties of joy, anxiety, and aversion. Vasubandhu stipulates that each of the five hedonic faculties are “analytically distinct from mind in terms of their activity” (Skt.: *manāyino'vṛttiḥ*) but “invariably associated with it” (Skt.: *saṃyuktaḥ*). The importance of this statement is that sensory and emotional experiences are dependent upon the presence of a mind that registers feelings.

In sum, the fifth through the twenty-first stanzas in this section of Vasubandhu's *Treasury of Abhidharma* outline a distinct sequence of mental and corporeal faculties constituted of fourteen faculties. These include the five ordinary senses (1-5) together with a mental faculty (6), the bodily faculties of vitality and procreation (7-8/9), and the five hedonic faculties (10-14) that correspond to pleasure, pain, joy, anxiety, and aversion. This describes the experience of humans in the *kāmadhātu* who are driven by their faculties toward the satisfaction of sensory desires for food and sex. By the nineteenth stanza of the chapter, Vasubandhu enumerates a total of fourteen faculties

¹⁶⁴ Skt.: Caturbhiḥ sukhakāyābhyām pañcabhiḥ cakṣurādīmān| saumanasyī ca duḥkhī tu saptabhiḥ strīndriyādīmān|| 2.17c-d. See Pradhan, *Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya*, 50-51. Xuanzang's Chi. runs: 成就命意捨 各定成就三 若成就樂身 各定成就四 (T1558:29.17.c05-6).

to describe the human experience. The number thirteen stands generally for the human in the mundane *kāmadhātu* that is characterizable in terms of a bimodal gender. Because hermaphroditic humans possess both male and female forms of procreative faculties (8-9), they are denoted by the number fourteen. However, Xuanzang's investigation into the nature of death focuses on only the first nine faculties, the senses and the bodily faculties. This is because the possession of a total nine faculties demarcates the line between a living human body and a dead one.

Nine is the Magic Number

The number nine has a vaunted status in the Abhidharma Buddhist systems of doctrine because it signifies the number of faculties that compose the living *paripūrin*. Vasubandhu states, in the twenty-second stanza of the second chapter of his *Treasury of Abhidharma* (AK 2.22c, Pradhan, 1967, p. 53) that, “possessing a body-with-sense-faculties (Skt.: *kāyêndriyin*) emerges from nine-elements” (Skt.: *kāyêndriya navadravyaḥ*; Chi.: *you genshen jiushi* 有身根九事).¹⁶⁵ In his auto-commentary on this line of verse, Vasubandhu determines that this “nine-fold constituency” (Skt.: *navadravyaḥ*; Chi.: *jiu shi* 九事) contains the nine faculties that characterize the able-bodied human earthling.¹⁶⁶

The number nine has special significance in the Buddhist literature because it symbolizes the emergence of animate and sentient life from the inert and non-living body. In his taxonomy of life, Vasubandhu refers to the nine essential materials that make up the physical body. These are

¹⁶⁵ T1558:29.18.b21.

¹⁶⁶ Xuanzang's rendition of Vasubandhu's auto-commentary on AK stanza 2.22 diverges considerably from the Skt. : “The conascent constituency is either ninefold or tenfold. The ninefold constituency is inherent in possessing a body-with-organs. The eight is as aforementioned (i.e., the insensate eightfold material constituency); the body is the ninth constituent. Then, the atomic aggregate with sound arises in such a series – ninefold, tenfold, and elevenfold.” |此俱生事或九或十。有身根聚九事俱生。八事如前。身為第九。有餘根聚十事俱生。九事如前，加眼等一。眼耳鼻舌必不離身。展轉相望，處各別故。於前諸聚，若有聲生，如次數增九•十•十一 For Skt. text see Pradhan, *Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya*, 56. Saṅghabhadra's section on the faculties cites the above explanation verbatim. See *Nyāyanusāra*, fascicle 9, T1562:29.383.c19-24.

the four sensory organs: the eyes, the ears, the nose and the mouth, the four elements that make up the objects of the sensory world: earth, water, fire, and wind, and finally *kāyêndriyam*. *Kāyêndriyam* stands for the organs in the body from which the faculties conduct their life sustaining operations.¹⁶⁷ The term *kāyêndriyin* means the possessor of a body with faculties.¹⁶⁸ The lengthy commentarial discussions on stanza twenty-two explain why the additional ingredient of the “ninth constituent,” *kāyêndriyam*, makes the qualitative difference between an inert body and an animate body “with faculties” (Skt.: *sēndriya*; Chi.: *jugen*具根). These faculties are the nine faculties “conascent” (Skt.: *saha*√*bhū*; Chi.: *jusheng*俱生) in a human *paripūrin*.

The nine faculties that are required to sustain the human are the five physical senses (1-5), the mind (6), the procreative faculties of males and females (7-8), and vitality. Although the procreative faculties are not necessary conditions for the survival of an individual member of the human species, they are necessary for the propagation and survival of the species. Hence, these nine faculties are considered to form the necessary and jointly-sufficient conditions required to sustain human life.

The idea that the number nine marks the line between life and death is an ancient Sarvāstivāda teaching. The stanza cited in Vasubandhu's *Treasury of Abhidharma*, within which the significance of the number nine is unraveled, is based upon an ancient strata of Sarvāstivāda source material.¹⁶⁹ The identification of the number nine with the sentient body of sensory organs

¹⁶⁷ Part of the definition of the embodied faculty of *kāyêndriyam* is that it “pervades the body.” This gloss indicates that the operational range of *kāyêndriyam*, or the “body *qua* faculty” (if construed in the compound form, i.e., *karmadhārya*) is not reducible to a particular location in the body, but is determined by the full strength and extension of the specific parts of the body.

¹⁶⁸ This is understood as an exocentric *bahuvrīhi* compound that refers to the “possessor” of said faculties.

¹⁶⁹ Judging by its appearance in two earlier sources: namely, *Abhidharmahrdaya* 阿毘曇心論, *Abhidharmahrdaya-sūtra-śāstra* 阿毘曇心論經 and the **Saṃyuktābhidharma-hrdaya-śāstra* 雜阿毘曇心論 of Dharmatrāta. The doctrine of the ninefold constituency forming the body is also attested in *Yogācārabhūmi* recension undertaken by Paramārtha, under the Southern-Chen Dynasty, titled *Canonical Treatise Making Doctrinal Determinations* (*Jueding zang-lun* 決定藏論), fasc. 3 — T1584:30.1032.a29.

and faculties is attested in a number of earlier Abhidharma works, including the **Samyuktābhidharma-hṛdaya-sāstra* (Chi.: *Za apitan xin lun* 雜阿毘曇心論),¹⁷⁰ attributed to “The Great Bhadānta Dharmatrāta” (Chi. *Dade Fajiu* 大德法救),¹⁷¹ and the **Samyuktābhidharma-hṛdaya* 阿毘曇心論經, attributed to Dharmaśreṣṭhin (name accessed from DDB, March 22, 2017).

In the twenty-second stanza of his discussions on the faculties, Vasubandhu argues that the nine faculties distinguish the living human from the dead human. According to the crucial hemistich of this twenty-second stanza (2.22c), the eight-fold constituency is simply an inert body, while nine-fold constituency is a human being “bestowed with faculties” (Skt.: *sēndriyam*).

What Does It Mean To Be Human? Other Forms of Human Life

In his exhaustive investigation of what it means to be human, Vasubandhu explores other forms of human life, including embryonic life, people of Uttarakuru, extraterrestrials, non-abled humans, and sages. These categories of humans possess fewer than nine faculties or more than nine faculties.

Building upon Vasubandhu's seminal analysis in the *Treasury of Abhidharma*, Xuanzang examines categories of humans who possess fewer than the nine baseline faculties required for survival ranging from embryonic life, humans born without one or more of the sense faculties, and

¹⁷⁰ The *Samyuktābhidharma-hṛdaya* 雜阿毘曇心論 redacted by Saṅghabhūti 僧伽跋摩 under the Six-Dynasties Liu-Song regime gives the pertinent line of the stanza: 身根九外八 謂在於 (emended from 有, based upon the Song edition) 香地.

¹⁷¹ Dharmatrāta is among the four great masters who are said to have convened the great Sarvāstivādin council, which took place in the state of Kāśmīra 迦濕彌羅國 during the reign of King Kaniska 迦膩色迦王. The other three old masters of this council are Vasumitra 世友, Ghoṣa 妙音, and Buddhadeva 覺天. Under the four masters of the Vibhāṣa council, the *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism* states: “it is said that five hundred learned Buddhist masters 五百羅漢 articulated the Abhidharma doctrines, compiling the *Mahāvibhāṣā-sāstra* 大毘婆沙論...These four scholars hypothesized the existence of an eternal essence in dharmas as well as clear distinction in the three time periods” (accessed May 8, 2018).

human sages who have effaced one or more of the hedonic faculties. Members of the first two categories lack one or more of the ordinary sensory faculties, while sages lack one or more of the undesirable or “contaminated” (Skt.: *sāsrava*; Chi.: *you-lou* 有漏) hedonic faculties.¹⁷²

Xuanzang employs an exploration of atypical forms of human life to consolidate his definition of what it means to be an ordinary human. While appearing to be a digression into embryology and phantasmagoria, this inquiry brings Xuanzang back to his core subject of survival and the faculties that are required to sustain life. In his penetrating examination into the nature of life, Xuanzang uses Vasubandhu's analysis to determine the minimum number of faculties required to sustain life. This brings him to an understanding of the number of faculties that disintegrate in death.

The Human Embryo

Xuanzang's signature gloss on the *paripūrins* found in the text of the CWSL, features an example of the human embryo during the five periods of gestation.¹⁷³ This gloss is rooted in the Buddha's teaching of co-dependent origination (Skt.: *pratītya-samutpāda*). Xuanzang defends Vasubandhu's claims that the pre-natal organism is a fully-fledged human being and therefore

¹⁷² The Sanskrit term *sāsrava* — in Chinese., lit., “with-outflows” (written *you-lou* 有漏 [Xuanzang] or *you-liu* 有流 [Paramārtha]) — carries both the sense of “impure/contaminated” and “distress, affliction, pain” (*Sir. Monier-Williams Skt.-Eng. Dictionary*). Both of these senses are important within the context of Abhidharma discussions of ritual purity. Vasubandhu cites the seven physical faculties in the context of his discussion on which faculties are “pure” and which faculties are “impure.” He concludes that the seven physical faculties are unanimously “contaminated.” See AK 2.9, Pradhan, ed., *Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya*, 42.

¹⁷³ The CWSL abides by the clear stipulation on this term stated by Vasubandhu in his AKBh 3.20. Saṅghabhadra also adopts this stipulation. Xuanzang's Chinese version of the AKBh gloss on *paripūrin* runs: “*Mahānidānaparyāya-sūtra* describes them as ‘fully-fledged beings.’ But it excludes the stillborn and those *paripūrins* in the *rūpadhātu rūpadhātu* and *arūpadhātu*, while merely referring to the *pudgalas* in the *kāmadhātu*.” 非諸中天及色無色。但據欲界補特伽羅。大緣起經說「具有」故 (T1558:29.48.b05-6). *Nyāyanusāra* 25 reads: “The idea here is that *pudgala* covers all stages. *Paripūrin*, however, excludes the stillborn fetuses, along with the being in the *kalala*, and so on, [pre-natal] stages in the subtle material realms and immaterial realms (*arūpadhātu*), which are excluded.” 此中意說：補特伽羅，歷一切位。名圓滿者。非諸中天，及色·無色，羯刺藍等，諸位闕故 (T1562:29.481.a06-7).

sentient. While the sensory and sexual organs of the human are not discernable in the earliest *kalala* stage, or the first eight weeks of pregnancy, when the embryo is a droplet,¹⁷⁴ Xuanzang insists that “the seeds of the seven physical faculties of vitality, the procreative faculties and the five ordinary senses are already there.”¹⁷⁵ Xuanzang posits that the fertilized embryo contains the genetic information that determines the development of the senses and the procreative organs. This stance is consistent with the judgement of the Sarvāstivādin editors of the *Mahāvibhāṣa*.

The People of Uttarakuru

In another example Xuanzang describes a species of human who differ from other humans in their physical presentation. One such species resides in the continent of Uttarakuru, the northernmost continent of the earth. The people of Uttarakuru are described in the scriptures as square-shaped and androgynous. Xuanzang states that they possess a minimum of thirteen faculties and can realize a maximum of eighteen faculties. This species of human does not possess the higher

¹⁷⁴ CWSL, fascicle 7: “Those sentient beings born viviparously, oviparously, or via spawning in moisture (i.e., insects), who have not yet achieved full maturity, definitely fall under “name-and-form” (*nāmarūpa*, the third “link” or *nidāna* in the Buddha’s teaching of twelvefold codependent origination). And the link of name and matter is pervasive. When physically incarnate beings born via transformation initially undergo the stage of becoming reborn, although they fully possess five faculties, these [faculties] have not yet obtained their full function. At that point, the being is not yet classified under the link (*nidāna*) of “six loci [of sensation].” 胎卵濕生者六處未滿足有名色故。又「名色」支亦是遍有。有色化生，初受生位，雖具五根，而未有用。爾時未名「六處」支故 (T1585:31.44.a01-4).

¹⁷⁵ This explanation is found in *Mahāvibhāṣa*, fascicle 147: “Question, for what reason do the loci of those [i.e., physical faculties of procreation] only come to be during the stage of infancy?” 問：如何於少時，頃便得爾所根耶？

Reply: at that time (in prenatal stage), although there are none of the salient features of the physical faculties, although the seed is already there. We liken it to mixing distilled saline-water, ghee, sweet honey, and rum, etc., together and then storing them in a single vessel. If you pick up a single drop with a blade of grass, all of the variegated flavors are present within that [single drop]. We should understand the *kalala* stage in this way, since the seeds of the physical faculties are already all present. 答：爾時雖無諸色根相而已具得彼根種子。如清鹽水酥•蜜•沙糖酒等，和合貯在一器。若以草端露取一滴，於中具有鹽等諸味。羯邏藍位應知亦爾，一切色根種子皆具。

faculties of gnosis or the procreative faculties. Hence, four faculties are deducted from the maximum of twenty-two faculties that make up the full spectrum of humans.¹⁷⁶

Extraterrestrial Humans

Xuanzang also examines extraterrestrial forms of humans, or *prthagjana*, that reside in the *rūpadhātu*. These forms of life differ from humans in the *kāmadhātu* in that they are androgynous, do not possess a nose or a mouth,¹⁷⁷ and have an average life span of one thousand years. The *rūpadhātu* heavens are host to extraterrestrial forms of humans with fewer than the nine faculties and to humans with more than nine faculties. The people of the *rūpadhātu* have a minimum of eight faculties and a maximum of twenty-one faculties (AK 20-21a-b). According to stanza 2.21 of Vasubandhu's *Treasury of Abhidharma*, there are examples of humans achieving the full range of twenty-one faculties in *rūpadhātu*, but these cases are rare.

¹⁷⁶ “The northernmost of the four continents 四洲 around Mt. Meru 須彌, square in shape, inhabited by square-faced people” (accessed Jan. 13 2017). The most standard enumeration for humanoids inhabiting the four continents is that given by the Vibh, which is also attested in *Jñānaprasthāna*: “one in the final stage of gradual dying, as it is across the Rose-Apple Continent (Jambudvīpa).” 漸命終位如瞻部洲•毘提訶洲•瞿陀尼洲亦爾。俱盧洲極多十八極少十三 (T1545:27.767.c01 -3). This text relies upon the term *kāyēndriyam* as a synecdoche for the “home” of the physical faculties, including the ordinary senses. This umbrella term is also taken to cover the body, life, mind, the five hedonic faculties including faith, which is the same as during the final stage of a life that is gradually ending. Xuanzang's text reads: “In Uttarā kuru, for humans there are a minimum of thirteen and a maximum of eighteen. The eighteen refer to all [faculties] except the three uncontaminated faculties. Thirteen refers to body, life, mind, and five including faith, etc., which are the sum of faculties existing during the stage of gradually dying. In that continent (i.e., Uttarā kuru) there are no men without procreative faculties (*saṇḍhas*) nor eunuchs (*paṇḍakas*), none without gender nor with two genders.” 俱盧洲極多十八極少十三。十八者，謂除一形三無漏根。十三者，謂身 命 意 五受信等五根，即漸命終位。彼洲無有扇搥 半擇迦 無形二形。The *Jñānaprasthāna* translated in the fourth century attests to the above enumerations: “Jambudvīpa, Aparagodānīya, and Pūrvavidheha are all the same (i.e., nineteen maximum, and eight minimum) Only in Uttarā kuru is there a minimum of eighteen and a maximum of thirteen.” 若極多十九，若極少八。閻浮提、拘耶尼、弗于逮亦復如是。鬱單曰，若極多十八，若極少十三 (T1543:26.874.a01).

¹⁷⁷ Fascicle twenty-seven of *Mahāvibhāṣa* explains that “those reborn into the *kāmadhātu* and those reborn into the *rūpadhātu* are both same in that respect (that is, they both bear *jīvitēndriyam* and *kāyēndriyam*). The only difference [between them] is that the latter do not have sensory consciousness of the nose or tongue. Those born within the *arūpadhātu* manifest (*xian*) vivid mental consciousness, as if right before the eyes.” 生欲界，生色界亦爾。差別者。彼無鼻舌識。若生無色界，意識現在前。(T27, no. 1545, p. 137, b17-8). This gloss also implies that sentient beings in the *arūpadhātu* sense their external environment directly by way of the mental faculty. They do not need recourse to any of the five gross physical senses.

Humans Who are Not “Able-Bodied”

Humans born with congenital disabilities may, or may not, possess fewer than nine faculties. It would make sense, in theory, that a human who lacks an auditory faculty would possess eight faculties rather than nine. Within this framework however, there is no “gene for deafness” that expresses itself in terms of the addition or subtraction of faculties from the baseline number of nine. Xuanzang abides by Vasubandhu's view (AKBh 2.1) that deafness is not the result of a congenital disability of a faculty, or an inherited trait. In his translation of Saṅghabhadra's Ny and XZL, for instance, Xuanzang does not consider the deaf humans to be missing the faculty of audition. Some of the scholars in the second generation of Xuanzang's “Teaching Gate” (Chi.: *xue-men* 學門), for example, the Northern scholar-monk, Lingtai 靈泰, and the *Kośa*-specialist, Zhizhou 智周 (668 C.E.-723 C.E.), argue in their commentaries on CWSL that deaf people do not lack an auditory faculty. They posit that the faculty is “dormant” (Chi.: *wufa* 無發) but retains the latent, or “non-manifest” (Chi.: *bubian* 不變) potentiality. One of Xuanzang's senior disciples, the Abhidharma scholar, Huizhao 慧沼 (648–714), makes the point that in the case of blindness, the ocular faculty is either “gorged out, caved in, or occluded by something extrinsic to it.”¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁸ Lingtai's commentary on CWSL, titled, *Jottings on Kuiji's Commentary on the CWSL* (*Cheng weishi lun shuchao* 成唯識論疏抄), fascicle 5 (X819:50.234.c19-24) describes the capability (*sāmarthyam*) as being inherent in a faculty, although it may remain “non-manifest” or “un-indicated” – such is the case for sentient beings residing in the realms of subtle material and for humans born without one or more sensory faculties. Lingtai writes: “‘Un-presented/un-manifest’ refers to the olfactory and gustatory sense-faculties pertaining to the realm of subtle material (*rūpadhātu*) – which although don't produce any function in consciousness, it is yet agreed upon that they are manifest in the nose and tongue. Because if among the sense-faculties one lacks the olfactory or gustatory faculties, the actual physical sense organs should also be lacking.” 不變者，即如色界鼻舌根，雖無發識用，仍許變鼻•舌。根若無鼻舌根，其扶根塵亦無故。

For this reason we know: although another's five sense-faculties fail to produce functions for our own consciousness, they still are manifest in our own consciousness as another's sense-faculties. If we say that only other's physical sensory organs are manifest [in our consciousness], then the five sense-faculties obtain no function [for us]. Since that which remains un-manifest is that way, the realm of subtle material should lack noses and tongues, since the olfactory and gustatory sense-faculties fail to produce any function in consciousness, since there merely exist physical sense organs. Those born congenitally blind are that way. Like someone born congenitally blind, although she possesses the visual faculty, and the root-consciousness (*mūla-vijñāna*) manifests [light] to the visual-faculty, any light catching up to the eyeball is cut off, and does not activate the visual consciousness.

Saṅghabhadra argues that in blindness, the capacity for sight remains inherent in the visual faculty, but cannot exercise its efficacy (Skt.: *kāritram*; Chi.: *zuoyong* 作用) because of a disability in the physical organs involved in eyesight. In the words of Xuanzang's second generation disciple, Zhizhou 智周 (668–723 C.E.), “it is simply that case its full extension is occluded by something external and cannot see things” 但外物翳致不能見。¹⁷⁹

Sages

Although there are no forms of ordinary human who evince fewer than nine faculties, there are forms of humans who evince more than nine. Ordinary humans in the *kāmadhātu* possess the five hedonic faculties of joy, pleasure, suffering, anxiety, and aversion. However, certain earthly sages develop more than the nine faculties by adding one or more of the five cultivatable skillful faculties (10-14). The addition of the skillful faculties and the subtraction of undesirable faculties is accomplished through a process disciplined practice.

Kuiji's commentary on the CWSL describes Aśvajit (Chi.: Masheng 馬勝),¹⁸⁰ an earthly sage who so skillfully cultivates his two “fleshy balls for eyes” (Chi.: *routuan-yan* 肉團眼)¹⁸¹ that he “sprouts forth” (Chi.: *chengjiu* 成就; *prabhū*) a form of divine vision whereby he can see out of the celestial spheres of the *kāmadhātu* and into the depths of *rūpadhātu*. Kuiji concludes that

However, we regard another's sensory faculties as real, as those faculties are still capable of activating consciousness [for others]. 故知：雖於他五根，自無發識用，仍許自識變他根也。若言唯變他扶根塵，五根不用。即不變爾者，色界應無鼻舌，鼻·舌根亦無發識用故，唯有扶塵。生盲等亦爾者；如生盲人，雖有眼根，本識亦變為眼，睛上有絕，不得發識。雖實他根，還別能發識也。

¹⁷⁹ Zhizhou, *Deducing the Doctrines of the CWSL* 成唯識論演祕 (T1833:43.868.b22).

¹⁸⁰ Xuanzang's Chi. is a semantic trans. of his appellation: (MW) “gaining horses by conquest.”

¹⁸¹ Vasumitra's *Treatise on the Wheel of the Different Tenets* attributes to the Mahasāṅgikas 大眾部 the doctrine “that the five types of physical sensory faculties have the fleshy body and viscera at their core” 五種色根肉團為體 (T1822:41.458.c09). The Sarvāstivādin editors of the *Mahāvibhāsa* essentially concur with this idea. However, chapter 2, section two of this study looks at how Xuanzang pushes back against the conflation of physical sense organs with the faculties.

Aśvajit's "divine vision" is not a mysterious "third eye" (Chi.: *di san yan* 第三眼) but the result of his cultivation of insight and concentration. These are among the five skillful faculties required for the "path of insight" (Skt.: *darśana-mārga*) and "the path of yogic meditation" (Skt.: *bhāvana-mārga*).

Vasubandhu devotes an entire chapter to the different forms and strata of sages in the three *dhātus*, the details of which exceed the scope of this present study. It is sufficient to note that the earthly sages bear a maximum number of nineteen faculties. These sages represent a category of humans, who despite the unfavorable conditions within the world, cultivate the five skillful faculties (15-19). Additionally there are spiritually advanced forms of human beings who live in the *rūpadhātu* and *arūpadhātu* and possess the full complement of five skillful faculties by virtue of having been reincarnated into one of these two higher realms. According to Vasubandhu, the reincarnated extraterrestrial sages can realize a maximum of nineteen faculties. He also notes that the maximum number of nineteen faculties refers to "beings of mediocre intelligence (Skt.: *bālas*) in the *arūpadhātu*."¹⁸² This remark serves as a reminder that even the most advanced forms of human extraterrestrials in the rarified *arūpadhātu* have not achieved liberation from the cycle of death and rebirth. According to Xuanzang, abiding by Vasubandhu's teachings on salvation, holds that the achievement of nirvāṇa entails the relinquishing of all of the faculties, both skillful and unskillful.

In contrast to the extraterrestrial *paripūrins* who evince more than nine faculties and up to

¹⁸² AK 2.20a-d runs: "*Bālas* [in the *rūpadhātu*] yoked (*yuktah*) to the purified forms of body, mind, and vitality, have at minimum, eight [faculties], while those *balas* within the *arūpadhātu* are [yoked] with the purified forms of mind, aversion, and vitality." *Sarvālpairniḥśubo 'ṣṭābhir vinmanah kāyajīvitaiḥ* – Skt. text based upon Pradhan, ed., *Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya*, 51-2. The following line of the subsequent stanza (2.21a-b) is anaphoric upon the subject of *bālas* which carries down from the immediately preceding line: "at the maximum, the *bāla* is yoked to the nineteen, with the exception of the immaculate faculties (20-22)." *Bahubhir yukta ekānnaviṃśatyā 'malavarjitaiḥ* 2.21a-b — *ibid.*, 52.

a maximum of nineteen faculties, Xuanzang's Abhidharma corpus provides examples of human sages with fewer than the sixteen faculties comprised by the nine physical faculties and the five hedonic faculties. Xuanzang's translation of the *Mahāvibhāṣa* gives examples of earthly sages who expiate the faculty of anxiety by way of yogic training.

Although many sages possess more than the nine faculties generically associated with the *paripūrin* in the *kāmadhātu*, certain sages in the *rūpadhātu* and *arūpadhātu* possess fewer than nine faculties. No human in the *rūpadhātu* goes without the faculty of aversion as this faculty constitutes the vital limbic system that sustains emotion and cognition. However, the extraterrestrial sages differ from the earthly sages in that, while the former are born without undesirable hedonic faculties of suffering and anxiety, the latter achieved this status through sedulous practice.

Section Two: Staying Alive Through the Cooperation of Faculties

What are the ingredients that are necessary to sustain human life? To determine what is lost in death, Xuanzang must determine the factors that are necessary to remain living. He addresses this question by isolating the particular faculties that distinguish a living human body from a dead body. For Xuanzang, who abides by the Buddhist doctrine of no-self, this question raises the additional question of what is removed by death, if not a self.

This section has three parts. The first section focuses on the arguments that Xuanzang mounts in the defense of the third methodological tenet regarding the cooperation of the faculties. By applying this tenet to the definition of death, Xuanzang arrives at the explanation that vitality, proprioception, and the mind are the three factors that make the difference between the living body and the corpse. Xuanzang takes the idea that vitality can be broken down into three discrete factors

that work together to sustain the vital operations of the body: vital power (Skt.: *āyur*), bodily warmth (Skt.: *ūṣman*), and consciousness (Skt.: *viññāna*). The second section turns to Xuanzang's arguments to defend the doctrine that consciousness must be distinguished from the other three vital factors because it is crucial for somatic functioning. While it is one of the three vital factors necessary to sustain life, Xuanzang argues that the loss of consciousness results in biological death.

Death as the Loss of Three Faculties of *Kāyēndriyam*, Vitality and Mind

In his exegesis in determining the nature of life, Xuanzang confronts the question of what differentiates the body and its material organs from a living thing. In addressing this question, Xuanzang applies his three methodological tenets: that faculties are essential to the continuation of life; that no single faculty operates in isolation; and that the cooperation of faculties provides the necessary and jointly sufficient conditions for sentient life. By enlisting these three methodological tenets in his analysis of death, Xuanzang concludes that death does not entail the loss of a single faculty. He posits that three faculties comprise the minimum number of faculties that are necessary to life. Anything less results in death.

The Tripod of the Three Faculties

Vasubandhu's *Treasury of Abhidharma* elaborates on the three vital constituents of bodily warmth, vital power, and consciousness. These three constituents map onto the three vital faculties of *kāyēndriyam*, vitality, and mind. In his commentary on Xuanzang's text of the *Treasury of Abhidharma*, Puguang introduces the example of the tripod (Chi.: *ding* 鼎) of the faculties that sustain life. He writes: "The three vital factors continue operating by mutually supporting each other. They are set up like the legs of a tripod" 若爾三法更互相持相續轉故，鼎足而立. Puguang avers that as each of the three legs together enable the tripod to stand, each one of the

three factors together enable life to be sustained. A tripod cannot stand on one or two legs, just as life cannot be sustained by one or two faculties.¹⁸³ Puguang continues the metaphor of the tripod to explain the survival and death of an organism. He writes: “If there is no single factor that is annihilated first, then the triad should be permanent and unceasing. If one factor is annihilated, then the other two factors are accordingly annihilated”何法先滅？由此一法滅故，餘二法隨滅。若無一法先滅者，是則此三應常無謝。¹⁸⁴

The metaphor of the tripod highlights crucial questions regarding the operational dependency versus the independence of the faculties. Can one faculty cease while others continue? If death is the annihilation of the triad of faculties, which faculty is annihilated first? If each one of the three faculties supply a necessary condition for survival, as well as the sufficient conditions for the continued operation of the other two, will the removal of one faculty cause the death of the entire organism? Will death be slow, or will it be sudden?

Xuanzang's response to the dilemma of the dependence and independence of the faculties is articulated in his translation of the seminal Yogācāra work, the *Compendium of the Mahāyāna* (Skt: *Mahāyāna-saṃgraha śāstra*; Chi.: *She dasheng lun* 攝大乘論). Xuanzang's translation of this famous Yogācāra *śāstra*, attributed to Asaṅga, introduces the metaphor of the standing bundle

¹⁸³ Lingtai takes up Puguang's example of the tripod in his *Jottings on Kuiji's Commentaries on CWSL* (*Cheng Weishi Lun Shu Chao* 成唯識論疏抄) at X819:50.167.a20-25. Like Puguang, Lingtai concludes that three factors are deprived simultaneously: “If one says that fear is the first thing to desert the body, then the great majority of people who are about to freeze to death would just be pretending to die! Hence, we know that when somebody dies in the *kamadhātu*, her body is initially deserted by vital power along with the other two [factors; i.e., bodily warmth and consciousness.] ‘When three factors desert the body,’ indicates the desertion of vital force, physical afflictions (*kleśas*), along with consciousness.” 若言先捨懼者，大有人被凍身雖冷，擬仍不死。故知欲死之時，先捨壽餘二。捨壽，煩惱、及識：三法捨身時者。

¹⁸⁴ *Jushe lun ji* 俱舍論記, fascicle 5, (T1821:41.10.b05-7).

of rushes (Skt.: *naḍa-kalāpa*; Tib.: *mdung kyim*;¹⁸⁵ Chi.: *lu shu* 蘆束).¹⁸⁶ In the iteration of the simile found in the *Compendium of the Mahāyāna*, the faculties are likened to a bundle of rushes. The bundle stands upright because each rush supports the other rushes. The bundle falls without the cooperation of the each of the rushes, just as a human being collapses without the cooperation of each one of its faculties.

Xuanzang adduces the metaphor of the bundle of thrushes, in the *Demonstration of Consciousness Only*, in the context of a discussion about the origin of consciousness. He poses the question: When exactly, does an embryo first evince consciousness in the course of its embryogenesis? Here Xuanzang employs the metaphor of the bundle of thrushes to depict the concept of the aggregation of faculties. Xuanzang implies that the “vital impulses” (Skt.: *āyuhśamskāras*; Chi.: *shou-xing* 壽行) and “consciousness” are bundled.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁵ *Tibetan-Himalaya Library Tib. Dictionary* (hereafter, THL) gives among the meanings of the word *mdung kyim*: “pole tent, shade for travellers made on the wayside by throwing piece of cloth over 3 pikes, frame to lean spears against.”

¹⁸⁶ Translation of the pertinent passage in **Mahāyānasamgraha* is based upon Xuanzang’s Chinese, with reference to the available Tibetan version of the text found in Tibetan Derge Tengyur Canon (D 4048: vol. 134, folio/line 6a.7-6b1), titled *Theg pa chen po bsdu pa*: “Moreover, *ālayavijñāna* is simultaneous with and finds its mutual causal basis in the impure dharmas. How is this seen? We liken it to a luminous lamp, within which spark and wick generate burning – spark and wick cooperate mutually in such a way to sustain the burning. We also liken it to rushes in a bundle, each of which mutually supports each other, without toppling over, all at once. It should be observed from these examples that this is the way that the principle of cooperative causal support is. We liken it to how the dharmas of variegated impurity (*upasaṃkleśa*) provide the causal basis for *ālayavijñāna*, and likewise, *ālayavijñāna* provides the causal grounding for the dharmas. *Ālayavijñāna* is established in order to provide the direct-cause (*hetu-pratyaya*) for the percept (Skt.: *ālambana*; dmigs pa).”復次，阿賴耶識與彼雜染諸法同時更互為因，云何可見？譬如明燈，焰炷生燒，同時更互。又如蘆束互相依持，同時不倒。應觀此中更互為因道理亦爾。如阿賴耶識為雜染諸法因，雜染諸法亦為阿賴耶識因。唯就如是安立因緣，所餘因緣不可得故。(T31, no. 1594, p. 134, c15-20). Corresponding Derge Tib. text reads: *Kun gzhi rnam par shes pa dang, kun nas nyon mongs pa'i chos de dag dus mnyam du gcig gi rgyu nyid du gcig 'gyur bar ji ltar blta zhe na? dper na mar me'i me lce 'byung ba dang, snying po tshig pa phan tshun dus mnyam pa dang, mdung khyim yang dus mnyam du gcig la brten nas mi 'gyel ba de bzhin du 'dir yang gcig gi rgyu nyid du gcig 'gyur bar blta'o. ji ltar kun gzhi rnam par shes pa kun nas nyon mongs pa'i chos rnams kyis rgyu yin pa de ltar kun nas nyon mongs pa'i chos rnams kyang kun gzhi rnam par shes pa'i rgyu'i rkyen nyid du rnam par gzhag ste/ rgyu'i rkyen gzhon mi dmigs pa'i phyir ro.*

¹⁸⁷ The CWSL presentation of the analogy of vital pulses or *samskāras* to the bundle of thrushes appears midway through the famous ten scriptural corroborations of the *ālayavijñāna* doctrine. While *samskāras* form the second

The Termination of the Three Constituents in Death

Saṅghabhadra and Vasubandhu use the example of the vegetative body for the purposes of examining and isolating the factors operating to keep a body alive. Xuanzang takes up the example and incorporates these earlier analyses into his original compilation, the *Demonstration of Consciousness Only*, to defend his three methodological tenets. In his explanations of what distinguishes the dead body from the corpse, Xuanzang draws from his translation of the *Mahāvibhāṣa*, and from the exegeses of the *Mahāvibhāṣa* by Vasubandhu and Saṅghabhadra. Xuanzang takes up the example of the comatose body on the brink of death cited in these source materials to make his doctrinal points.

In engaging with the example of the vegetative body, Xuanzang enlists the principle that the three baseline faculties: vitality, aversion, and mind, are required for survival. In his auto-commentary on Chapter Two, verse 45 of the *Treasury of Abhidharma*, Vasubandhu breaks down the faculty of vitality into three constituents: bodily warmth, vital power, and consciousness. Xuanzang references Vasubandhu's doggerel stanza in *śloka* meter to illustrate that three co-dependent factors are required for the continued survival of all sentient beings. Vasubandhu encapsulates this principle as it plays out in a human body on the precipice of its demise as follows:¹⁸⁸

link of Buddha's great chain of being, following the first link — ignorance — *saṃskāras* are said to pre-condition consciousness (3rd link), which begets name-and-form (Skt.: *nāmarūpa*; Chi.: *ming-se* 名色).

The gloss on name-and-form coming at the end of fascicle 4 of CWSL reads: “moreover, the sūtras say that consciousness (i.e., the third link in the chain of twelvefold codependent-origination or *pratītya-samutpada*) is conditioned by name and form. This is termed consciousness conditioned by name and form. These two dharmas (i.e., consciousness and name-and-form) co-operate and depend upon one another. We liken it to the thrushes bundled together which cooperate together in a simultaneous way. If not for this consciousness (i.e., *ālayavijñāna*), then that consciousness shouldn't even exist as an entity.” 又契經說識緣名色。名色緣識。如是二法展轉相依。譬如蘆束俱時而轉。若無此識，彼識自體不應有故 (T1585:31.17.a23-4).

¹⁸⁸ The above is in fact an interpolation of the stanza (of unclear provenance) from Vasubandhu's Auto-commentary on his *Treasury of Abhidharma* AKBh 2.45ab -- Pradhan, ed., *Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya*, 73. This stanza shows up in both Paramārtha's and Xuanzang's translations of AKBh. Later, the stanza, in slightly modified form, is

As for vital power (Skt.: āyur), bodily warmth (Skt.: ūṣman), along with consciousness (Skt.: vijñāna), when these three factors (Skt.: dharmas) desert the body, the deserted body is numb, stiff, and insensate like a plank of wood.¹⁸⁹

壽煖及與識

三法捨身時

所捨身僵仆

如木無思覺¹⁹⁰

Xuanzang's translation of this stanza interpolates the original Sanskrit word “stiff” into “stiff as a plank of wood” (Skt.: *kāṣṭham*) to make a vivid point. He states that the dead body is nothing but an insensate piece of matter. In the picture sketched out by Xuanzang in this stanza, death involves the loss of a body, but also involves much more. Xuanzang's qualification indicates that “life's desertion of the body” refers to the loss of three vital constituents of bodily warmth, vital power (Skt.: āyur), and consciousness (Skt.: vijñāna). The inclusion of consciousness indicates that the faculty of mind, one of the six senses that characterize a sentient being, is always present in a living body. The deprivation of consciousness is coterminous with the death of the living organism. For instance, the vegetative body is considered to be sentient, or to evince the

incorporated into the *Sūtra Revealing the August Mysteries of the Mahāyāna* 大乘密嚴經 (trans. Bukong 不空). It reads: 壽煖及與識；若捨離於身。身則無覺知；猶如於木石 (T682:16.770.b12-13).

¹⁸⁹ In his *Jottings on Kuiji's Commentaries on CWSL* at X819:50.167.a16-18, Lingtai 靈泰 explains that the Chinese character meaning “stiff” (*jiang* 僵) portrays “dying whilst lying supine” (*fu si* 伏死) while “like a board/falling forward” (*pu* 仆) portrays dying whilst remaining “collected” (*he* 合). Lingtai's gloss on “dying falling forward” involves a double-entendre in the Chinese character, *fu*, meaning both “like a board,” and “falling forward.” Puguang goes on to explain that “dying whilst remaining collected” roughly means “dying whilst leaning on something” (*ce si* 側死); as opposed to “dying whilst lying down.”

¹⁹⁰ Doggerel śloka found in AKBh 2.45. Corresponding Skt. text reads: Āyurūṣmātha vijñānaṃ yadā kāyaṃ jahatyamī apaviddhastadā śete yathā kāṣṭham acetanaḥ||iti|| Pradhan, ed., *Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya*, 73. Tib.: Bcom ldan 'das kyis 'di skad du /tshe dang drod dang rnam shes 'dis/ /gang tshe lus ni 'dor byed cing /bor nas de tshe 'dug pa ni /sems med ji ltar shing bzhin no //zhes gsungs te/ Stanza also appears in Skāndila's Treatise on Entering Abhidharma 入阿毘達磨論, fascicle 2, 987 stanza twenty-two.

property of *sattvam*, as long as it has a pulse.

Sarvāstivāda doctrine holds that vitality is ultimately constituted in the triad of bodily factors of heat, consciousness, and vital power. Ultimately, Vasubandhu regards vital power as the most basic of the three constituents. In his commentary on the first line of the forty-fifth stanza of Vasubandhu's "Discrimination of Faculties," Yaśomitra glosses "bodily heat" (Chi.: *nuan* 暖) as the activity of consciousness which is continuously connected to vitality (Skt.: *jīvitā*).¹⁹¹ On the topic of the three constituents of bodily warmth, vital power, and consciousness that are required to sustain life, Puguang writes: "This triad is invariably realized by sentient beings in all stages, places and times" 此三於一切處時位等皆定成也.¹⁹² Puguang determines that the compresence of this triad is the *sine qua non* for sentient life. This principle that the presence of these three constituents is an invariable sign of life applies across all three transmigratory realms (Skt. *traiḍhātu*).¹⁹³ In sum, these three form the necessary and jointly sufficient conditions for the continuation of life in a body.

The Sarvāstivāda teachings posulate that the three constituents of bodily warmth, vital power, and consciousness, desert the body at death. Vasubandhu argues that the compresence of the three constituents in the organism distinguishes being alive from being dead. In his exegesis into death, Xuanzang compresses the concepts of the the three constituents with the three vital faculties and identifies bodily warmth with *kāyēndriyam*, vital power with *jīvitēndriyam*, and consciousness with the mental faculty. For Xuanzang, without each of these three faculties

¹⁹¹ Shastri, *Sphuṭārtha*, vol. 2, 247.

¹⁹² *Commentary on the Kośa* (*Jushe-lun shu* 俱舍論疏), fasc. 3, (T1822:41.523.b10-11).

¹⁹³ Cox, *Disputed Dharmas*, 128, explains how this principle must be taken to apply to the immaterial realm in addition to the *kāmadhātu* and *rūpyadhātu*: "Since beings in the formless realm (i.e., *arūpadhātu*) lack a corporeal basis and, therefore, warmth, were it not for vitality, their thought would be without a support. As a force dissociated from both thought and form (i.e., *rūpa*), vitality provides the basis of animation for 'insentient' beings in states without thought and the basis of support for beings without a corporeal basis in the formless realm."

operating together, the organism will not sustain itself. The loss of any one of these faculties is fatal to the organism as a whole. This is his definition of death.

The Faculty of Vitality is Vital to Life

In matters of life and death, not all faculties are created equal. The faculty of vitality, or *jīvitêndriyam*, plays a vital role in Xuanzang's explanation of what is lost in death. The faculty of *jīvitêndriyam* is lost whenever a living organism dies, regardless of the nature of the organism or its karma. Even here, however, Xuanzang makes it clear that the presence of vitality alone does not delimit the border between what is dead and what is alive. He maintains this position to preserve the three methodological tenets, and in doing so upholds the Buddhist doctrine of no-self. Xuanzang finds the doctrine of the three constituents of life to be more parsimonious than the mind-body compound dualism of the rival theories represented by the Brahmanical Sāṅkhya and Vaiśeṣika thinkers.¹⁹⁴ While both the Brāhmanical and Buddhist traditions support the theory of the faculties as the bearers of life, the Xuanzang rejects the postulate of a soul (Skt: *ātman*; *pūṃs*) or person (Skt.: *puruṣa*) that is separate from the faculties.

Xuanzang holds that the faculty of vitality is not located in any particular part of the body. We cannot see it with the naked eye. Rather, one may validly infer that vitality inheres in the body simply by sensing vital signs such as a pulse. However, the question arises: From where does this mysterious source of power in the body derive, as its presence is known only indirectly, *via* inference? Vasubandhu postulates that vitality is imperceptible by nature, in that it does not contribute to the percept (Skt.: *ālambana*; Chi.: *suo-yuan* 所緣).¹⁹⁵ At the same time, vitality

¹⁹⁴ By “mind-body” compound dualism we mean the general idea that the person is composed of at least two proper parts, a body and a soul. See the definition of compound dualism elaborated in Corcoran, “Introduction: Body or Soul?” In *Soul, Body, and Survival: Essays on the Metaphysics of Human Persons* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 2011), Corcoran, ed., 5-10.

¹⁹⁵ The *Great Commentary on the Gate of Logic* 因明正理門論大疏 compiled by Kuiji cites the following syllogism: “For example, the Sarvāstivāda set out the following counter-inference targeting the Mahāyāna: ‘My faculty of

constitutes the most rudimentary basis for the survival of all organisms. It is the bearer of life.

Puguang follows Vasubandhu and Saṅghabhadra's approach in treating the faculty of vitality as analytically separate from the senses and the body. Xuanzang views vitality as a “factor that is dissociated from the mind” (Skt.: *cittaviprayuktasaṃskāra-dharma*; Chi.: *xin bu xiangying xing fa* 心不相應行法:). He makes a distinction between vitality and the other eight physical or embodied faculties (Skt.: **aṣṭa-rūpêndriyaṇi*; Chi.: *ba youse gen* 八有色根) of the *paripūrīn*. The classification of vitality as separate from the mind and yet analytically distinct from the body is important because it means that the operations of vitality cannot be fully accounted for in purely physical or psychological terms. Vitality is partially physical and partially psychological and is not reducible to either set of explanations. Vitality cannot be viewed as separate or distinct from any of the faculties or the organs of the body.

To demonstrate the invariable presence of the faculty of vitality within a living body, the twenty-seventh fascicle of Xuanzang's *Mahāvibhāṣa* poses the question: Why does the human being die when the body is severed at the torso or at the head, but not when the hands or the feet are lopped off? The answer, given in *Mahāvibhāṣa*, is that the hands and the feet do not bear vitality. Destroying the site of vitality will result in death, whereas cutting away the limbs or other organs will change the body, albeit in a drastic way. The destruction of vitality is the mortal blow. The *Mahāvibhāṣa* states that it is the loss of vitality that determines the loss of the sentient being.

It is the presence of vitality that determines the “number of the sentient being” (Chi.:

vitality really exists; because of the fact that it does not present a cognizable condition. We liken this to the way that sound and color are generally granted to be.’ This is the realist tenet. It takes the remaining five *skandhas*, as well as the unconditioned factors, as positive examples (*sapakṣas*). These have no causal basis as a cognizable condition, but they do exist as material things (*rūpas*).” 如薩婆多對大乘立自比量云：我之命根定是實有：許無緣慮故。如許色聲等，此實有宗。以餘五蘊·無為等為同品。無緣慮因，於色等有 (T1840:44.125.a21-23).

youqing shu 有情數)¹⁹⁶ or how many organisms are constituted by a piece, or pieces, of organic matter. For instance, two severed halves of an animal do not constitute two separate living individuals. Hence, the faculty of vitality serves as a *principium individuationis*, providing a means of individuating separate forms of biological life.

Foreclosing on the Houses of the Senses

Xuanzang's translation corpus and his CWSL are in line with the standard Abhidharma doctrine that the triad of the three faculties — *kāyēndriyam*, vitality, and mind constitute the baseline for human survival. As grounds for this stance, Xuanzang's translations of the *Treasury of Abhidharma* and *Nyāyanusāra* both highlight a key line of verse from Vasubandhu's *Treasury of Abhidharma*, stating that “a sentient being is invariably yoked with the compresent triad of *kāyēndriyam*, vitality, and mind” (2.17cd).¹⁹⁷ *Mahāvibhāṣa* reports in the one hundred and forty-second fascicle that “the faculty of vitality cannot supply a basis for all the other faculties” 命根非一切根所依。¹⁹⁸ This means that even in the case of a catatonic body, more than just the singular faculty of vitality is necessary to sustain rudimentary cardio-pulmonary function.

However, possessing a body does not automatically entail the possession of sentience. While the “core faculties” or the “faculties, *per se*” (Chi.: *genti* 根體) are themselves the root and subserving basis of life, the body is the “house” (Skt.: *āyatana*) of the faculties. According to both Xuanzang's text of Vasubandhu's auto-commentary, and the critical commentary on Vasubandhu's statements offered by Saṅghabhadra, the faculty of vitality is operationally dependent on the body,

¹⁹⁶ The *Mahāvibhāṣa* discusses the case of disembowelment and why it is fatal, while merely severing the arms or feet may not be, in fascicle 27 at T1545:27.138-39.

¹⁹⁷ Pradhan, Abhidharmakośa, 50: *Upekṣājīvitamanoyukto 'vaśyaṃ trayānvitah'*/17cd//.

¹⁹⁸ T1545:27.749.c7.

but analytically distinct from it for two reasons: because the faculty of vitality exists in the immaterial realm, and because the faculty of vitality is present when one is in the state of mindlessness, for example, annihilative concentration (Skt.: *nirôdhasamāpatti*), a function that is not simply dependent on the mind.¹⁹⁹

In making the claim that the body is necessary but not sufficient for sentient life, Xuanzang draws deeply from Vasubandhu's credo that “six houses are the root of sentient life.” Although the provenance of the above doggerel quatrain cited in Vasubandhu is hazy, it reports upon a doctrine that is attested in both Asaṅga's and Vasubandhu's corpora. In this respect, both Asaṅga and Vasubandhu follow the early Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma account in which all living organisms have the triad of vital qualities (Skt.: *guṇas*; Chi.: *de* 德): heat, vital power, and consciousness.²⁰⁰ What this doctrine entails for the understanding of death is that the dying person loses mental consciousness at the same time that s/he loses basic physiological functions.

In particular, Xuanzang's commitment to the idea that “subliminal” (Skt.: *asamviditaka*; Chi.: *bu ke-zhi* 不可知)²⁰¹ *ālayavijñāna*, or storehouse consciousness, motivates him to defend the idea that all living things possess consciousness, albeit in an attenuated or dormant form, as in the case of the catatonic body on the brink of death. However, the perdurance of this “store-house of life” has to have the right kind of cause. What then ultimately sustains life itself?

¹⁹⁹ *Nyāyanusāra*, fascicle 13: “As an entity, vital power is a discrete thing that is capable of sustaining heat and consciousness – it is what is designated by ‘the faculty of vitality.’ In this way, it is not the case that the faculty of vitality is operationally dependent on the body [for two reasons]: because of the fact that there exists the faculty of vitality in the immaterial realm and because of the fact that there is also the faculty of vitality when one is in the state of mindlessness (i.e., annihilative concentration), which is not simply due to operations dependent upon the mind.” 壽體實有別物，能持煖・識，說為「命根」。如是命根非唯依身轉。於無色界，有命根故。非唯依心轉，處無心位，亦有命故 (T1562:29.404.c21).

²⁰⁰ Like the Latin *virtus*, the Chinese rendering of *guṇa* also bears the senses of both “power” and “quality.”

²⁰¹ *Triṃśika kārikā* 3.b – see edition of Sylvain Lévi, *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi de la Deux traités de Vasubandhu: Viṃśatikā (La vingtaine) accompagnée d'une explication en prose/ et Triṃśikā (La trentaine) le commentaire de Sthiramati* (Paris: Librairie Ancienne Honoré Champion, 1925), 11.

In the denouement to the second fascicle of the CWSL, *jīvitēndriyam* comes to subsume the three constituents of vital power, heat, and consciousness. This move is consistent with Vasubandhu's line of verse (AK 2.45ab) followed by an especially long auto-commentary on the subject of what *jīvitēndriyam* ultimately consists in. Ultimately, Vasubandhu will funnel the three dharmas sustained by *jīvitēndriyam* down to one, namely, vital power (Skt.: *āyur*). Yaśomitra's meticulously detailed sub-commentary on Vasubandhu's words explain that Vasubandhu is compelled to make this move in order to avoid a vicious regress.²⁰² Yaśomitra explains that where Vasubandhu says that "otherwise there is the unwarranted consequence of their perpetual operation,"²⁰³ he is talking about the dilemma between two competing views. The first view holds that the three factors of life are operationally dependent, and in which case, the collapse of any of the three factors would result in immediate death. This is considered to be an unwarranted consequence (Skt.: *prasaṅga*), since Vasubandhu's schema involves both "sudden" (Chi.: *dun* 頓) and "gradual" (Chi.: *jian* 漸) ways of dying. The opposing view holds that one must "bite the bullet," as it were, by admitting that the two factors – bodily heat and consciousness – rely upon the more basic and primitive conditions maintained by the presence of vital power (Skt.: *āyur*). Ultimately, both Yaśomitra and Xuanzang follow Vasubandhu's final analysis by endorsing the second view that bodily warmth and consciousness depend ultimately upon *āyur*, lest they face a vicious *regressus ad infinitum*.²⁰⁴

²⁰² AKBh 2.45a-b. See Shastri, *Sphuṭārtha*, vol. 1, 248.

²⁰³ Vasubandhu writes that there is the "unwarranted error of perpetual operation [of the three factors] (*nityānivr̥ttiprasaṅga*). Ibid., Vol. 1, 248.

²⁰⁴ In his commentary on AKBh 2.45ab, Yaśomitra argues that there is no way to avoid the conclusion that there is no persistence of life's continuum (*saṃtāāna*) without a fundamental subserving basis or āsraya, based firmly in the qualities and forbearance of the faculty of vitality. See Shastri, ed. *Sphuṭārtha*, vol. 1, 248. Yaśomitra comments: "bodily warmth and consciousness are invariably associated (*pratibaddha*) with vitality (*jīvita*). Hence, vitality is referred to as the subserving basis (*ādhāra*) of consciousness and the basis of the two factors' stability (i.e., the stability of warmth and consciousness). Otherwise there is lent free reign to the infinite regress." *Uṣmaṇo*

Losing Consciousness

Xuanzang's signature argument that loss of consciousness results in death is based on the “ten verifications” (Chi.: *shi zheng* 十證) of the doctrine of consciousness-only. This set of ten arguments cites two examples that are directly relevant to an understanding of death. These include the example of the vegetative body on the brink of death and the vegetative state of the meditator who has obtained the state of “mindless concentration.” Both represent states during which all sensory activity is brought to a halt. Xuanzang uses both examples to demonstrate his third methodological tenet, which holds that at least three faculties, including vitality, are required for survival. Vitality is, quite literally, vital to life because it sustains the biological processes necessary to maintain the body. Xuanzang also claims that the mind is present as long as the body is alive.

The analytical distinction between the body and mind must be upheld in order to defend the doctrine that a body, absent a cognitive faculty, is merely an inanimate object. Schmithausen (1991) has studied how animals in contrast to plants are considered to be sensitive beings.²⁰⁵ One of the reasons that this is so is the idea, developed in the Abhidharma, that animals evince mental faculties. In the introduction to the “Discrimination of Faculties,” in chapter two of the *Treasury of Abhidharma*, Vasubandhu writes: “The six houses are the root of sentient life.” 此內六處是有情本 (AKBh 2.5: *Etacca ṣaḍāyatanaṃ maulaṃ sattvadrayam*).²⁰⁶ The term that Vasubandhu uses is *āyatana*, or home. Notably, Xuanzang uses the same character to indicate the *āyatanas*, or

vijñānasya ca jīvitapratibaddhā pravṛtṭih/ tasmājjīvitamūṣmano vijñānasya cādḥāra ucyate sthitihetustayoreva/nityānivr̥ttiprasaṅga iti/nityameṣāṃ srotāḥ prasajyate.

²⁰⁵ See Schmithausen, *The Problem of the Sentience of Plants in Earliest Buddhism* (Tokyo: The International Institute for Buddhist Studies, 1991).

²⁰⁶ Pradhan, ed., *Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya*, 40.

“houses of the senses,” along with the Sanskrit term, *sthāna*, or “the standing.”²⁰⁷ Xuanzang's translation introduces an ambiguity not present in the original Sanskrit by using same Chinese character — *chu*, meaning “locus” — to render the Sanskrit terms “dwelling” (Skt.: *sthāna*), “residence” (Skt.: *adhiṣṭhāna*), and “home” (Skt.: *āyatana*).

Not all residences have equal status in this picture. Within the seminal passages of both works, the mind, while one of the six senses, is different. Unlike the ordinary senses, it is not associated with a physical organ in the body. Mind, however, by definition, is essential for the sustenance of sentient life and for independent action. In his treatment of the issue of the final site of life within the catatonic body, Vasubandhu cites the prevailing view of Abhidharma that the mental consciousness sustained by the mental faculty is the final seat of consciousness before it deserts the dead body (AKBh 3.41).²⁰⁸ The indication that mind is one of six senses is implicit in the earliest sequences found in the ancient *Treatise on the Basis of Knowledge* and *Jñānaprasthāna śāstra*. However, the analytical distinction between the body and the mind must hold in order to defend the doctrine that a body, absent a cognitive faculty, is merely another inanimate object. The former is a mere inert vessel without the necessary ingredient for life in its full-fledged sense, a mind to sustain the cognitive life of the sentient being. Vasubandhu's ensuing discussions clarify that the rest of the faculties sprout forth from the six houses as a result of improvements to the senses, the amplification of the body's native capacities, or the development of higher-order cognitive functions based in the mental faculty.

However, there cannot be a mental faculty without a working body in which to inhere. In

²⁰⁷ Xuanzang uses this same character to indicate both the *āyatanas* or “homes of the senses,” and the Sanskrit term *sthāna*, the standing. Depending upon the context, the latter terminology can indicate either the *bhājanaloka* (according to the third of Vasubandhu's *Thirty Stanzas*) — the sensory world into which sentient beings are born — or the “firm standing/residence” (*adhiṣṭhāna*) or “basis” (*āśraya*) that the faculties find in the body.

²⁰⁸ Pradhan, *Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya*, 155-156

the context of the *Jñānaprasthāna*, the sequence of twenty-two faculties is presented with *manêndriyam* succeeding from *jīvitêndriyam* to express the thought that the latter is essential to all animals. Life is the precondition for sentience.²⁰⁹ Both faculties play active roles in nourishing and regenerating themselves.

Vasubandhu's auto-commentary on stanza 2.22 of his *Treasury of Abhidharma* indicates that “possessing a body-with-faculties” (Skt.: *kayêndriyin*; Chi.: *you gen-shen* 有根身) means being endowed with the five ordinary sense faculties in addition to the four included under “bodily faculties.” The latter is understood as an umbrella term for the limbic system common to all animals.²¹⁰ *Kāyêndriyam* participates in all manner of bodily functions, such as proprioception, digestion, and excretion, but only when matched with the subserving faculty of vitality and a mental faculty to oversee it.

The CWSL makes a provocative claim about the nature of dying. It equates the vegetative state leading up to biological death with the states of meditative absorption wherein physiological processes are brought to a murmur. Both cases are meant to serve as live examples of the tenet that both body and mind are vital for human survival. The CWSL's treatment of the example of the vegetative body goes on to extend the requirements for the survival of vital power, bodily warmth, and consciousness to other examples as well. Notably, the CWSL applies this triad to an examination of the nature of the “mindless” state of “annihilative concentration.” Griffiths (1986) describes this state in his study, *On Being Mindless*.²¹¹

²⁰⁹ This particular order of twenty-two faculties is found in fascicle 15 at T1544:26.991.23-5 in the form of the list. Later, Vasubandhu and Saṅghabhadra cite this order.

²¹⁰ The 20th-century scholar-monk Taixu 太虛 offers the analogy of the “nervous system” 神經系統. See his essay, “Ping Yinshun Gong Bu-Gong Yanjiu” 評印順共不共研究, *Faxiang weishi xue* 法相唯識學 (**Anthology of Taixu's Writings on Yogācāra*), 2 vols. (Beijing: Shangwu Yinshu Guan 商務印書館, 2012), 113.

²¹¹ Griffiths, *On Being Mindless*, 10.

An individual in the attainment of cessation is conceived of as being without all but the most basic autonomic physical functions. All that remains is a certain minimal level of bodily heat coupled with a dormant, but still present, 'life-principle' which seems to mean little more than that the practitioner has the possibility of leaving this condition and restarting normal physical activities, just as a charcoal fire, carefully banked and covered with ash, may appear to be dead but can in reality be rekindled without too much difficulty.

Griffiths offers the above explanation in response to the question of how a meditator, after having obtained a state of mindlessness during which neither sensory activity nor thoughts occur, can re-emerge from this state. One cannot simply will one's self out of the state during which all mental activity has ceased. What is the nature of the consciousness in this state? Cox gives voice to the Buddhist desideratum that mindless states of utter sensory deprivation must be distinct from death: "If life were distinguished from death only by the presence of perceptual consciousness, states without thought would be tantamount to death."²¹²

In response to the worry that consciousness is no longer present in zombie-like states such as that experienced by beings residing in the heavens of the "those celestials lacking thought" (Skt.: *asaṃjñikādevas*; Chi.: *wuxiang tian* 無想天), the CWSL makes essentially the same point: "consciousness has not departed the body" (識不離身).²¹³ The CWSL's arguments on the subject of dissociative meditative states adduce the example of the practitioner attaining a state of annihilative concentration in which the temperature of the body cools, the heartbeat slows to a murmur, and sensory activity is brought to a halt. This recurring refrain throughout the CWSL

²¹² This thought is expressed in the traditional commentarial literature on the *CWSL*. Lingtai expresses it in his subglosses to Kuiji's commentary on the finale to the 1st fascicle of *CWSL* that takes up the topic of *jīvitēndriyam*: "If you say that when someone dies in the *kāmadhātu*, s/he is first deserted by consciousness, then obtaining either of the two states of mindless concentration would be the same as dying." 若言欲死時，先捨識者，應入二無心定時，名為死(X819:50.167.a20-22).

²¹³ Cox, *Disputed Dharmas*, 128. See Xuanzang's translation of MsG at (T31, no. 1594, p. 137, a02): 又入滅定識不離身。

indicates that unless the faculty of mind has been damaged, uprooted, or occluded by something extrinsic, and as long as the faculties of aversion, proprioception, and vitality have not decayed, the human body is still alive in the sense that its ordinary sensory faculties are operable. This conclusion commits Xuanzang to the stance that the mental faculty simply remains dormant in a catatonic body. However, the body is alive because there still exists a sentient being. This sentient being exhibits not only the three embodied faculties of aversion, proprioception, and vitality, but also a faculty of mind, or *manêndriyam*. At the very least, it exhibits it in the sense that the vegetative body is still breathing and its heart is beating. The reason that the triad is invariably present in a living body is that all three faculties of the mind, proprioception, and vitality, form the necessary and jointly sufficient conditions for the body to manage digestion and excretion of waste, with which the body must still deal even in the vegetative state, while the faculty of vitality is a necessary but not sufficient condition. Hence, Xuanzang concludes that all three are needed to sustain the most rudimentary vital processes, because without each and every one, the triad is unsustainable.

The CWSL concludes that within the state of annihilative concentration, all mental disruptions are brought to a halt. However, it also avers that the meditator attaining this depth of concentration is still alive, even in the absence of discernable mental activities and sensations, because the faculty of vitality, the faculty of mind and the faculty of aversion remain operative. Here, aversion stands both for the limbic system in less-advanced forms of life, in addition to the subtle aversive tendencies in highly advanced meditators and attenuated forms of life such as the transitional being (Skt.: *upapāduka*). The point is that there are always multiple faculties sustaining life at any given moment. This core notion of operational co-dependence between faculties is vitally important for Xuanzang's pluralistic explanation of death in terms of different kinds of final

moments.

However, Vasubandhu's *Treasury of Abhidharma* is clear that death is what happens when the human body no longer possesses the baseline three faculties mentioned above. Xuanzang follows Vasubandhu's explanation to the letter. It is important to note that it is not just the baseline triad described in Chapter Two of the *Treasury of Abhidharma*, stanza twenty-two that is involved in the explanation of death by Vasubandhu. Actually, the entire twenty-two-fold taxonomy of faculties is part of Xuanzang's response to this question, because Xuanzang differentiates what is lost in death based on the environment or realm in which the being dies and whether the specific sentient being dies gradually or suddenly.²¹⁴

Apart from the embodied but insensible faculty of vitality, the sensory faculties and the mind are also involved in this picture of what death deprives. But what exactly is meant by a “sensory faculty”? The precise referent of the Sanskrit term — *indriya* — is a matter of broad dispute between Brahmanical and Buddhist authors.

It is true that the word for the visual faculty or organ in both classical Sanskrit, Chinese, and Tibetan means, literally, “the eye.” And yet, the *Abhidharma* rejects the notion that it is the eye, simpliciter, that sees things. Both Buddhist and Brahmanical thinkers recognize that the terminology is to be understood metonymically for the sensory faculty as a whole, including but not limited to the eyeball, the associated optic nerves, and the blood supply. One consequence of this terminological stance for both Buddhist *Abhidharma* theorists and contemporary proponents of the Brāhmanical traditions of *Sāṅkhya* and *Vaiśeṣika* is that the operation of the faculty is not limited to the physical functions of the organ, but invariably involves a cognitive component as

²¹⁴ Discussion on the “suddenly vs. gradually dying” classification is deferred until the fourth chapter of this dissertation.

well. It is in this respect that Abhidharma teachings concur with the Sāṅkhya theory, rooted in the *Sāṅkhyakārikas*, that the faculty of vision is only capable of seeing things when it works in conjunction with a mental faculty.

The following chapter examines the differences between the Abhidharma and rival Brahmanical taxonomies of faculties, based on Xuanzang's translations of the earliest systematic Abhidharma discussions.²¹⁵ Xuanzang is keenly sensitive to a number of striking similarities between the Buddhist and Abhidharma theories of faculty psychology. Xuanzang's translation of the Vaiśeṣika material from Sanskrit shows that he is well aware of the considerable terminological overlap between Buddhist and Brāhmaṇical taxonomies. However, his translations of Buddhist Abhidharma materials develop counterarguments against a number of charges leveled by rival theorists from the Brāhmaṇical traditions. These Abhidharma discussions are structured in a dialectical way wherein the author (Skt.: *siddhāntin*; Chi.: *lunzhu* 論主) must first address the interlocutor's objections. Typically, it is only after any difficulties have been resolved that the author goes on to elaborate the “correct doctrine” (Chi.: *zheng-yi* 正義). The specific debates here swirl around both the constitution and number of faculties required to sustain life in the sentient organism. These are the “faculties in their proper sense” (Chi.: *zheng-gen* 正根). A number of parallel items are found in the Sāṅkhya and the Abhidharma taxonomies of faculties. The

²¹⁵ Sāṅkhya and Vaiśeṣika are the only two Brahmanical interlocutors or *pūrvapakṣins* represented in Yaśomitra's commentary to the *Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya* of Vasubandhu, titled *Abhidharmakośa-sphuṭārtham*. In general, these are only two interlocutors represented in the body of Abhidharma material studied here—the same goes for the *CWSL*, its Chinese commentaries, and the Yogācāra works attributable to the sixth-century authors Dharmapāla, Sthiramati, and Yaśomitra. Xuanzang's Chinese commentators make mention of, among others, the Jains, Paśupatas (literally, the “Followers of the Bestial Lord” 獸主—a derogatory moniker for Śaivite acolytes), and the Lokāyatara (i.e., Cārvāka) materialists (Chi.: *Shun shidao* 順世道). However, these later attributions appear suspect. Tucci (1927) includes Mimāṃsaka among the ranks of the *pūrvapakṣins* whose views are considered in the “older Buddhist texts”—namely, the translations of Kumārajīva. See Tucci, *Pre-Diñnaga Buddhist Texts on Logic from Chinese Sources* (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1929), xxxii. Tucci cites Kumārajīva's translation of *Śāta śāstra*, a dialectical work attributed to Āryadeva 提婆. Tucci writes: “At the time of the *Śāta śāstra*...the Nyāya system had not yet originated as a separate school” — *Pre-Diñnaga Buddhist Texts on Logic*, xxxiii.

Sāṅkhyakārikās (hereafter, SK) enumerate five ordinary senses (Skt.: *prajñēndriyāṇi*). This work, attributed to Kṛṣṇēśvara, also counts five physical faculties (Skt.: *rūpēndriyāṇi*), or the “faculties of action” that include the faculties correlating to the capability to speak (Skt: *vak*) words (Skt: *vacanam*), to grasp things to be grasped (Skt: *grāhaṇam*), to walk to and fro (Skt: *caṅkrama*) with the legs, or “the faculty of locomotion” (Skt: *pādēndriyam*),²¹⁶ to excrete liquid and solid waste (Skt: *pāyur*), and to procreate (Skt: *ānandam*). Xuanzang argues that the differences between the Abhidharma and the Sāṅkhya taxonomies of the faculties outweigh the similarities.

²¹⁶ The Chi. trans. of this term is *wu xing-gen* 五行根; or *wu ye-gen* 五業根. The Sāṅkhya taxonomy standardized in *Sāṅkhyakārikā* stanzas 27-30 identifies the core capability of the faculty of locomotion with the action of “walking on two legs.” For Skt. text of these verses, see Dutt, ed., *Sāṅkhyakārikās*, 30-31. However, it is important to point out that the term “locomotion” is construed broadly in this context to cover bodily actions executed by the torso, which means that the faculty of locomotion is not exhausted by just two legs. Although the characteristic action of this faculty – to walk [with the two legs] (*pādau*, from the root \sqrt{pad}) — the underlying terminology can also literally mean “the leg.” In this sense, the word “leg” is meant as a metonymy for the faculty as a whole.

Chapter 2: Xuanzang on Karma and the Faculties

What is dying? For Xuanzang, death is not simply dying. But what is dying? For Xuanzang, the Abhidharma theory of the *indriyas* provides a naturalistic way to determine what brings about biological death. As an explanatory account of death, the theory of *indriyas* does not postulate supernatural entities such as a soul, or a personality that transcends corporeal existence.²¹⁷

Hewing to the theory of the faculties and to the doctrine of karma, Xuanzang comes to understand dying as the deterioration of a specific cluster of the faculties borne by an individual. Xuanzang, however, goes on to posit that dying is more than the formulaic loss of a vital triad of faculties, or the disintegration of the organs in the body. He argues that dying is a complex sensory and emotional experience caused by the termination of a set of dynamic interactions between the mental and physical faculties. Karma, the accumulation of the effects of the good and the bad actions taken by an individual over a lifetime, is implicated in the interaction of the faculties at the end of life.

Abiding by the Brāhmanical and Buddhist scriptures, Xuanzang determines that karma and the faculties play essential roles in determining the ritual purity, hedonic tone, and timing of dying. The quality of dying is determined by karma and by the specific number, type, and condition of the *indriyas*²¹⁸ that are possessed by an individual at the end of life. What an individual does, or

²¹⁷ The notion that Buddhism embraces the idea of a personality transcending corporeal existence is found in secondary scholarship. See Lawrence E. Sullivan, *Death, Afterlife, and the Soul* (New York: Macmillan Publishers), 194: “Buddhist texts in general, then, acknowledge the existence of a self as an entity that distinguishes one individual from another, that serves as the center of intellect, will, and moral agency, and that is understood to be the source of human perfection.”

²¹⁸ Conze mentions and uses translations of “faculty,” “controlling faculty” and “spiritual faculty,” and refers to the five *indriya* as the “cardinal virtues” —see Conze, ed., *Buddhist Scriptures* (New York: Penguin Classics, 1959). Bhikku Bodhi uses “faculty” —see his translation of *Samyutta Nikāya*, corresponding to *Samyutkâgama* in the Chinese canon, under the title *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Samyutta Nikaya*. (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1998), 1509. *The Pāli Text Society Pali-English dictionary* by Rhys Davids & Stede (1921-25), 122-123 contains under the entry for *indriya*: “*Indriya* is one of the most comprehensive & important categories of Buddhist psychological philosophy & ethics, meaning ‘controlling

does not do, to nurture the faculties during a lifetime, accounts for the physiological and psychological conditions of the faculties at the end of life. Ultimately, it is the cultivation of the faculties of faith, perseverance, concentration, mindfulness, and wisdom that improves the ritual purity, hedonic quality, and timing of death. In living and in dying, the nurturance of the faculties matters.

For Xuanzang, dying is not the loss of a singular core, self, or soul (Skt.: *ātman*; *pūṃs*; Chi.: *wo* 我). He dismisses the Brāhmaṇical description of dying as the release of an immortal soul from the fetters of the corporeal body and endorses a definition of dying founded on a biological theory of the faculties and karma. Xuanzang vigorously denies the need for any explanation of dying other than the ending of the coordinated action of the faculties. In doing so, he upholds the Buddhist doctrine of no-self.

Xuanzang's discussions of no-self and the nature of dying demonstrate his sensitivity to the differences and similarities within the doctrines of the Brāhmaṇical traditions of Hinduism and within the Yogācāra and Abhidharma traditions of Buddhism. His mastery of the original Sanskrit texts that represent the Brāhmaṇical Sāṅkhya and Vaiśeṣika traditions allow him to make a trenchant critique of these two classical Indic philosophies. In his exegesis of dying, Xuanzang

principle, directive force, élan, dynamis'...: (a) with reference to sense-perceptibility 'faculty, function...' More recently, Vincent Eltschinger and Isabelle Ratié have expressed reservations about rendering *indriya* as "faculty." See their co-authored book, *Dharmakīrti's Critique of the Notions of Self and Person* (Vienna: Austrian Academy of Sciences Press, 2013), 203. They sum up the heart of their objection to the translation of *indriya* as "faculty" as follows: "the rather common translation 'sense faculties' does not seem relevant either in so far as the sense faculties do not stand in need of any inference: seeing is knowing that one sees, and the Indian philosophers do not mean that we need to infer our sense faculties but rather, that we must infer the existence of the imperceptible instruments (*kāraṇa*) that make these sense faculties possible. Provide that one keeps in mind that etymologically an organ is a bodily 'instrument' and that sense organs are not limited to the perceptible body parts called 'eye,' ear, etc., the translation 'sense organs' therefore appears to us as the least unsatisfactory, given that the *indriyas* are the (bodily) instruments of perception." This study resorts to the translation of *indriya* as "faculty," while remaining sensitive to the issue raised by Vincent Eltschinger and Isabelle Ratié, *Self, No-Self, and Salvation*, 203. The rendering of *indriya* as faculty tries to preserve the notion of the instrumental efficacy (*kāraṇatva*) of the *indriyas* that is not limited to the perceptible parts of the physical organs.

deconstructs the arguments in the classical Brāhmaṇical texts that rely upon the presence of an immortal soul to explain the survival of the human body and to define dying. While Xuanzang remains rooted in the theory of the faculties, his theories about dying evolve as he engages with the ideas promulgated by his contemporary Brāhmaṇical rivals. The position held by the Brāhmaṇical theorists is that the *indriyas* exist for the benefit of a sentient entity or a person (Skt.: *puruṣa*; Chi.: *renwo* 人我). Xuanzang addresses the challenges presented by these theorists to defend his position that the theory of the faculties is sufficient to explain survival and dying.

This chapter examines Xuanzang's investigation into the interaction between the faculties and karma in determining the ritual purity, hedonic quality, and timing of dying. Xuanzang begins with an exhaustive and meticulous analysis of the theories of the faculties and the role they play in dying as they are presented in the ancient sūtras that reprise the teachings of the Buddha. He then examines the Brāhmaṇical doctrines of the Sāṅkhya (Chi.: *Shu-lun* 數論; *Seng-qu* 僧佉) and Vaiśeṣika (Chi.: *Sheng-lun* 勝論, *Weishi shi* 衛世師) traditions. Following his vigorous engagement with the Brāhmaṇical scriptures, Xuanzang examines the views of the faculties held by the Buddhist Personalists. He continues with an analysis of the disputes between the contending sects of the Abhidharma schools and follows with an immersive study of Vasubandhu and the Yogācāra traditions. Xuanzang's comprehensive examination of the Brāhmaṇical and Buddhist sources on the nature of the *indriyas* leads him to his precise formulation of the faculties that are implicated in dying and of the role played by karma in the quality and timing of death.

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first section examines Xuanzang's sweeping analysis of the rival Brāhmaṇical and Buddhist theories on the faculties and karma. His investigation into the scriptures on the *indriyas* and karma follows a chronological order that begins with the statements of the Buddha and ends with the doctrinal debates held by Xuanzang's

contemporary scholar monks. The chapter adheres to the order by which Xuanzang conducts his systematic analysis of the *indriyas* and their role in dying. It begins with his analysis of the ancient *Āgamas* (Chi.: *ajimo* 阿笈摩; *ahan* 阿含), continues with his investigation into the later Brāhmaṇical theories of Sāṅkhya and Vaiśeṣika, and ends with an analysis of the disputes between Xuanzang and his contemporaries within the Buddhist Personalist (Skt.: *Pudgalavāda*; Chi.: *Buteqieluo lun* 補特伽羅論) and Vātsīputrīyas (Chi.: *Duzi bu* 犢子部) traditions.²¹⁹ The second section in this chapter examines Xuanzang’s rebuttal to the Brāhmaṇical and Buddhist theories of dying that are predicated upon the existence of an enduring person who undergoes death and is reincarnated in another body. Xuanzang formulates his rejoinder to the theories of personhood held in the *Āgamas*, in the Brāhmaṇical theories of Sāṅkhya and Vaiśeṣika, and by his contemporaries by using the theories of dying proffered by Yogācāra Buddhism. Availing himself of the Yogācāra theories of the faculties and karma, Xuanzang determines that no entities are involved in dying other than the faculties and karma. In doing so, he affirms the cardinal Buddhist tenet of no-self.

Section One: Xuanzang’s Analysis of the Brāhmaṇical and Buddhist Theories on the Faculties and Karma

While residing in Northeast India from 630–640 C.E., Xuanzang immerses himself in the study of the early Buddhist and Brāhmaṇical scriptures and engages in debates with masters from both religious traditions. Upon his return to China, Xuanzang reconstructs the stories of the

²¹⁹ .The Vibhāṅgyavādins (Pāli: Vibhajjavādins) were an Abhidharma tradition contemporaneous with the Kaśmīri Sarvāstivādins, however, little is known about their doctrines apart from what is preserved in Sarvāstivāda texts — see Lance Cousins., “On the Vibhajjavādins: The Mahiṃsāsaka, Dhammaguttaka, Kassapiya and Tambapaṇṇiya Branches of the Ancient Theriyas,” *Buddhist Studies Review*, 18 (2001): 131-82.

Buddha that are located within the Abhidharma texts, researches the teachings of Sāṅkhya into his corpus, and engages in a translation of an important treatise of Vaiśeṣika philosophy, the *Treatise on the Ten Categories of Existence* (Skt.: *Daśapadārtha śāstra*; Chi.: *Shi juyi lun* 十句義論) by the Vaiśeṣika master Candramati. In his effort to record and translate the early classical scriptures, Xuanzang examines the Brāhmaṇical and Buddhist theories of dying that are premised upon the existence of a soul, person, or eternal spirit that deserts the corporeal body and results in the end of life.

In this exegesis, Xuanzang looks to the *Sāṅkhyakārikās*, the ancient scripture of the Sāṅkhya tradition, for the authoritative Brāhmaṇical teachings on dying and the soul. Through extensive study of the *Sāṅkhyakārikās* and the early commentaries on this text by the sixth-century Sāṅkhya scholar Gauḍapada and the Chinese translator Paramārtha, Xuanzang masters the Brāhmaṇical theories on the topic of dying and reincarnation. The Brāhmaṇical view of dying is captured in the penultimate verse of the seventy-stanza *Sāṅkhyakārikās*, where it is stated that the departure of the soul (Skt.: *puruṣa*; Chi.: *renwo* 人我) marks the moment of death. Without the animating presence of the soul, the body is said to decompose into its material nature (Skt.: *prakṛti*; Chi.: *zixing* 自性),²²⁰ composed of earth, wind, water, fire, and ether. It then reverts into a primordial state (Skt.: *pradhānavinivṛtti*) whereby the earthly solids of the body return to the earthly elements and the fluids of the body flow back into the water elements. In the process of dying, the soul, in the form of a “subtle or ethereal body” (Skt.: *guhyaṃ śarīram, sūkṣmāśarīra*;

²²⁰ Translation based upon Paramārtha’s Chinese – *Jin qishi lun*, stanza 68ab (T2137:54.1261.c22). Chi. text runs: 捨身時事顯，自性遠離時；決定及畢竟，二獨存得成 (T2137:54.1261.22-23). According to the edition of Dutt, *Sāṅkhyakārikās*, 60, the corresponding line in the Skt. runs: *Prāpte śarīrabhede Caritārthatvāt pradhānavinivṛtau / ekāntamātyantikamubhayam kailayamāpnoti* // 68a-d. This Skt. quatrain is in moraic *ārya* meter with four “legs” or *pādas* per quatrain (i.e. four quarters), the first two legs (a and b, separated by vertical slash here or *dāṇḍa*) forming a line of verse each has twelve beats or morae, and the second has eighteen morae. Chi. is in five-character-per-line verse. Reference has been made to the Skt. edition of Dutt, *Sāṅkhyakārikās*, 79, who translates the entire stanza as follows: “After having deserted the body and after the cessation of the Nature, (the Spirit) acquires the salvation which is both certain and final.”

Chi.: *xishen* 細身) in possession of the faculty of intelligence (Skt.: *buddhîndriyam*), soars off into the ether (Skt.: *ākāśa*; *Chi.*: *kong* 空). The soul then migrates through the ether until it becomes associated with a new embryo and begins the process of reincarnation into another bodily form.

Throughout his corpus, Xuanzang deems the Brāhmaṇical theories of the soul as antithetical to the earliest teachings in the *Āgamas* and seeks to reclaim the Buddhist teaching on the impermanence of the self. He regards the Brāhmaṇical treatment of dying as steeped in the occult and is interested in understanding dying from a more naturalistic and physiologically-based perspective. Ultimately, Xuanzang seeks to banish the entire notion of the Brāhmaṇical spiritual soul from Chinese Buddhism.

In his exegesis of dying, Xuanzang looks first to the *Āgamas* and examines the teachings of the Śākyamuni Buddha on the topic of reincarnation. He finds that the Buddha consistently relies upon the *indriyas* to explain what constitutes the locus of transmigration. He then examines the ancient Brāhmaṇical scriptures in the traditions of Sāṅkhya and Vaiśeṣika and attempts to square their theories of karma and the faculties with the views of his contemporaries versed in these traditions. In their explanations of dying, Xuanzang finds that the Brāhmaṇical scholars, past and present, cling to the notion of an enduring person who bears the responsibility for, and the consequences of, the actions performed in the life of the individual. Xuanzang then turns to his contemporaneous fellow Buddhists and finds them attempting to smuggle the soul back into Buddhism under the guise of the “individual,” or *pudgala* (*Chi.*: *buteqieluo* 補特伽羅). The *pudgala* is described by the Vātsīputrīyas as the part of the individual that becomes reincarnated. It is conceptualized as the locus of karma, or as the container of the bad and good acts that a person commits in a lifetime.²²¹ Xuanzang indicts both the Brahmins and his co-religionists, the Buddhist

²²¹ As Vasumitra (Shiyōu 世友) writes in his *Treatise on the Wheel of the Different Systems of Tenets* (Skt.: *Samayabhedoparacana-cakra śāstra*), by the *pudgala*, the Vātsīputriya mean to indicate the basis for the identity

Vātsīputrīyas, for relying upon an explanation of the *pudgala* as the bearer of karma. He regards the idea of the *pudgala* as equivalent to the Brāhmaṇical doctrine of the *puruṣa*, the unchanging essence of a person. He contends that these ideas are simply “old wine in new bottles” and that both conceptions undermine the canonical idea of no-self.

In the first folio of his CWSL, Xuanzang mounts an assault on the theories that bolster the ideas of the self and personhood within the Buddhist and Brāhmaṇical canons. Xuanzang vigorously contends that the very idea of the self vitiates Buddhism. His work is motivated by a desire to disabuse his rivals of their fundamental misconceptions regarding the nature of dying. To accomplish this, Xuanzang must expel the idea of the supernatural soul from the definition of dying. To lay bare the root cause of what he regards as a mistaken view, Xuanzang appeals to the words of the Buddha (Skt.: *Buddhavacana*; Chi.: *Foshuo* 佛說) that are preserved in the ancient *Āgamas*.

The Buddha’s Teachings on the Faculties: The Debates in the Jetavana Park

As a novice monk in his native China, Xuanzang is exposed to the earliest strata of source material, albeit in fragmentary form, that records important episodes in the life of the Buddha.²²² Xuanzang comes to regard the *Āgamas* as the authoritative source on doctrinal matters.

of the five skandhas over time: “The tenet of the Vātsīputrīyas that is largely the same is that the *pudgala* is neither identical to, nor entirely different from, the *skandhas*. *Pudgala* is a nominal term applied to skandhas, sensory faculties (*āyatana*s), and realms (*dhātu*s). All ephemeral impulses (*saṃskāra*s) abide only for a moment and then cease. Apart from these momentary dharmas there is no *pudgala* that moves on from a previous lifetime to a subsequent lifetime. On the basis of the *pudgala*, one can say that there is transmigration (*saṃkrānti*).” 有犢子部本宗同義。謂補特伽羅非即蘊離蘊。依蘊處界假施設名。諸行有暫住。亦有剎那滅。諸法若離補特伽羅。無從前世轉至後世。依補特伽羅可說有移轉 (T2031: 49.16.c14-18).

²²² The Chinese translations of the *Āgamas* undertaken by Guṇabhadra preserves the *Uttarā sūtra* in its intact form. However, the disputes of *Uttarā* are hardly known in the comparatively scarce body of materials preserved in their original Sanskrit. The figure of “*Uttarā* the Deva” appears briefly in the Pāli *Samyutta Nikāya*. For English translation of the elliptical Pāli recension of the *Uttarā sūtra*, see Bhikku Bodhi, *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2000), section 19.99.

Throughout his life, Xuanzang devotes enormous amounts of time to reprising the narratives of the teachings of the Buddha that are described in the early sūtras. Xuanzang is particularly interested in the records of the disputes between the Buddha and Jātiśroṇa and Uttarā, two powerful Brāhmin landholders, on the topic of the *indriyas*. These debates take place in the Jetavana Park, near the Anāthapiṇḍaka Monastery in the Kingdom of Śrāvāsti (舍衛國) in the sixth century B.C. The Jetavana Grove is the site one of the most famous monasteries in India and is historically significant as a location wherein the Buddha gives many teachings and engages in important discourses with his followers.

On the Provenance of the Debates in the Jetavana Park

The *Jātiśroṇa* and *Uttarā sūtras* are attributed to great antiquity by the Abhidharma scholars. The figures of Jātiśroṇa and Uttarā appear in the Chinese *Āgamas* and in the Pāli *Nikāyas*, the earliest known records of the homilies of the Buddha. While partial accounts of the Jātiśroṇa debate are found in two earlier Chinese translations of the *Vibhāṣa*, the full rendition of Jātiśroṇa's interview with the Buddha on the twenty-two *indriyas* appears for the first time in the *Mahāvibhāṣa* translated by Xuanzang. The Uttarā debate with the Buddha in the Jetavana Park first appears in the *Samyuktāgama*. This translation of the original *Āgamas* was rendered into Chinese by Guṇabhadra (Chi.: Qiunabatuoluo 求那跋陀羅), a Sanskrit scholar who was active during the Liu-Song Dynasty in the fifth century C.E. The retranslation and exegesis of the dispute between Uttarā and the Buddha on the topic of the twenty-two faculties in Xuanzang's *Mahāvibhāṣa* hews closely to Guṇabhadra's source material.

The most comprehensive descriptions of the audiences of the two Brāhmins and the historical Śākyamuni Buddha are found in the translation of the *Mahāvibhāṣa* by Xuanzang. The accounts of the two Jetavana debates in this work are matchless in their extensive documentation

and their exquisite attention to detail and presentation. Significantly, Xuanzang's reprisal of the Jātiśroṇa story is immediately followed by his account of the dialogue between Uttarā and the Buddha within the *mise en scène* of Jetavana Park. Using this literary device, Xuanzang links the debates under the umbrella topic of the nature of the *indriya* and fortifies the doctrinal message of the Buddha regarding the taxonomy of the twenty-two *indriyas*.

The debates in Jetavana Park between the Buddha and the two Brāhmin landholders, Jātiśroṇa and Uttarā, focus upon the definition of the *indriyas*. Both Uttarā and Jātiśroṇa pose trenchant questions targeting the nature and constitution of the twenty-two *indriyas* posulated by the Buddha. The two episodes highlight and play upon the meaning of the Sanskrit word *indriya*. *Indriya* is a double entendre that simultaneously refers to an organ of the body and to a faculty. Like the Sanskrit word, the Chinese and Tibetan equivalents (Chi.: *gen* 根; Tib.: *dbang po*)²²³ are double entendres that mean both “organ” and “faculty.” The Chinese word *gen* can mean organ, faculty, or “root.” The meaning of “root” is important in this context because it refers to the “root faculties,” or the *indriyas* that possess the capacities for faith, perseverance, concentration, mindfulness, and wisdom. While these *indriyas* are innate, they must be cultivated by a sentient being through disciplined practice to take root and grow into fruition.

The *Jñānaprasthāna śāstra*, the ancient source upon which the *Mahāvibhāṣa* is a commentary, does not mention the encounter between Jātiśroṇa and the Buddha. The absence of any mention of Jātiśroṇa in the early sources supports Skilling's (2012) hypothesis that the story

²²³ According to Tony Duff's *Tibetan Dictionary*, *dpang bo* can mean *indra*. Duff's entry under *dpang bo* reads: “Faculty is appropriate in some cases but in the particular case of the sense-faculties, a better translation is available. In more recent times translators have been using the term ‘faculty’ with less frequency and using terms like ‘(sense) powers’ to translate this term. This is certainly accurate and quite literal to the original Sanskrit. However, these things are, in modern terminology exactly and precisely ‘sensors.’ A sensor is that intermediary which detects an object and provides a message to something more intelligent than itself with information about the detected object.”

of Jātiśroṇa and the subsequent commentaries on the Buddha's discourse on the twenty-two *indriyas* were constructed by the Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma scholars in the first or second century C.E. In his study of this sūtra, Skilling (2012) concludes that: "If included in any of the *Āgamas*, the 'Discourse on the Twenty-Two Faculties' (i.e., the *Jātiśroṇa sūtra*) might have belonged to a *Samyuktāgama* (although one cannot rule out the possibility that it belonged to either a *Madhyamāgama* or *Ekōttarāgama*)."²²⁴ Skilling compiled a complete translation of the Jātiśroṇa sūtra from excerpts found in Yaśomitra's *Sphūṭārtha*, and from Śāmathadeva's *Guiding Commentary on the Treasury* (Skt: *Upayīka-ṭīka*). While both texts are available in a Derge Tibetan translation, only the excerpt from Yaśomitra survives in the original Sanskrit. The dialogue between the Buddha and the Brāhmin Jātiśroṇa appears for the first time in its entirety in the Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma literature.²²⁵ Skilling estimates, somewhat conservatively, that the *terminus pro quem* for the *Jātiśroṇa sūtra* lies between the second or third centuries C.E., during which time the Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma scholars in Kaśmir and Gandhāra compiled the *Vibhāṣa* compendia. The only extant version of this document is in classical Chinese.

The retelling of the famous story of the audience of Jātiśroṇa with the enlightened Buddha in the Jetavana Park is found in two places in Xuanzang's *Mahāvibhāṣā*. It first appears in the second fascicle of the two-hundred-fascicle Sarvāstivāda compendium in the form of a trenchant question posed by Jātiśroṇa to the Buddha. This portion of the *Mahāvibhāṣā* presents the earliest

²²⁴ Skilling, "Discourse on Twenty-Two Faculties," 137.

²²⁵ Skilling, "Discourse on Twenty-Two Faculties," argues that this sūtra is a polemical recension by the compilers of the Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma of ancient Kaśmir and Gandhāra. This textual tradition produced a number of voluminous compendia of tenets, the earliest of which dates back to the 2nd-century C.E. All of these take the form of exegesis on the *Jñānaprasthāna śāstra*, which contains material dating back to the 1st-century C.E. Skilling, "Discourse on Twenty-Two Faculties," 137, writes: to expect to find the "Discourse on the twenty-two faculties" in one or the other *Āgama* may be mistaken. It is quite possible that the "Discourse on the twenty-two faculties" was never included in an *Āgama*: that it circulated independently within the Sarvāstivāda-Vaibhāṣika tradition."

source material regarding the nature of the faculties and karma. Later in the text, a detailed account of Jātiśroṇa's questioning of the Buddha on the topic of the doctrine of faculties appears in the preamble to the “Chapter (Skt.: *Varga*) on the Faculties.” This portion begins in fascicle one hundred forty-two and occupies thirty rolls.²²⁶

In the third century C.E., the Indian monk, Saṅghabhūti, translates from Sanskrit into Chinese, a ten-folio version of the *Vibhāṣa* containing a fragment of the *Jātiśroṇa sūtra*. In the fifth century C.E., the Chinese monk, Daotai 道泰, collaborates with Buddhavarman (Chi.: Futuobamo 浮陀跋摩), a monk from Central Asia, on a translation of the *Vibhāṣa* from Sanskrit into Chinese that includes an abridged version of the Jātiśroṇa dispute. Because both texts preserve fragments of the Jātiśroṇa interview with the Buddha, they are of historical significance. In his rendition of the disputes, Xuanzang draws upon these sources, and on the more extensive accounts preserved in the *Mahāvibhāṣa*.

A more substantial portion of the dispute appears later in Xuanzang's translation of the *Mahāvibhāṣa*. This version features Jātiśroṇa's first question regarding the number of the faculties and includes the obliging response of the Buddha. The content of the response of the Buddha to Jātiśroṇa's initial inquiry are documented in the works of Vasubandhu and in the writings of two of his earliest Sanskrit commentators, Yaśomitra and Śāmathadeva, recovered by Skilling (2012). However, the *Vibhāṣa* compendia, extant only in Chinese, provide the sole source that preserves the second question posed to the Buddha by Jātiśroṇa regarding the ultimate constitution of the faculties and their supporting organs. In scale and comprehensiveness, the versions of the debates

²²⁶ The brief listing of twenty-two faculties, in the proper order, is also found in Sthiramati's Commentary on the *Abhidharmakośa*, titled *Genuine Doctrines of the Abhidharmakośa* (Chi.: *Apidamo jushe lun shi yi* 阿毘達磨俱舍論實義), fascicle five. It is followed sub-commentary that adduces the *Jātiśroṇa sūtra*: 釋曰。此是何經所說。調有梵志名曰生測 (emend to 聞)。來詣佛所。歡喜問訊。在一面坐。而白佛言：施設幾根攝諸根盡？佛言：我說二十二根攝諸根盡 (T1561:29.327.a18-21).

in the Jetavana Park recorded by Xuanzang in his translation of the *Mahāvibhāṣa* dwarf all other recensions of this text.

The Doctrinal Significance of the Debates Between the Buddha and Jātiśroṇa and Uttarā

The positions taken in the Jetavana Park debates are as follows: The Brahmins, Jatisroṇa and Uttarā, contend that the *indriyas* require the presence of an executive in the form of a person, or soul, to animate them. This premise directly contradicts the core Buddhist tenet of no-self. The Buddha and his disciples take the position that the faculties, in and of themselves, are sufficient to sustain life. This premise upholds the Buddha's stance that nothing is required to empower the faculties. This conclusion ultimately reaffirms the core Buddhist tenet of no-self. Because the principle of no-self is at stake in the debates between the Brahmins and the Buddha in Jetavana Park, the translations and exegesis of the disputes offered by Xuanzang are of great significance within the Buddhist canon.

The Story of Jātiśroṇa Versus the Buddha

The story of Jātiśroṇa and the Buddha begins with Jātiśroṇa asking: “Gautama! How many faculties are there?”²²⁷ Jātiśroṇa strikes an informal tone in this exchange. He calls the Buddha by

²²⁷ The *Mahāvibhāṣa*'s rendition of the initial question of Jātiśroṇa reads: “The Brāhmin Jātiśroṇa walked over to the Bhāgavān's seat and spoke to the Buddha, saying: “Venerable Gautama! How many faculties do you teach about?” The Buddha said: “I teach about twenty-two faculties, starting from the so-called ‘ocular faculty,’ etcetera (*iti vistaraḥ*).” 生聞梵志，往世尊所而白佛言：喬答摩尊說根有幾？佛言：我說二十二根，所謂眼根。乃至廣說。彼經豈亦說根所依？

Buddhavarman's and Daotai's text reads: “the Brāhmin Jātiśroṇa inquires of the Buddha: ‘Gautama! I simply seek to inquire a few things of you. I wish to hear what you will say to me about them.’ 生聞梵志白世尊曰：瞿曇。我欲少有所問。聽我所問當為我說。

The Bhāgavan tells him: ‘Brāhmin! As you wish, ask away.’ 世尊告曰：梵志！隨所欲問。

The Brāhmin asks: ‘Gautama! Indriya means ‘faculty.’ But Gautama, how many loci do these faculties have? Each faculty you posit falls under a locus, such that your theoretical posits rest on top of other posits!’ 梵志曰：瞿曇！根調根。瞿曇！根有幾所？云何瞿曇？根根所攝，施設而施設。

The Bhāgavan replies: “You Brāhmin! There are twenty-two faculties, starting from the ocular faculty (i.e., cakṣurindriyam, the first in the standard listing), and ending with the faculty by which nothing is unknown (i.e.,

his first name, Gautama, and refrains from using the honorific Sanskrit epithet of “*Bhagāvan*,” “Master,” or the Chinese appellation of “The World-Honored One” (Chi.: *Shizun* 世尊).²²⁸ The question posed by Jātiśroṇa takes the form of an innocuous request for information from the Buddha regarding the number of faculties that exist within an able human body.²²⁹ The Buddha obliges Jātiśroṇa with his response. In the translation of the *Mahāvibhāṣa* by Xuanzang, as in the two earlier recensions of this sūtra found in Saṅghabhūti’s translation of the *Vibhāṣa* from the fourth century C.E., and Daotai’s and Buddhavarman’s translation of the *Vibhāṣa* from the fifth century C.E., the Buddha proceeds to enumerate the twenty-two *indriyas*, beginning with the ocular faculty and ending with the uncontaminated faculties.

In the retellings of this story found in the two earlier Chinese versions of the *Vibhāṣa* translated by Saṅghabhūti in the fourth century C.E., and by Daotai and Buddhavarman in the fifth century C.E., Jātiśroṇa asks, “For what reason does Gautama set forth the *indriyas* as theoretical posits, one *indriya* on top of the other?” Here Jātiśroṇa insinuates that the taxonomy of twenty-two faculties postulated by the Buddha is on shaky ground. He presses the Buddha to clarify his stance regarding the nature and number of the *indriyas*. The exchange between Jātiśroṇa and the Buddha on the topic of the *indriyas* begins to bring the differences between the Buddhist and

ājñāṭasyēndriyam, the 22nd in the list).” 世尊告曰：汝梵志。有二十二根。從眼根至無知根 (T1547:28.439.b15-18).

The parallel passage in *Bi posha lun* 4 runs: 問訊世尊，種種語已，在一面坐，而作是言：說諸根者多。沙門瞿曇。說有幾根耶？佛告婆羅門。我說二十二根。謂眼根乃至知已根。如來說二十二根，則攝一切諸根義。婆羅門若有人言：沙門瞿曇所說諸根，我能遮止，更說餘根，但有是言，而無有實。 T28, no. 1546, p. 270c, 13-18.

²²⁸ Sanskrit text based upon Skilling (2012, p. 488): *indriyāṇi idriyaṇi ti bho Ghautama ucyante/ kati bho Gautama indriyāṇi? kiyatā ca indriyāṇām saṃgraho bhavati?/*

²²⁹ The earliest recension of *Vibh* precedes this question about how many faculties there are, with an additional challenge by Jātiśroṇa to Buddha. This additional question is not found in Yaśomitra’s clipping or in Śāmathadeva’s version. This earliest presentation, found in *Vibhāṣa* (*Bi posha lun*) translated by Saṅghabhūti, appears to coalesce the challenges of Jātiśroṇa with those of Uttarā, which occur in different parts of Xuanzang’s translation. Daotai and Buddhavarman’s **Vibhāṣa* (fasc. 4) is the same as Saṅghabhūti’s text in combining the two stories and the questions raised by the protagonists therein.

Brāhmaṇical doctrines of the faculties into sharp focus and raises two thorny questions regarding the nature of the faculties. The first question is: how many faculties are there? The second is: what is the relationship between the faculties and the organs in the body?

The *Mahāvibhāṣa* text records that Jātiśroṇa, prior to his audience with the Buddha, has polled other gurus about their opinions on the exact number of the *indriyas* in the taxonomy of life forms.²³⁰ He requests that the Buddha position himself vis-à-vis the plethora of theories on the precise number of *indriyas*, a topic contested by the Brāhmaṇical and Buddhist scholars of the time. For example, while the classical Sāṅkhya scholars postulate a taxonomy of eleven physical faculties, the Vaiśeṣika scholars posit a schema of five faculties that correspond to the five senses. Jātiśroṇa is said to believe in an ornate taxonomy of one hundred and twenty two independent faculties, the provenance of which is obscure and somewhat spurious.²³¹ Here the *Mahāvibhāṣa* editors imply that the Brāhmin Jātiśroṇa's belief in this doctrine reveals his lack of sophistication. His naiveté allows him to be positioned as a straw man in the debate with the Buddha.²³² The

²³⁰ Xuanzang's *Mahāvibhāṣa* delivers a series of plaudits to the Brāhmin Jātiśroṇa before casting aspersions upon his doctrinal position: "According to some the Brāhmin was good-nature, inquisitive and thoughtful. In order to learn about the doctrine of the faculty, Jātiśroṇa has traveled all around in order to undertake the ninety-six paths (of the different gurus), whilst inquiring about the numbers of the various faculties." 或彼梵志性善尋・思。隨有所聞，意便歷問。為知根義，周遍遊歷九十六道，問諸根量 (T1545:27.729.a11-12).

²³¹ This architectonic theory of one-hundred-and-twenty-faculties adduced in *Mahāvibhāṣa*, fascicle 142, classifies sentient beings in each of six *gatis* on the basis of twenty discrete faculties. They arrive at one-hundred-and-twenty different faculties by multiplying twenty different faculties per *gati* times six *gatis*. *Mahāvibhāṣa* records: "Others further state that there are one-hundred-and-twenty faculties. Namely, there are two faculties each for vision, audition, and olfaction – six in total. The faculties managing gustation, tactition/proprioception, vitality, the five hedonic faculties, along with the five [skillful] faculties including faith, etc., together amount to twenty-six. Then within each transmigratory destiny (*gati*) there are another twenty [faculties] for a total of one-hundred-and-twenty [faculties]. They say that the āsuras count as a sixth destiny." 或復有說。百二十根。謂眼耳鼻各二為六。舌身意命及五受根。信等五根總為二十六。趣各二十為百二十。彼說阿素洛為第六趣 (T1545:27.730.a01-5).

²³² "They say that there are one-hundred-and-twenty *īrthika* masters [that Jātiśroṇa sought out] – for example, the masters of heaven, *nagas*, *aśuras*, humans, etc. – the main point is that these beings experience a range of one-hundred-and-twenty loci. For them, it is naught but the marvelous, subtle body (**guhyaśarīra*) that obtains liberation. The Brahmin Jātiśroṇa's learning covered all of this. The faculties he spoke about were not the same [as ours], which engendered his doubts. He didn't know what the authentic theory was."

agenda-driven editors use the Brāhmin Jātiśroṇa's unwieldy taxonomy to place the brevity of their list of twenty-two faculties into a more favorable light when compared to the Sāṅkhya theory of eleven faculties, and the far simpler Vaiśeṣika taxonomy of five physical faculties.²³³ The dispute between the Jātiśroṇa and the Buddha is enlisted to highlight the concision of the Sarvāstivāda taxonomy of the twenty-two faculties.

After Jātiśroṇa poses the question regarding the number of the faculties, he presses the Buddha with a theoretical question regarding the definition of an *indriya*. The second question is rhetorical and more acerbic in tone: “But Gautama, don't your sūtras also talk about the basis of the faculties?” 喬答摩彼經豈亦說根所依？ Jātiśroṇa continues: “Don't your sūtras speak about some physical locus upon which the faculties themselves are based?” Here Jātiśroṇa takes the straw man position that the *indriyas* are located within the organs of the body, but are separate from them. Jātiśroṇa assumes, again somewhat naively, that the Buddha will protest and state that the *indriyas* are different from the organs of the body. Jātiśroṇa himself does not hold to this idea, as he regards it as inconsistent with his understanding of the *indriyas* as distinct and separate from the organs. With this maneuver, however, Jātiśroṇa attempts to trap the Buddha into agreeing that there is a difference between the *indriyas* and the physical basis of the *indriyas* in the organs of the body.

The second question posed by Jātiśroṇa is at the heart of several sensitive issues within the Buddhist doctrine. What exactly is the difference between an *indriya* and a material organ? Is there a constitutional difference between the two? Jātiśroṇa's question opens an inquiry into the nature

²³³ The editors of the *Mahāvibhāṣa* are well aware of this fact. However, they list five faculties postulated by Vaiśeṣika in a different order from the Buddhist taxonomy – “olfaction, gustation, vision, and proprioception/tactition, and audition make five *indriyas*” 鼻舌眼身耳根 (T1545:27.729.c28). This Vaiśeṣikataxonomy is attested in Kumārajīa's translation of Āryadeva's *Śāta śāstra*, which reads: “How many *indriyas* do the Vaiśeṣika masters postulate? Response: According to the Vibhāṣa, they only postulate five *indriyas*.” 衛世師計幾根？答：婆沙云：但計五根。

of the *indriyas* that includes questions ranging from the distinction between the faculties and the corporeal body to the nature of the faculties held by enlightened beings. These questions include: Are the faculties analogous to parts of the body? Are they organs? What is the difference between a faculty and the body? What is the status of the spiritual faculties possessed by the Buddha and other enlightened gurus? How does Buddhist practice influence the expression or the realization of the faculties?

In response to Jātiśroṇa's question, the Buddha states that the word *indriya* must be construed in the classical sense, as describing both the faculty and the organs associated with it. The Buddha adopts the ancient duality imbedded in the term *indriya* and does not use the word to refer to the *indriyas* and the organs as separate entities. For example, in the early texts of the Buddhist and Brāhmaṇical traditions, the Sanskrit and Chinese words for eye (Skt.: *cakṣur*; Chi.: *yen*) refer to the organ of the eye and to the entire visual system. According to Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma, a sensory faculty is both a sense organ and the sensory mechanism that receives and processes visual stimuli. Ganeri (2012) writes: "A sense-organ, here, is not something like a nose, but rather a specific quality or capacity which a certain complex matter has; we would now speak, for example, of the olfactory aspect of the exteroceptive system."²³⁴

Jātiśroṇa and the Buddha agree on the general principle that the word *indriya* is a synecdoche for an organ and for a sensory capacity. In his response to Jātiśroṇa's question, the Buddha offers the example of *cakṣurindriyam*, "the organ of the eye" (Skt.: *cakṣur*). The Buddha states that the word *cakṣurindriyam* stands for both the organ of the eye and the capacity of vision. He applies the idea of the cooperative action of the *indriya* in this example, stating that the eye

²³⁴ Jonardon Ganeri, *The Self: Naturalism, Consciousness, and the First-Person Stance* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2012), 133.

needs the eyeball, the cornea, and the associated blood supply within the organs of sight to exercise the characteristic action (Skt.: *karman*) of seeing visible things (Skt.: *rūpas*). Additionally, the Buddha notes that the word *śrotrêndriyam*, like the Chinese equivalent, *er* 耳, synecdochally refers to the auditory organs of the earlobe, the ear-canal, and the entire auditory apparatus. The principle that the Buddha upholds is that, by definition, the word *indriya* captures the organs, the sensory apparatus, and the activity or capacity that is executed when all parts of a mechanism work together. The Buddha concludes that there is no meaningful difference or distinction between the *indriyas* and the organs. Importantly, this core principle applies to all twenty-two *indriyas*, ranging from the baser sensory faculties to the higher spiritual ones.

The elision between the physical or sensory faculties and the spiritual faculties raises a thorny question, however. Do the spiritual faculties have an impure basis in the gross physical organs of the human body? Holding fast to the Buddhist teaching that the body is a “contaminated” (Skt.: *sāsrava*; Chi.: *youlou* 有漏) vessel, it would follow that if the spiritual faculties sprout forth from the loci of a defiled body, they are also impure. The problem of the defilement of the *indriyas* is moot within the Sarvāstivāda dogma, however, because the contaminated and uncontaminated *indriyas* are segregated into discrete categories within the taxonomy. In this schema, the contaminated *indriyas* include the inborn faculties of able-bodied humans, whereas the uncontaminated faculties refer to the skillful faculties of faith, perseverance, concentration, recollection, and wisdom that are possessed by the Buddha and cultivated via the religious practices of individuals. This allows for a conceptualization of the spiritual faculties as having loci apart from the impure bases of the physical faculties. Because they have separate loci, they can be developed through religious practices and rituals, rather than through exercise or the physical training of the organs of the body. This crucial distinction has large ramifications for religious

practice and ritual in Sarvāstivāda Buddhism and is addressed in the Jātiśroṇa sūtra.

The issues concerning the relationship of the lower sensory to the higher spiritual faculties raised in the Jātiśroṇa sūtra challenge Xuanzang's theory of the twenty-two faculties. The question of from whence the spiritual faculties emerge casts into question the very nature and existence of the Buddha's skillful faculties of faith, wisdom, perseverance, recollection, and wisdom. Where are the physical loci (Skt.: *āśraya*) of the spiritual faculties? Are the operational bases of the spiritual faculties "over and above" the five senses and the physical faculties of the body? Do they grow out of the existing operational bases in the body? According to the position held by Jātiśroṇa, the spiritual faculties must require loci that are separate from the contaminated faculties inherent in the body of an ordinary human. According to the Buddha, the uncontaminated spiritual faculties emerge from loci innate to the body of an ordinary human and are realized through cultivation by religious practice.

In both retellings of the Jātiśroṇa episode found in Saṅghabhūti's and Buddhavarman's Chinese translations of the *Vibhāṣa*, the Buddha flatly rejects Jātiśroṇa's premise that the spiritual faculties are constitutionally different from the physical faculties of the body.²³⁵ In the debate, the Buddha upholds the position that the spiritual faculties are the natural outgrowths of the innate faculties borne by all humans.

The Jātiśroṇa debate, located in the second fascicle of Xuanzang's translation of the *Mahāvibhāṣa*, concludes with the editors (Skt.: *siddhāntins*; Chi.: *lunzhu* 論主) weighing in on the distinction between the faculties and their physical basis in the body (Skt.: *āśraya*; Chi.: *suoyi* 所依). The verdict rendered by the *Mahāvibhāṣa* editors is that "the faculty and the physical locus of

²³⁵ While in Saṅghabhūti's version, this inquiry into the relationship of the faculty viz. locus appears in the first fascicle. In the earliest Chinese recension of Vibh, it shows up in the "Sixteenth Chapter on the Loci of Twenty-Two *Indriyas*" 二十二根處第十六 (fascicle 4 of 14).

the faculty are not different. That *indriya* refers, at once, to both ‘faculty as an entity’ and to the ‘basis of the faculty,’ is not a matter of general-acceptance (*aprasiddha*). It is a false postulate of one’s own tradition.” 彼此二經根聲不異。一謂根體。一謂所依。非所極成。是自妄執。

The authors of the *Mahāvibhāṣa* go on to aver that any doctrine that posits a difference between the faculty and the locus in which inheres “cannot be a matter of general acceptance” (Skt.: *aprasiddha*; Chi.: *bu jicheng* 不極成) and that to contrive this distinction is to adhere to a false dichotomy. As the straw man, Jātiśroṇa stands firmly behind the position that there is a distinction between the *indriyas* and the organs of the body. He therefore inadvertently endorses the idea that the spiritual powers of the Buddha have a locus in the body.

To the Sarvāstivādin editors of the *Mahāvibhāṣa*, however, the distinction between a faculty and its physical basis in the body is unacceptable. To locate the marvelous powers of the enlightened guru within in the fleshy viscera and the “contaminated” sense organs²³⁶ would be tantamount to a desecration of the spiritual achievements of the Buddha and all other masters. The editors of the *Mahāvibhāṣa* are disgusted with what they regard as an unappealing and unwarranted consequence that flows from the premise that the spiritual faculties are outgrowths of the defiled sensory organs of the body. They contend that the spiritual faculties are the outgrowths of innate *indriyas* that are distinct from the physical *indriyas* and possessed by all.²³⁷ The difference between

²³⁶ The verdict of the Mahāvibhāṣa editors on the paradigmatically Vibhāṣyavāda doctrine presented in fasc. 2 of Xuanzang’s translation is: “Therefore, it should be granted that the five faculties including faith are also unanimously contaminated” 故定應許信等五根，亦通有漏。

²³⁷ Mahāvibhāṣa 150 contains the following illustration of feats of divine sight: “There are those who are of the opinion that it is precisely the human’s native eye that can be modified into the heavenly eye, which is capable of seeing things in a non-impeded way. This is what is established by the followers of the outside path of Sāṃkhya. 作是說：即人眼根轉為天眼，能無障見。此是數論外道所立。

Some are of the opinion that: ‘the human eye’ is equivalent to the eye which arises naturally and by way of modifications through repetitive practice, it can illuminate and clarify what’s immediately before the eyes, such that it comes to be rewarded the moniker of ‘heavenly.’ 彼作是說：所起天眼即是人眼。數習轉變，明淨勝前，立以天稱。

the “pure” spiritual faculties, such as the heavenly vision of the Buddha, and the “crude” organs of the body is that the spiritual faculties of the Buddha do not emanate from a sensory organ, such as a third eye. Rather, the spiritual faculties of the Buddha are a result of specific and disciplined practices that enhance or upgrade the innate spiritual *indriyas*.

In their concluding remarks on the Jātiśroṇa episode, the *Mahāvibhāṣa* editors reject the analytical distinction between a faculty and its physical locus. They then engage in a series of arguments regarding the nature and the composition of the spiritual *indriyas* that are possessed by the Buddha and other enlightened masters. This topic is taken up in the second series of disputes between the Buddha and the Kṣatriya-Brāhmin Uttarā.

The Story of Uttarā and the Buddha in the Jetavana Grove

The story of Uttarā (Chi.: Wodaluo 嚧怛羅; also written Yuduoluo 郁多羅) and the Buddha begins with Uttarā kneeling on one knee and turning the strap of his robe to the right in a gesture of supplication and deference. According to the *Mahāvibhāṣa*, Uttara, the peripatetic philosopher of “mixed Kṣatriya-Brahmin stock,”²³⁸ comes to Mahāpiṇḍaka to take part in the challenge laid down to proclaim faculties other than the twenty-two endorsed by Buddha.²³⁹ The Buddha’s

We liken it to some forest practitioners in the Deccan Interior, some of whom can see up to a *yojana* through repetitive practice, but the items it makes manifest [at a distance] are all opaque. When they cultivate the heavenly eye is just like this. But granted that's the case then the blind would not be able to cultivate the penetrating heavenly vision, which violates the sacred teachings (*āgamas*), moreover it runs counter to common sense.” 如中印度青林中行。或經旬乃至數習，所變舉目皆青。修天眼時，亦復如是。若爾，盲者應不能修此天眼通，便與聖教及現見事皆悉相違。

²³⁸ *Mahāvibhāṣa* 142: “There are those who say that Prajñāśrī is of mixed heritage, having been born to a Kṣatriya and a Brahmin. For example, the mule is born from the stallion and the mare. It is said that this was his caste, and that he had a disciple by the name of Uttarā.” 有說。此是雜種：謂從刹帝利婆羅門生，名波羅設利。如從驢馬，所生名騾。如是說者，此是彼姓，彼有弟子名嚧怛羅。

²³⁹ The Records of Western Territories (*Da Tang Xiyu ji* 大唐西域記) purportedly based upon Xuanzang's travelogue records that Uttarā hailed from the Kingdom of Culya 珠利耶國 (modern-day Tamil Nadu): “In the western towns not far from the Qielan, lies the spot where the Bodhisattva Āryadeva (Chi. Tipo Pusa 提婆菩薩) debated with the Arhat Uttarā :”城西不遠有故伽藍，提婆菩薩與羅漢論議之處。Apparently, subsequent to his

disciples, Ānanda and Śāriputra, are present at this audience. The Buddha begins the dialogue by asking Uttarā how his guru, Prajñāśrī (Boluosheli 波羅設利; also written Boluoshi 波羅施 and Boluoshe 波羅奢), exhorts his disciples to “cultivate the faculties in a sagely way” (Chi.: *sheng-xiu gen* 聖修根).

Xuanzang’s recounting of Uttarā’s audience with the Buddha immediately follows his lengthy presentation of the Jātisroṇa’s disputes in the the one hundred and forty-second fascicle of the *Māhavibhāṣa*. The conversation between the Brāhmin Uttarā and the Buddha in the Jetvana Park is preserved in the fifth-century translation of the *Sayuktāgama*, composed by the scholar monk Guṇabhadra. While he derives much of the content of this episode from the Chinese translation by Guṇabhadra, Xuanzang reprises the incident in greater detail and offers editorial commentary on the ancient sūtra.

Xuanzang links the dialogues between Uttarā and the Buddha, and Jātisroṇa and the Buddha in the Mahāpiṇḍaka Grove chronologically and thematically. Both episodes are enlisted to develop doctrinal points regarding specific and definitional aspects of the *indriyas*. The first episode, featuring Jātisroṇa and the Buddha, focuses on the number of faculties, while the second debate with Uttarā centers on the development of the spiritual faculties. The debate between Uttarā, a disciple of the Hindu Guru Prajñāśrī, and the Buddha homes in on the nature of spiritual faculties, such as “divine hearing” (Skt.: *divya-śrotram*; *tian-er* 天耳) and “heavenly sight” (Skt.: *divya-cāksur*; Chi.: *tian-yan* 天眼).

Responding to the Buddha’s initial question, Uttarā describes how his guru, Prajñāśrī, advises his disciples to “cultivate the faculties in a sagely way.” Uttara offers the following

meetings and instruction under the Buddha, Uttarā had become an enlightened Ārhat, having cultivated the six supranormal abilities (*ṣaḍabhijñāṇi*)” (T2087:51.931.b13-16).

enigmatic statement: “Our master is of the opinion that it is something that the eyeball does not see, and a sound that the ear does not hear! Now, that is to cultivate the faculties in a sagely way, as there is nothing to be grasped” 我師作如是說：眼不見色，耳不聞聲，名「聖修根」，無所取故。²⁴⁰

Uttarā then describes Prajñāśrī’s methods of “cultivating the faculties in a sagely way.” These practices include staring at objects for extended periods and other exercises intended to develop visual and aural acuity. According to Uttarā and others, these efforts, when properly executed, result in the attainment of a supramundane sense, such as heavenly vision or heavenly hearing. The realization of a heavenly sense occurs when a “third eye” or a “divine ear” emerges, or sprouts forth, from deep within the body. Additionally, Uttarā believes that superior forms of vision or hearing can be attained only under the supervision of a guru, such as Prajñāśrī, who guides a novitiate through the practices of cultivating the faculties. He states that the achievement of a spiritual faculty “cannot be grasped by the un-initiated.”²⁴¹

²⁴⁰ T1545:27.729.b02-4.

²⁴¹ *Mahāvibhāṣa* 142: “Once, Uttarā came to pay audience to the Buddha. Uttarā was delighted, and sat down in front of the Buddha to begin his interview. At that time, the Buddha asked Uttarā : “Does your Guru Prajñāśrī teach you how to cultivate the *indriyas* in a sagely way?” Uttarā replied: “our Guru has taught us about it.” The Buddha asked: How does your Guru Prajñāśrī teach you to do it?” Uttarā says: “He explains it to us like this: ‘it is what the eye cannot see and what the ear cannot hear – that is sagely cultivation of the *indriyas* – since there is nothing to be grasped.’” The Buddha immediately rejoined Uttarā in saying: “If that were the case, then the blind person should already have ‘cultivated his *indriyas* in a sagely way,’ since his eyes do not see anything.” At that point, Ananda was waved over by the Buddha and stood up in attendance upon the Buddha. He had already discerned a response [to Uttarā’s statement], saying: “the deaf should also be innately cultivated in their sagely faculties, since their ears do not detect the sounds.” 嚧怛羅。曾於一時來詣佛所。歡喜問訊在一面坐。佛時告曰：汝師波羅設利，為汝等說修根法耶？嚧怛羅言。我師曾說。佛問云何。彼云：我師作如是說：眼不見色，耳不聞聲，名「聖修根」，無所取故。佛即難曰。若爾盲者應名聖修根不見色故。時阿難陀佛邊侍立。為佛搖扇。尋亦難言。聾者亦應名聖修根不聞聲故 (T1545:27.29.a26-b06). This account found in Xuanzang’s *Mahāvibhāṣa* is largely derived, verbatim, from Guṇabhadra’s earlier translation of the *Uttarā sūtra* found in fascicle 11 of the *Samyuktāgama* (T99:2.78.a2-b08): Guṇabhadra’s text contains the further remarks by the Buddha to the audience, once Uttarā has been rendered utterly at a loss following Ānanda’s riposte concerning the incoherence and absurdity of Uttarā’s notion of “sagely cultivation of the *indriyas*.” This additional text runs: “Then, the Buddha told Ānanda: “That (i.e., what Uttarā has said about the method of sagely cultivation) is different from our venerable, sagely dharma that regulates the unsurpassable *indriyas*.” 爾時，世尊告尊者阿難：異於賢聖法、律無上修諸根。Ānanda requests of the Buddha: “we humbly entreat the Buddha to teach to the Bhikṣus the venerable sagely dharma – how to regulate the unsurpassable cultivation of the *indriyas*, and once

Throughout the initial part of his interview with the Buddha, Uttarā maintains that the spiritual faculties are, by definition, extraordinary, and beyond the attainment of persons who are not undergoing training by a guru. The path of “cultivating the sagely faculties” proposed by Prajñāśrī is designed to develop the ability to see that which is not seen with the ordinary eye, and to hear that which is not heard with the ordinary ear. In due time, Uttarā will learn that his representation of the guru's path is vague, cryptic, and misleading, and that his investment in the idea of undertaking the cultivation of the faculties only under the guidance of a guru will get him into trouble. For the moment, however, Uttarā is taken by Prajñāśrī's alluring promise of attaining heavenly sight and divine hearing under his guidance and supervision.

The Buddha's teaching that one sees not just with two eyeballs and hears with not just two ears is recorded in the ancient *Āgamas*.²⁴² The Buddha states: “The eye, per se, does not actually see things, nor does the ear, per se, actually hear things.”²⁴³ The teachings of the Buddha recorded in the *Dirghāgama* extend the principle that the authentic faculties engaged in the action of seeing or hearing are not visible. This means, quite literally, that the faculty of vision cannot be seen by the naked eye. *Mutatis mutandis*, this is true for the faculties of olfaction, gustation, and touch.

Having established that the optic and aural faculties are not what see or hear things in the most literal sense, Uttarā extends this idea to the supramundane faculties and to the Buddha's

the audience of Bhikṣus have heard the teaching, how to properly uphold it when put into practice.” 阿難白佛言：唯願世尊為諸比丘說賢聖法、律無上修根，諸比丘聞已，當受奉行 (T99:2.78.b07-8). For the remainder of the *Samyuktāgama*'s presentation of the Uttarā sutra, the Buddha goes on to regale the members of the audience, both Buddhists and Brāhmins, about the cultivation of the six senses.

²⁴² For instance, the Buddha makes statements to this effect in the Sayuktāgama version of the dispute between the Brāhmin Uttarā and the Buddha. Here, the Buddha proclaims to ānanda that “the eye (i.e., *caksurāyatana*) and visible matter present visual consciousness as their perceptual basis (*ālambana*).” 眼、色緣生眼識. (T:99:2.78.b22).

²⁴³ For the debates on “what sees” within Sarvastivāda Abhidharma, see Dhammajoti, *Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma*, 336-343; also readers may refer to his (2007) study, titled *Abhidharma Doctrines and Controversies on Perception* (Hong Kong: Center for Buddhist Studies), chapter 2.

sagely faculties. Uttarā begins with the anodyne idea that the vision cultivated by the sages is awesome in terms of its overwhelming power and penetrating scope. He adheres to the premise that the heavenly eyes and divine ears of the Buddha allow him to see things and hear sounds that lie beyond the sensory range of ordinary humans. He then contends that the things seen with the faculty of heavenly vision cannot be detected with the untrained eye.

From the outset, the Buddha and the Brāhmin are quick to point out that the “eye, *simpliciter*, does not see things.” The “eye” (Skt.: *caḥsur*) is understood by both parties to stand for the visual organ of sight that is constituted by the eyeballs, the optic nerves, and the associated blood supply. The faculty of sight directs the movements of the eyeball and the activities of the entire visual apparatus, of which the eyeballs are only one part. According to the Buddha’s doctrine of perception, in addition to the visual faculty (Skt.: *caḥsurāyatana*), two other elements are required to perceive the presence of visible matter. These are a sensible object (Skt.: *rūpa*) and visual consciousness (Skt.: *caḥsurvijñāna*). This tenet, which is attributed to the early homilies of the Buddha, is encapsulated in the famous slogan: “Three elements coalesce to generate the sensory experience” (Chi.: *sanshi hehe* 三事和合).²⁴⁴

Thus far, the Buddha appears to agree with everything that Uttarā has argued. The Buddha concurs that the faculties as entities, *per se* (Chi.: *genti* 根體), cannot be seen, in the case of the visual faculty, or sensed, in the cases of the other sensory faculties. Uttarā extends this idea to the spiritual *indriyas* and adduces that the *indriyas* of the sages cannot be seen by the naked eye or sensed by the faculties possessed by ordinary humans. The Buddha agrees that “cultivation of the faculties in a sagely way” entails “something that is not seen with the eye or heard with the ear.”

²⁴⁴ This doctrinal mantra finds its locus classicus in the *Samyuktāgama*, trans. Guṇabhadra 求那跋陀 fascicle 3, in the Buddha’s sermon to disciples at the Jetavana Park (T99:2.18-19).

Jātiśroṇa runs into difficulty, however, when he side-steps the issue of the origin and development of the sagely faculties. His argument then becomes mired in the murky territories of third eyes, hidden *indriyas*, and other phenomena of the occult.

At face value, there is little that is objectionable about Uttarā's characterization of the sagely faculties. He, along with the disciples of Master Prajñāśrī and the Bhagavān Buddha, agrees that the incremental development and refinement of the supramundane skills that are evinced by the sagely faculties cannot be measured or grasped by the naked eye. Uttarā believes that the heavenly eyesight of the Buddha is pervasive in its scope and penetration and that his marvelous visual powers allow him to simultaneously view enlightened beings in the heavens and hellish beings or *nārakas* in the eight cold and eight hot *Avīci* hells. Uttarā concludes that this superior form of vision extends above and beyond the scope of any ordinary “fleshy ball of an eye” (Chi.: *routuan yan* 肉團眼).²⁴⁵ According to the Sarvāstivāda teaching of the *Māhavibhāṣa*, the heavenly eye of the wheel-turning king (Skt.: *cakravārtin*), or the Buddha, can detect sights at a distance of up to four *krośas*,²⁴⁶ or eighteen miles, and the heavenly ear can perceive sounds up to four *kroṇas*, or one *yojanas*, away. Uttarā attributes the heavenly vision of the sage to the cultivation of supernatural *indriyas* such as third eyes.

The Buddha and the Brāhmin fundamentally agree that the senses grasp their objects, but “are not something to be grasped.” (Chi.: *wu suoqu* 無所取)²⁴⁷ They concur that all *indriyas*,

²⁴⁵ *Mahāvibhāṣa* 150 describes the scope and range of this power of vision as capable of penetrating “a great chiliocosm,” (Skt.: *mahātrihasra*; Chi.: *da-qian jie* 大千界), presumably, the triple chiliocosm which spans roughly 200,400 miles in breadth. This reckoning is according to AK 3.10, wherein Vasubandhu measures the full extent of the chiliocosm to be sixteen hundred thousand leagues (Skt.: *yojanas*; Chi.: *you-xun* 由旬), or roughly 200,400 miles. This is based on A.L. Basham's (1954) reckoning of one *yojana* (=four *krośas*) as approximately nine miles. *Mahāvibhāṣa* adds the qualification that with the “applied practice” (*prayoga*) of his yogic power, the Buddha's vision penetrates “innumerable, boundless worlds.” 無量無邊世界(T1545:27.767.a28)

²⁴⁶ Under one *krośa*, *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism* entry gives: “The eighth part of a *yojana*, or 5 *li* 里 [2.5 kilometres]; another less probable definition is 2 *li*.”

²⁴⁷ T1545:27.729.b03.

ranging from the sensory to the spiritual, are by definition invisible. They part ways, however, regarding the idea that the sagely faculties originate from the *indriyas* that are innate and borne by all humans. Uttarā holds that the sagely faculties emerge from an independent source, and that the marvelous faculties of the enlightened sages are not something that ordinary worldlings can attain by having two working eyeballs and passable eyesight. He implies that we are “born blind in the third eye” and can access the power of this sense only with disciplined practice under the tutelage of a guru. The Buddha states, however, that the spiritual faculties are innate to humans and therefore can be cultivated by anyone. While the Buddha teaches that the *indriyas* are invisible, he also states that they are also endowed with agency and potency. The *indriyas* are involved in all activities of living, from the simplest of hand gestures, to the sagely powers of insight and mindfulness.

The Buddha then delivers to Uttarā and his disciples his homily on the taxonomy of the twenty-two faculties. After listening to the Buddha enumerate the twenty-two faculties, Uttarā admits that he is confused about the status of the spiritual faculties vis-à-vis the ordinary sensory faculties of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch. Uttarā presses the Buddha on the precise relationship between the bodily senses and the “yet-uncultivated” (Chi.: *wei-xiu* 未修) faculties of concentration, faith, perseverance, recollection, and wisdom. By “yet-uncultivated,” the Buddha refers to the advanced spiritual attainments or the cultivated faculties of the sage.

Uttarā agrees with the Buddha that the expression of these extraordinary faculties is the result of courses of physical training and yogic cultivation. The Buddha diverges from the Brāhmin, however, when he states that the extraordinary *indriyas* do not have a locus in a third eye or in any other mysterious or supernatural faculty. He implies that it is not the case that the unenlightened are born “blind in the third eye” or that their heavenly eye has been occluded. Nor, according to

the Buddha, has their natural ability to open the aperture of the heavenly eye been unnaturally impeded or inhibited. The realization of heavenly eyesight cannot be analogous to sprouting (Skt.: *prabhavaḥ*) another eye. If the Buddha is sincere in his commitment to the naturalistic view of the faculties, then even the most abstract faculties, such as the faculties of concentration and higher gnosis, must have a basis in the physical body with which all ordinary humans are endowed at birth.

The Buddha then waves one hand to beckon his disciple, Ānanda. With this simple gesture, the Buddha demonstrates how the *indriyas*, while invisible, have visible effects. Ānanda immediately comes to the Buddha's side, kneels, and adjusts the left shoulder strap on his robe (Skt.: *kāṣāya*; Chi.: *jiasha* 袈裟). The expression on Ānanda's face is serene, and his eyes reflect his ready attentiveness to the Buddha. Uttarā looks befuddled. As he squints back and forth between the Buddha and Ānanda, the meaning of the Buddha's legerdemain is lost to him. Uttarā is unable to speak.

Ānanda then poses a question to Uttarā. How would Prājñāśrī explain the special cases of gurus born blind and deaf who attain the sagely faculties of heavenly vision and hearing? In responding to this challenge, Uttarā runs into difficulty. His guru, Prājñāśrī, cannot account for how blind or deaf people can achieve sagehood in any way other than through his specific course of practice involving the refinement of the eyes and ears. Uttarā concedes that a congenitally blind person has the innate capacity to attain sagehood. How then is sagehood to be attained if not through the cultivation of existing and intact sensory organs? Ānanda states that for the Buddha's disciples (Skt.: *śrāvakas*; Chi.: *dizi* 弟子), cultivating the faculties of sagehood entails improving the inborn faculties possessed by all humans. Attaining sagehood does not require locating a third eye or developing *indriyas* that are hidden deep within the body.

Ānanda's question poses a dilemma for Uttarā: Is the eyeball of the sage with divine vision constitutionally different from the eyeball of the ordinary human? Uttarā is faced with two choices: He can admit that development of the faculty of divine sight through the practices taught by Prājñāśrī requires the presence of a third eye that is constitutionally different from the material organ involved in seeing things, or he can swallow an equally bitter pill by admitting that the eyeball of the enlightened sage is the same as the eyeball possessed by an ordinary human.

Ānanda continues to point out the incongruity of Uttarā's statement that the eyesight of the sage involves developing cultivatable capacities to see things far beyond the purview of an ordinary set of eyes. However, if in achieving something beyond the pale of ordinary, vulgar sensation is the goal, one might try to deprive the base senses and avoid worldly distractions. If one is to attain enlightenment, then one must abstain from the defilement of the sensory world. It would then follow that to cultivate the spiritual *indriyas*, one must overcome the constraints of the contaminated fleshy eye and peel back the corrupted fleshy ball of an eye to see things in their true light.

Ānanda's second rejoinder has an unforeseen consequence when put into practice. If the ordinary senses contribute to unwholesome attachments to the objects of sensory desire, then the practitioner bent on cultivating the sagely way might be led to deprive, or even destroy, the sense organs that promote desire. Ananda asks Uttarā: For what purpose would you renounce the life of a householder and practice day and night to cultivate the pure practices of being a Brāhmin if you could simply destroy the faculties of seeing and hearing to cultivate the faculties in a sagely way? Would it not be more efficient to gouge out one's eyes than to spend years abstaining from defilement and practicing purification rituals to attain heavenly eyesight?

Ānanda's rejoinder to the Brāhmin Uttarā is meant to be a knock-down argument. Uttarā,

again, is at a loss for words. He falls into an insuperable dilemma, as he is unable to reconcile two opposing ideas. The first idea is his religious conviction that humans can become sages by cultivating the faculties with practice and under the guidance of a guru. The second idea is that the faculties of the sage are not constitutionally different from those of an unenlightened person. How then, is it possible to attain sagehood with the insufficient sensory faculties of an ordinary human?

Finally, Uttarā concedes that the sagely faculties must be constitutionally different from the five ordinary sense organs. Uttarā admits that while deaf people are born without functioning auditory faculties, they can develop the sagely faculties. Here, he concedes that the cultivation of the sagely faculties requires more than the honing of the ordinary senses and involves the development of the faculties of faith, spiritual zeal, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom.

In the Jetavana Park, Jātiśroṇa probes the Buddha with questions regarding the ultimate definition of the *indriyas*. Uttarā expands this discourse and engages the Buddha in a debate on the distinction between the corporeal body and the faculties. What is at stake in these disputes between the Buddha and the Brāhmins Jātiśroṇa and Uttarā is the difference between the Brāhmaṇical and Buddhist definitions of the *indriya*. In his Chinese reprisal of these ancient narratives, Xuanzang provides a spirited and rigorous defense of the Buddhist doctrine of the *indriyas* and concludes that dying is the direct result of the disintegration of the *indriyas*. Because the debates are regarded as faithful representations of the words of the Buddha, Xuanzang's renderings of the debates further his agenda of rescuing the teachings of the *indriyas* from dilution at the hands of his Brāhmaṇical counterparts and Buddhist co-religionists.

The debates between the Buddha and Jātiśroṇa and Uttarā provide a convenient vehicle by which the Sarvāstivāda editors clarify, reconcile, and advance their doctrinal agenda. The Abhidharma editors enlist the actual words of the Buddha to support their doctrinal rendering of

the taxonomy of twenty-two faculties. The *Mahāvibhāṣa* editors purposefully set up the disputes as polemics. The Brahmins, Jātisroṇa and Uttarā, play the roles of straw men with whom the Buddha argues fundamental doctrinal points regarding the definition of the *indriyas*. The *Mahāvibhāṣa* scholars make use of this sūtra material for the very deliberate purpose of reconciling the salient differences and similarities between the Brāhmaṇical and Buddhist teachings on the nature of the *indriyas*. Essentially, they are motivated to supplant the eleven-fold taxonomy of the *indriyas* of the Sāṅkhya and Vaiśeṣika masters with their own taxonomy of twenty-two faculties.

Prior to the famous Jetavana Park debates, disputes between the Buddha and Brahmins regarding the number of the faculties appear in the ancient strata of sūtra material. Also preserved within Xuanzang's *Mahāvibhāṣa* are narratives that describe Brāhmins who come to pay homage and are challenged by the Buddha to find faculties other than the twenty-two enumerated in the taxonomy. The Buddha states: "The twenty-two faculties that I have taught are exhaustive. If you can refute this, then you can go ahead and talk [to me] about other faculties. But you should know that their theories are all talk and make no sense."²⁴⁸ In his address to an audience of Buddhists and Brāhmins, the Buddha throws down the gauntlet to anyone who can challenge his theory of the *indriyas*. In one account recorded in the *Vibhāṣa* of Saṅghabhūti, the Buddha adds the condition that "Not even a single item may be subtracted from the [list of] twenty-two faculties, otherwise one has only laid bare the twenty-one. If one adds another single faculty, then one has already postulated twenty-three." 不能二十二根中，減一根，已立二十一；增一已，立二十三。²⁴⁹ Here the Buddha makes it clear that if a contender is not ready to defend the taxonomy of no more or no less than twenty-two *indriyas*, the edifice of the challenge will collapse, and defeat must be

²⁴⁸ Xuanzang, *Mahāvibhāṣa* 142 佛言：我說二十二根攝諸根盡。若有遮此更說餘根。當知彼說有言無義 (T1545:27.729.a06-7).

²⁴⁹ T1547:28.439a28.

conceded.

While debates regarding the number and the type of faculties are documented in the earliest strata of the Indic sources, the Sarvāstivāda editors of the *Mahāvibhāṣa* enlist the words of the Buddha to further their agenda of supporting their taxonomy of the twenty-two faculties. The problem for the *Mahāvibhāṣa* editors, however, is that their taxonomy appears baroque when placed alongside the relatively streamlined classification of eleven faculties proposed by Sāṅkhya theorists.²⁵⁰ The taxonomy of the twenty-two faculties espoused by the *Mahāvibhāṣa* editors includes categories of faculties that do not appear in the comparatively economical list presented in the *Sāṅkhyakārikas*. For example, the fourth and fifth categories of the *indriyas* recognized by the Abhidharma Buddhists as faith, perseverance, mindful recollection, concentration, wisdom, and knowledge of past, present, and future are not enumerated in the taxonomy of the *tattvas*, the term used in the *Sāṅkhyakārikās* to describe the faculties. That these more cerebral *indriyas* are reconciled with a concrete and naturalistic understanding of the physiology of the body becomes a constant difficulty for the Buddhist apologetics.

In the Jetavana Park debates, the Buddha, Jātiśroṇa and Uttarā address two fundamental questions: How do the twenty-two faculties form the basis of life? How does the taxonomy of the twenty-two faculties explain the spectrum of all life forms? Xuanzang states that these debates confirm two premises of the Buddha, that life consists of the twenty-two faculties and that the taxonomy of the twenty-two faculties forms a comprehensive explanation for the variation of all

²⁵⁰ According to the *Sāṅkhyakārikas*, there exist eleven *indriyas* corresponding to the mind, the five senses, and the physical functions (Skt.: *vṛtti*; Chi.: *shi* 事) of the five faculties of physical action (*karmēndriyas*). Eliade translates the five *karmēndriyas* as “five conative faculties.” See Eliade, M., *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom* (vol. 56). (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2009; First printed 1959), 21. Twelve actions are enumerated under the five cognitive faculties, five *karmēndriyas*, and the faculty of mind, including desiring (mind), listening, touching, seeing, tasting, smelling, speaking (*vāk*), grasping, walking (feet), excreting solid and liquid waste, and sexual pleasure.

life forms. The stories of the Buddha's debates with the Brahmins are constructed to develop *reductio ad absurdum* arguments to highlight the unwanted and unwarranted consequences (Skt.: *prasaṅga*) of several arguments posed by the Brāhmaṇs regarding the nature of the *indriyas* and their relationship to the material organs.

The Māhāvibhāṣa Verdict on the Uttarā Dispute With the Buddha

In Xuanzang's *Mahāvibhāṣa*, the series of disputes between the Buddha and his disciples, Ānanda and Śāriputra, with the somewhat hapless Brāhmin Uttarā is followed by editorial commentary regarding the nature of the *indriyas*. Here the editors take on two doctrinal issues, the first regarding the relationship between the material organs and the “cultivable sagely faculties” and the second regarding the nature of suffering and the *indriyas*. The doctrinal verdicts rendered by the editors of the *Mahāvibhāṣa* are meant to abjure the distorted views of the Vibhajyavāda, a tradition of Buddhist Abhidharma known as “the makers of analytical distinctions” (Chi.: *Fenbie lun zh e* 分別論者).²⁵¹ True to their name, doctrinal scholars in this tradition are famous for making picayune distinctions that hold meaning only among themselves.²⁵²

The illocutionary force of the challenge posed to Uttarā by Ānanda is intended to place the Sāṅkhya doctrine of the *indriyas* under a light that is unfriendly, to the point of being discriminatory and unkind to people that are not able-bodied. The Sāṅkhya teaching encapsulated in the sacred *Sāṅkhyakārikās* states that “those whose faculties are defective, such as the deaf, lack

²⁵¹ The name of this tradition derives from the verb “to make distinctions” *vi√ kṛp*; Chi.: *fenbie* 分別. DDB (accessed 1/10/2016) cites one of their cardinal doctrines to be that the five hedonic faculties are all uncontaminated” 五受根皆悉無漏. The Vibh editors, and later, both Vasubandhu and Saṅghabhadra, reject this view.

²⁵² Mahāvibhāṣa, fasc. 2: “The Vibhajyavāda are of the opinion that the reference to *indriya* here [in these two sūtras] is to the basis of the faculty, and not to the faculty, per se. Where does this violate our doctrine? What they [the Vibhajyavāda say] is not appropriate reasoning, since it contravenes other scriptures.” T27, no. 1545, p. 8a19-20 分別論者作如是言。此中根名說所依處不說根體。於我何違。彼如是言亦不應理。違餘經故。調餘經說。

the capability to achieve *mokṣa* through learning.”²⁵³ Underlying this statement is the premise that having the ability to hear the teachings is a prerequisite for liberation. Therefore, the inability to hear precludes the deaf from achieving liberation. The text goes on to enumerate eleven disabilities that are specific to each of the eleven *indriyas* of the Sāṅkhya taxonomy.²⁵⁴ The category of the “impediment to wisdom” (Chi.: *zhihai* 智害), the disability of the mental faculty, includes seventeen types of mental disorders, any one of which would prevent an individual from attaining liberation.

On the Relationship Between the Sagely *Indriyas* and the Material Organs

In the debates, the Buddha maintains that the total number of independent *indriyas* is exactly twenty-two. Additionally, the Buddha posits that while the *indriyas* are neither different nor entirely independent from one another, they are not based in the material organs of the body. While vanquished in the debate by Ānanda, Śāriputra, and the Buddha, Uttarā hits upon an Achilles's heel in the Buddhist doctrine of the *indriyas* regarding the relationship between the physical organs and the spiritual faculties.

The didactic, or illocutionary, outcome of this sūtra is that the Brāhmin Uttarā is pressed to admit that the spiritually cultivated organs of the sage are constitutionally different from the ordinary sensory faculties. Uttarā is forced to defend the untenable idea that the cultivation of divine or heavenly vision is akin to sprouting (Skt.: *pra √bhū*) a third eye. This raises the question of the locus of the spiritual *indriya*. If the Buddha's powers of divine sight are an outgrowth of the innate capacities of vision that are cultivated, and not the result of the emergence of a supernatural third eye, then what is the relationship between ordinary material organs and extraordinary sagely

²⁵³ *Sāṅkhyakārikā-vṛtti* of Paramārtha: T54n2137p1257a08.

²⁵⁴ 十一根損壞者，調聾•盲•聾•爽•癩•癩•狂•啞•戾•跛•石女•黃門祕上 (T54n2137p1257a06-7).

faculties?

In the two hundred rolls of the *Mahāvibhāṣa*, the editors are forced to contend with this question and to articulate a distinction between the sensory and spiritual *indriya* and the material organs. Their reasoned response to Uttarā's question on the nature of the faculties is found within the work associated with Xuanzang in the CWSL. Xuanzang is keenly sensitive to the popular opinion that the spiritual powers of the Buddha involve supernatural faculties such as third eyes. Kuiji's disciple, Zhizhou, expresses the view that the *divyacakṣur* of the Buddha is not supernatural. He proposes that the supernormal powers of vision can be equated to an upgrade of an existing visual system. Zhizhou describes the attainment of *divyacakṣur* as equivalent to upgrading an operating system with a new application for an existing fleshy eye.²⁵⁵

The *Mahāvibhāṣa* commentators are then pressed to deal with the questions of how and when the *divyacakṣur* emerges in the organogenesis or the embryogenesis vis-à-vis the faculties. In their discussions on organogenesis, the editors of the *Mahāvibhāṣa* point out that the Vibhajjavāda strictly adhere to naturalistic principles of bodily growth and development. According to the Sarvāstivāda, the same principle holds for the more abstract-sounding “immaterial faculties” (Skt.: *arūpēndriyāṇi*; Chi.: *wuse-gen* 無色根), or the five “hedonic faculties” (Skt.: *pañca-vedanēndriyāṇi*; Chi.: *wu shou-gen* 五受根) of joy (Skt.: *muditēndriyam*; Chi.: *xi-gen* 喜根), pain (Skt.: *duḥkhēndriyam*; Chi.: *ku-gen* 苦根), pleasure (Skt.: *suḥkhēndriyam*; Chi.: *le-gen* 樂根), anxiety (Skt.: *daurmanasyēndriyam*; Chi.: *you-gen* 憂根), and aversion (Skt.: *upekṣēndriyam*; Chi.: *she-gen* 捨根). These faculties are understood in strictly naturalistic terms as they evince saliently physical characteristics. As a result, the physiological emergence of these

²⁵⁵ Zhizhou's subglosses to Kuiji's *Commentary on the CWSL* cites **Mahāprājñā-pāramitōpadeśa* to insist that there is nothing supernatural about the *divyacakṣur*, rather it refers to a bionic “amplification of the physical eye, by which one becomes capable of seeing far into the distance.” 修得天眼在肉眼上。導彼肉眼亦能遠見 (T1833:43.869.a01-2).

faculties is viewed as essentially similar to the development of the five senses of vision, audition, olfaction, gustation, and touch.²⁵⁶

Because they take the position that the sagely faculties are innate, and therefore expressed in utero, the authors of *Mahāvibhāṣa* must additionally account for how the immaterial faculties are made manifest as well. This brings the question of whether the hedonic faculty of pain is innate and therefore experienced by all humans, including the sages and the Buddha.

The *Mahāvibhāṣa* editors address this issue by focusing on the question: At what point in interuterine development does the fetus feel pain? The *Mahāvibhāṣa* editors determine that the proprioceptive, mental, and affective faculties are required for the embryo to experience the sensation of pain. According to Vasubandhu, the development of these faculties takes place during the fifth pentamenster, or between the twenty-ninth and thirty-sixth weeks of pregnancy.²⁵⁷ Vasubandhu concludes that the human fetus evinces hedonic faculties, the faculties necessary to register sensations of pain and pleasure, during the *prakhāśa* stage, or the twenty-seventh week. Xuanzang supports Vasubandhu's estimate, as it is solidly based upon earlier *Vibhāṣa* materials. Based on Vasubandhu's work, the editors of the *Mahāvibhāṣa* conclude that the supramundane eye of the sage is observable in the fetus by the fifth pentamester and therefore is an ordinary sense

²⁵⁶ Vibh 147: “if the non-physical faculties, Skt.: *arūpēndriyāṇi*; *wuse gen* 無色根) are not obtained by the embryo, why do the sūtras say that one can detect the heavenly eye (*divyacakṣur*) [in utero] and the gender it belongs to? 若不得者。何故經說天眼觀知是男是女? Reply: the sūtras simply says that one can.” The discussion goes on to say that the divine faculty of hearing is palpable by the *prakh ā śa* stage (i.e., from the 29 to 36th weeks of pregnancy): “If it [the *divyacakṣur*] is conceived in the female [embryo], one should already know that in this stage it [the *divyacakṣur*] is female and not male. In this way, it is said that although the physical faculties (*rūpēndriyāṇi*) are not all obtained in the *kalala* stage, they are fully obtained by the *prakh ā śa* stage.” 若女人者，復知此位是女非男。如是說者，羯邏藍位未得餘色根。鉢羅奢佉位中，方乃得故。

²⁵⁷ Vasubandhu's AKBh references a doggerel quatrain (śloka-meter) of unclear provenance in his auto-commentary on AKBh 3.19: *indriyāṇi ca rūpīṇi vyañjanānyanupūrvaśaḥ*|| (Shastri, p. 433) – a position that is firmly attested in Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma. Vibh 147 states: “those who say that it's like that [i.e., the faculty is fully-fledged only by the *prakhāśa* stage], then the physical faculty is yet unrealized in the *kālala* stage. They are realized in the *prakhāśa* stage.” 如是說者，羯邏藍位未得餘色根，鉢羅奢佉位中方乃得故。(T27, no. 1545, p. 751, c21-2).

faculty.

The Vibhāḥyavāda interlocutor, cited in fascicle one hundred forty-two of the *Mahāvibhāṣa*, avers that the “cultivable spiritual faculties are uniformly uncontaminated” 皆通無漏.²⁵⁸ The Vibhāḥyavādins state that none of the faculties beyond the nine physical ones are infected by the contaminated ground from which they “sprout up.”²⁵⁹ This stance means that the five so-called “wholesome roots” (Chi.: *shan gen* 善根) are not equivalent in status to the “contaminated faculties” (Chi.: *youlou gen* 有漏根). Essentially, the Vibhāḥyavādins and Vātsīputrīyas appear unwilling to admit that the five wholesome roots, three faculties of gnosis, and so forth are reducible to the basic physical faculties with which ordinary humans are born. They “bite the bullet,” as it were, in maintaining that the “contaminated” physical faculties and the “uncontaminated roots” are constitutively different.

According to the *Mahāvibhāṣa* Sarvāstivāda editors, although the spiritual faculties are natural outgrowths, each additional faculty cultivated through the course of training derives its power from a subserving basis (Skt.: *āśraya*) in the innate physical faculties, including the five ordinary senses and the three embodied faculties. The Sarvāstivāda editors state explicitly that each of the spiritual faculties is a natural outgrowth of the five ordinary sense faculties. However, the *Mahāvibhāṣa* also cites two dissenting positions on the status of the spiritual faculties. Both the Vibhāḥyavāda and the Vātsīputrīya opinions cited in *Mahāvibhāṣa* reject the consequence of this doctrine. Rather, these two traditions maintain that the five wholesome roots of practice, faith, vigor, concentration, recollection, and wisdom are uniformly “uncontaminated” (Skt.:

²⁵⁸ Vasubandhu reports this view that the cultivatable faculties are “uniformly uncontaminated,” in the twenty-fifth fascicle of his Treasury, in Xuanzang’s translation; for Skt. See Shastri, 1976, vol. 2, 147.

²⁵⁹ Vasubandhu interprets the very same sūtra passage cited by the Vibhāḥyavādins as inconclusive grounds for the verdict that the five hedonic faculties are immaculate. *Yasya etāni pañcendriyāṇi sarveṇa sarvāṇi na santi tamahaṃ bāhyaṃ prthagjanapakṣāvasthitaṃ vadāmi*” iti (Shastri, 147).

anāsravāni).²⁶⁰

After abjuring this view, the *Mahāvibhāṣa* editors arrive at the verdict that the five faculties of faith, concentration, perseverance, recollection, and wisdom must be treated as “discretionary” (Chi.: *fenbie* 分別) *indriyas*. Because the karmic status of these *indriyas* is ambivalent, the way they trend is the direct result of training. The text explains that the label of discretionary *indriyas* applies to the faculties of pleasure, joy and aversion and to the five wholesome roots, including faith.²⁶¹ The karmic status of these nine *indriyas* is ambivalent in that each one can become contaminated, uncontaminated, or karmically neutral (Skt. *avyākṛta*)²⁶² in character, depending upon training. For example, the *indriya* of faith can be misdirected and degenerate into erroneous thinking (Chi.: *xienian* 邪念) and incorrect cognitions (Chi.: *bu zhengzhi* 不正知). Individuals who unquestionably follow a guru to the point of physical or moral degradation can fall prey to a contamination of the *indriya* of faith. The myopic exercise of faith in an unquestioning manner can lead to degradation, as witnessed in many cults in both the ancient and modern worlds.

The refusal of the Sarvāstivāda editors to differentiate between the innate sensory faculties and the immaculate spiritual faculties has consequences for Buddhist practice. The roots of wholesome thinking and conduct are based in the ordinary sensory faculties that are motivated by sensual desires and directed at worldly objects. To defuse the charge that the imperceptible

²⁶⁰ “There are those who say that this is the tenet of the Vatsīputrīyas. The masters of that tradition postulate the highest worldly state to have the five including faith, as its nature (*svabhāva*). It is only these five faculties that are skillful/wholesome (*kuśala*) by nature. Because the additional faculties are mixed together with these 5, those [other faculties] also deserve the name of ‘skillful.’ From this reason we know that five faculties are established as the basis of differentiation between all sages, virtuous people, with no recourse needed to other faculties.” 有說：此是犢子部宗，彼部師執世第一法信等五根以為自性，唯此五根是自性善。餘雜此故，亦得善名。由此五根建立一切賢聖差別不由餘根 (T1545:27.8.b10)

²⁶¹ See Vibh 144 for the identification: (T27, no. 1545, p. 738, a12): 九應分別者，謂意樂•喜•捨•信等五根。

²⁶² Vibh 144 relates: “Eleven of the human faculties are neither acquired via training nor innate (‘untrained’ [*aśaikṣa*]) – namely, the seven physical faculties (i.e., five senses), along with vitality, suffering, and anxiety.” 十非學非無學者。謂七色命苦憂根。

spiritual faculties are insufficiently anchored in the body, the Vibhāṣyavāda theorists cited in the *Mahāvibhāṣa* claim that the spiritual faculties are distinguished from the physical faculties in how they are realized. In contrast to the uncultivated sensory and hedonic faculties that all able-bodied humans are born with, the generation and refinement of skillful faculties require disciplined practice.

The *Mahāvibhāṣa* editors ultimately decide that the faculties of faith, concentration, and recollection have a “firm standing” (Skt.: *adhiṣṭhāna*) in the body. Additionally, they concur that the five wholesome faculties and the three uncontaminated faculties are the root *indriyas* that produce the fruits of “insight” (Skt.: *darśana*) with the “cultivation” (Skt.: *bhāvanā*) of the Buddha's course of practice.

The Faculty of Suffering is Innate

Toward the end of their discussion of the intrauterine development of the *indriyas*, the *Māhavibhāṣa* editors emphatically state that the Buddha was born with the “faculty of suffering” (Skt.: *duḥkêndriyam*; Chi.: *kugen* 苦根). This powerful statement is meant to place the Buddha on equal standing with all ordinary humans. It is also intended to neutralize the Brāhmaṇical claims that the powers of insight are an outgrowth of supernormal organs that are possessed by few.

Xuanzang follows the Abhidharma doctrine that ordinary humans are born with the faculties of suffering and anxiety (Skt.: *daurmanasyêndriyam*; Chi.: *yougen* 憂根).²⁶³ The editors acknowledge that the Buddha, in his earthly human incarnation, knows the pain of having an impermanent and “contaminated” (Skt.: *sāsrava*; Chi.: *you-lou* 有漏) body. Moreover, the *Māhavibhāṣa* editors acknowledge that the Buddha is intimately aware of the undesirable

²⁶³ This doctrinal view is encapsulated in Xuanzang's translation of Vasubandhu's auto-commentary on AK 2.1: “If one realizes the seven faculties including suffering, namely *kāyêndriyam*, mind, vitality, and the four hedonic faculties [including suffering], then that excludes anxiety.” 若成苦根定成就七。謂身命意四受。除憂。

psychological experiences of ordinary humans who, like him, bear the faculties of suffering and anxiety. With this claim, they highlight how the Buddha, through practice and insight, overcomes the aches and pains and emotional suffering associated with having a mortal body. To the *Māhavibhāṣa* editors, the uplifting message that any ordinary human being can be enlightened contains the premise that the preexisting conditions for sagehood are present in every human.

Uttarā is reluctant to accept the idea that the mundane and sagely *indriyas* are on an equal footing because they are inborn. He is concerned that if the sensory and spiritual faculties are placed on the same level and said to be inborn and available to all, the achievements of the enlightened beings will be devalued. This claim places the exalted status of the sages in peril. The *Māhavibhāṣa* editors, however, argue that the supramundane achievements and mighty spiritual faculties of the Buddha are the result of specific modifications and amplifications of the faculties that are innate and possessed by all humans.

There is a doctrinal motivation behind the Sarvāstivādin editors' placement of the mundane and spiritual faculties on an equal standing. This step is intended, very literally, to bring the spiritual faculties down to earth, to make them accessible, and to inspire lay people to undertake the practices of concentration and insight. The message of the *Māhavibhāṣa* editors is that all people are born with the assets necessary to become sages if they undertake sufficient practice. They argue that a supramundane organ such as a third eye is not required to attain sagehood, and that everyone is born with the *indriyas*, the building blocks of sagehood. Xuanzang takes up the desideratum, expressed by the Sarvāstivādin editors of the Jātiśroṇa and Uttarā stories, that sagehood is available to those who cultivate their innate faculties through spiritual practice. Here the *Māhavibhāṣa* editors, as part of their doctrinal agenda, provide an important doctrinal rationale for Buddhist religious practices. If the Buddha is human and can transcend the universal experience

of suffering with dedicated practice, so too can the ordinary human.

Xuanzang applies this egalitarian approach to the *indriyas* to bolster his view that the twenty-two faculties are all that is necessary and sufficient to explain living and dying. He turns to an examination of the roots of the Brāhmaṇical theories regarding the relationship between the *indriya* and the soul as represented by the Sāṅkhya and Vaiśeṣika schools. Here he develops the naturalistic and non-supernatural approach to the *indriyas* endorsed by the earlier Sarvāstivādin scholars. By engaging with the Brāhmaṇical text-traditions of Sāṅkhya and Vaiśeṣika, Xuanzang takes issue with the doctrine of the soul embedded in the Indic sūtras. He defends the Buddhist position that nothing over and above the faculties is required to explain the nature of life and the process of dying. Importantly, Xuanzang's investigations of the traditions of Sāṅkhya and Vaiśeṣika further his agenda of expunging the idea of the soul from Chinese Buddhism, once and for all.

Xuanzang's Disputes with the Sāṅkhya and Vaiśeṣika Traditions Regarding the Soul

While at Nālanda University in the Maghada Kingdom of Northern India during the 630s C.E., Xuanzang studies and debates with followers from the ancient Brāhmaṇical traditions, the Hindu philosophical schools of Sāṅkhya and Vaiśeṣika. Xuanzang comes to understand that the Brāhmaṇical and Buddhist traditions agree that *indriyas* are the building blocks of life, and that the destruction of the *indriyas* is implicated in the process of dying. Where the two traditions fundamentally diverge, however, is in the idea that a soul is required to animate the *indriyas*. The Brāhmins posit the existence of a soul that vitalizes the body, departs the body in dying, and then transmigrates until it finds a body into which it is reincarnated. The Buddhists maintain that no self, person, or entity above the *indriyas* is required for the human being to survive. Therefore, no

self, person, or entity is lost in dying. The doctrine of no-self is central to the Buddhist doctrine.

The fundamental tenet of the Brāhmaṇical traditions of Sāṅkhya and Vaiśeṣika is that the soul bears the essence of life and vitality in the human being. Within both traditions, the soul is upheld as the master of the body. While the Sāṅkhya and Vaiśeṣika schools agree upon a conception of the soul as essential to life, specific aspects of their doctrines differ considerably. For the Sāṅkhya theorist, the soul operates the *indriyas* through the intermediary of the *ahankāra*, essentially an executive faculty that directs other faculties. For the Vaiśeṣika philosophers, the soul is an active agent and drives the *indriyas* by using its capacity for sentience. Both doctrines hold that the soul is involved in the action of sustaining life, albeit in different ways. While the classical Sāṅkhya²⁶⁴ and the later Vaiśeṣika wholeheartedly concur that dying is defined as the immortal soul's desertion of the body, they part ways in their conceptions of the soul's relationship to the faculties of the body.²⁶⁵

In the first fascicle of his CWSL, Xuanzang mounts a defense of the Buddhist no-self explanations of death against the rival theories articulated by thinkers from the traditions of Vaiśeṣika and Sāṅkhya. Xuanzang begins this work by surveying the contemporary Brāhmaṇical

²⁶⁴ Taking a methodological cue from Dasti and Bryant, E. F., eds. (2013, p. 10), *Free will, agency, and selfhood in Indian philosophy* (OUP), and Bryant's essay in this volume (p. 16): "Classical Sāṅkhya" is taken to indicate "the oldest speculative philosophical tradition in ancient India, with clear roots in the *Upaniṣads* – e.g., *Svetasvara Upaniṣad*."

²⁶⁵ Xuanzang's firsthand knowledge of these Brahmanical systems was not limited to the relatively few original Sanskrit works of classical Sāṅkhya and Vaiśeṣika that have survived to the present day. In a series of articles, Honda Megumi mines Paramārtha's and Xuanzang's translations for fragments of an ancient *Sāṅkhyā sūtra* 僧伽經. See also Tang Yongtong 湯用彤 (1884-1964), who compiles Sāṅkhya sūtra citations from the corpus of the Sui-Dynasty scholar-monk Jizang 吉藏 as well [this compilation, titled "Historical Materials on Indian Philosophy in Buddhist sources from Chinese canon" 漢文佛經中的印度佛教哲學史料 is Tang's posthumous papers, ed. Tang Yijie 湯一介, *Tang Yongtong quanji* 湯用彤全集, volume 3, pp. 431-503, *passim*]. Knowledge of ancient Sāṅkhya texts in Xuanzang's time was not limited to the *Sāṅkhyāārikās*, the oldest work of Sāṅkhya extant in the original Sanskrit. Honda's supposition is that "If the 大莊嚴論經 is written by Aśvaghoṣa, contemporary with the king Kaniṣka, *Seng qie jing* should be earlier than A.D. 100. It is beyond question if *Seng qie jing* is different from what we know have in Skt. original entitled Sāṅkhya Sūtra which must be the alter (sic.?) work. We do not know the author of this earlier work either. Another problem is if *Seng-qie jing* indicates a proper name or not." – "Āryadeva's critique against Sāṅkhya," p. 12 (Beilheim, 1972).

theorists, and then divides them into doctrinal camps that represent the traditions of Sāṅkhya and Vaiśeṣika. Sāṅkhya and Vaiśeṣika are the only Brāhmaṇical theories or philosophical schools that Xuanzang mentions by name in his *Māhavibhāṣa*. Both sets of theories share the premise that a non-physical or spiritual aspect of the human is responsible for coordinating the activities of the body. They posit the existence of a “task master” (Chi.: *zhu zai* 主宰)²⁶⁶ or a “master-mind” (Chi.: *xin zhu* 心主/心宰)²⁶⁷ that is in charge of regulating and coordinating the activities of different parts of the body. The nomenclature of a “dominant master” (Chi.: *zhu* 主) stands for the notion of an entity that acts as the executive operator of the body.

The idea of an entity that operates the faculties throughout life, and then deserts the body as life comes to an end, pervades the Brāhmaṇical Sāṅkhya and Vaiśeṣika texts. Xuanzang must

²⁶⁶ Here the term *zhu-zai* is understood as a form of dependent or adjectival compound (我謂主宰), rather than as a coordinative compound, hence this study resorts to the translation as “task master.” There is a clever but untranslatable pun on the Chinese characters *zhu* – in its adjectival senses as both “predominant/main,” “domineering,” etc. – and its nominal sense as “master” or “overlord.” Kuiji’s subglosses on *CWSL* break down the word – *zhu-zai* – into a coordinative compound. Reference has been made to Kuiji’s gloss, cited here with the caveat that is not the only way to construe the Chinese character dyad *zhu-zai*: “The *ātman* is likened to the master or the governor. For example, the governor of a country possesses autonomous power. He is capable of oppressing and making determinations [over his subjects]. To possess this “power to oppress and to make determinations [over the subjects]” is equivalent in its meaning to the *ātman*. Some take “master” to be what the self (*ātman*) is as an entity. So, [for them], the governor is “mine (i.e., my lord and governor).” So, this governor functions just like a self (*ātman*). 述曰。我如主宰者。如國之主有自在故。及如輔宰能割斷故。有自在力。及割斷力義同我故。或主是我體。宰是我所。或主如我體。宰如我用 (T43n1830p0239c01-4).

²⁶⁷ Puguang’s *Study Notes on the Treasury (Jushe lun ji)*, fascicle 13, offers the following exegesis on the topic of the Brāhmaṇ and its unity with Īśvara: “One Lord refers to our singular Lord in Heaven. Some describe him as ‘the Great Brāhmaṇ King,’ or as the Great Mahēśvara, etc. The *tīrthikas* postulate this Lord in Heaven as he who is capable of creating the myriad things. When he desires to create things, he first gives rise to perceptual awareness (*buddhi*). Once the soul comes to seek after, enjoy, avail itself of worldly objects, it is then reborn into the worldly realms. Some among the Sāṅkhya theorists of the wayfarer (*tīrthika*) paths postulate a singular soul as the master. Its nature as an entity is simply *thought*. Desiring after, enjoying and availing oneself of worldly objects, necessarily stimulates the awareness/intelligence (*buddhi*) belonging to the soul. Now, when the soul comes to desire after and avail itself of worldly things in the mundane realm, by its own nature, the soul ever so gradually engenders a process of transformation and becoming reborn into the worldly realm.” 一主謂一天主。或大梵王。或大自在天等。諸外道等計此天主能造萬物。將欲造時先起是覺。欲受用境，然後生諸世間。或數論外道計一我主以思為體。欲受用境時要先起覺我。今欲得受用境界，然後自性漸漸轉變生諸世間。

Some among the Vaiśeṣika theorists of the wayfarer paths postulate the soul as the agent (*kartr*). It is born of various factors (*dharmas*), but among these, its *intelligence* is foremost. For this reason they say: ‘One Lord is born with foremost intelligence.’” 或有勝論外道計我為能作者；生於諸法，亦以覺為先，後生世間。故言一主先覺而生 (T41, no. 1821, p. 200 b23-29).

engage with the Brāhmaṇical theories of Sāṅkhya and Vaiśeṣika to bolster his claim that nothing other than the faculties is necessary to explain living, and conversely, that nothing other than the loss of the faculties is required to explain dying.

The Sāṅkhya and Vaiśeṣika Positions on the Soul and the Faculties

In his exegesis of dying, Xuanzang studies the ancient source material to gain a deep understanding of the Brāhmaṇical theories of the soul and the faculties. He analyzes the Indic treatise *On the Refutation of Four Hinayāna and Tīrthika Sects* 外道小乘四宗論, attributed to the Mahāyāna Bodhisattva Āryadeva. Extracted from the ancient *Lāṅkāvatāra Sūtra*, this work was translated into Chinese from Sanskrit in somewhat partial segments by the Indian scholar Bodhiruchi 菩提流支 during the century prior to Xuanzang's life. In his close reading of this treatise, Xuanzang finds that Bodhisattva Āryadeva draws the conceptions of the soul held by the Sāṅkhya and Vaiśeṣika Brāhmaṇical schools into sharp contrast.

Bodhisattva Āryadeva describes the differences between the Sāṅkhya and Vaiśeṣika doctrines as based upon their conceptualizations of the relationship of the soul to the faculty of perceptual awareness (Skt.: *buddhīndriyam*). The Sāṅkhya scriptures directly imbue the soul with the capacity of *buddhi*, which is defined as perceptual awareness, sentience, or intelligence. The Vaiśeṣika authors treat *buddhi* and the soul as analytically distinct entities.²⁶⁸

In his Chinese translation of the *Lāṅkāvatāra Sūtra*, Bodhiruchi uses the metaphor of a

²⁶⁸ Bodhiruchi (T1639:32.155.b08-12), *On the Refutation of Four Hinayāna and Tīrthika Sects*, Question: Why do the Vaiśeṣika masters say that all dharmas are different? Response: When Vaiśeṣika masters talk about difference, they say that the soul is different from intelligence. For what reason? Since they state that they are different [dharmas]. Question: For what reason do they say that they are different dharmas? Response: Just as they say that one thing is “white” and that this is also “mounded.” These are innate properties [of the white mound]. The soul and intelligence are just like this – the same thing that is “mine” is also “intelligent.” 問曰。云何毘世師外道說一切法異。答曰。所言異者。我與覺異。何以故。以說異法。問曰。云何名說異法。答曰。如說此是白此是疊。此是天德。此是天德疊。我與覺異亦如是。此是我此是智故。

“mound of white sand” (Chi: *bai die* 白疊) to illustrate the differences between the two Brāhmaṇical positions on the relationship between the soul and *buddhi*, or sentience. Here the “mound of sand” is analogous to the soul, and the “whiteness” of the sand is equivalent to *buddhi*. According to the Sāṅkhya theorists, the whiteness of the sand is inseparable from the mound of sand, in the way that sentience is inseparable from the soul. According to the Vaiśeṣika interpretation of this metaphor, the whiteness of the mound of sand is an attribute of the sand, in the way that sentience is an aspect of the soul. The distinction is subtle, but important. In the Sāṅkhya tradition, sentience is the very essence of the soul. In the Vaiśeṣika tradition, sentience is an attribute, albeit an important one, of the soul.

Where the two Brāhmaṇical doctrines fundamentally diverge is in the Vaiśeṣika scholars’ conceptualization of “whiteness” and “mound of sand” as discrete and separable properties. Xuanzang is aware that the Sāṅkhya scholars conflate the faculty of sentience with the soul.²⁶⁹ He is also sensitive to the Vaiśeṣika thinkers’ view of the faculty of sentience as an aspect or an attribute of the soul. He ultimately exploits this distinction to further his agenda of expelling the crypto-Brāhmaṇical idea of the soul from Chinese Buddhism.

Broadly speaking, both the Buddhist and the Brāhmaṇical traditions agree upon the taxonomy of five sensory faculties. The same five sensory faculties are postulated in the Buddhist and in the Sāṅkhya and Vaiśeṣika taxonomies, although in different orders: “The Vaiśeṣika masters also speak of five [cognitive] faculties-olfaction, gustation, vision, and tactition together form five” 又勝論者說有五根。鼻·舌·眼·身·耳根為五。²⁷⁰ This standard gloss on the five faculties reveals one point of difference between the Vaiśeṣika and Buddhist and Sāṅkhya taxonomies. The

²⁶⁹ Watson’s (2006, p. 68) prescient comments are worth noting: “The soul confuses himself with this organism, particularly with its highest constituent, the Intellect (*Buddhi*).”

²⁷⁰ T27, no. 1545, p. 729, c26-7.

Buddhist and the Sāṅkhya count the five ordinary senses as coordinated by a mental faculty (Skt.: *manendriya*) that is listed as the sixth faculty in the taxonomy. Therefore, when compared with either the Abhidharma Buddhist or the Sāṅkhya taxonomy, the Vaiśeṣika taxonomy appears less complicated in that it posits only five sensory faculties. In sum, the five faculties correspond to the five physical senses. Bodhiruchi's fifth-century corpus provides a clue to the reason the mental faculty is not included in the Vaiśeṣika taxonomy of five senses. The implication is that the Vaiśeṣika theorists identify *manendriya* with the mind itself. This classificatory distinction is attested in the *Praśāstapādabhāṣya* of Candrānanda,²⁷¹ the oldest work of Vaiśeṣika commentary surviving in the original Sanskrit.

Xuanzang's comprehensive and detailed account of the differences between the Sāṅkhya and Vaiśeṣika theories of the *indriyas* and their relationship to the soul is based upon his studies of Bodhiruchi and other source materials. To attain a basic grasp of the core Sāṅkhya tenets, Xuanzang relies upon the fluid and precise Chinese translation of the *Sāṅkhyakārikās* and *vṛtti* prose commentary completed by Paramārtha in 569 C.E. Additionally, Xuanzang looks to the ancient Vaiśeṣika sūtras (Chi.: *Shenglun jing* 勝論經; *Weishi shi jing* 衛世師經) and to the writings of the classical Vaiśeṣika scholar *Candramati 月慧 (fl.: 450-550 C.E.), for authoritative and unalloyed expositions of the Vaiśeṣika doctrine.²⁷² After returning to China from India in 645 C.E., Xuanzang undertakes a translation of an important work of Vaiśeṣika philosophy, Candramati's treatise, *The Treatise on the Ten Ontological Categories*, (Skt.: **Vaiśeṣika-*

²⁷¹ Jambuvījaya, ed., *Praśāstapādabhāṣya of Candrānanda*, 28

²⁷² Frauwallner, *History of Indian Philosophy*, V.M. Bedekar, trans. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidaas Publishers, 1973), vol. 2, gives "Candramati," but some Chinese commentators spell his name as "Maticandra" 慧月 (Kuiji gives both spellings in his commentaries).

daśapadārtha-śāstra 勝宗十句義論).²⁷³ Xuanzang's translation of this treatise stands as the only full-length work of Vaiśeṣika philosophy extant within the Chinese Buddhist canon.²⁷⁴

In his translations and analyses of these texts, Xuanzang formulates his position regarding the distinction between the doctrines of Sāṅkhya and Vaiśeṣika on the relationship between the *indriyas* and the soul. He continues by contrasting the Brāhmaṇical doctrines with the Abhidharma Buddhist explanations of the *indriyas* and the soul. Ultimately, Xuanzang's exegesis of the classical Brāhmaṇical and Buddhist texts bolsters his conviction that the Abhidharma theory of the *indriyas* offers the most powerful explanatory account of living and dying.

Xuanzang upholds the Abhidharma theory positing that the *indriyas* and the interaction between them are sufficient to explain the survival of the human. He concludes that no other entities above and beyond the *indriyas* are required to explain the vitality of life. Applying the principle of ontological parsimony, Xuanzang claims that the Abhidharma-based theory of the faculties offers a naturalistic explanation for life that is unencumbered by the supernatural and superfluous entities that populate the Brāhmaṇical theories of living and dying. Xuanzang broadly contends that the Abhidharma theory of the *indriyas* is more naturalistic and parsimonious than the rival Brāhmaṇical theories and therefore preferable, because it does not involve occult entities such as an immortal “subtle body” (Skt.: *guhya-śarīra/sūkṣma-śarīra*; Chi.: *xi-shen* 細身),²⁷⁵ a

²⁷³ This work, attributed to Maticandra 慧月 (ca. 450-550 C.E.), promulgates the doctrine of 10 *padārthas* or categories. The title of this work, extant only in Xuanzang's Chinese translation of 648 C.E. is reconstructed into Sanskrit as **Daśapadārtha-śāstra*.

²⁷⁴ See edition of Ui, Hakuju 宇井伯壽, ed. and Jha, Uma Ramana, trans. *Daśa-padārthī: Vaiśeṣikanikāyadaśapadārthaśāstram*. Reconstruction based on the Chinese text rendered into English by Ui Hakuju under title: the Vaiśeṣika philosophy according to the *Daśapadārthaśāstra* (Jammu: Śrīraṇavīrakendriyaśaṃskṛta-Vidyāpīṭham, 1977). This edition comprises Jha's Sanskrit back-translation of the text, based upon Xuanzang's Chinese, and Ui's English translation.

²⁷⁵ The *Vṛtti* commentary on the thirty-ninth stanza of SK explicates the nature and composition of the subtle body and its relationship to the “gross corporeal body” (*sthūlaśarīra*) by unraveling the metaphor of the “palaces built by the King for the Prince.” According to explanation of this simile found in the *vṛtti* commentary, the palaces build by the King for the full usage of the Prince are likened to the crude body in that both fundamentally serve

“psychic person” (Skt.: *guhya puruṣa*; Chi.: *ren-wo* 人我),²⁷⁶ a “bearer of subtle life” (Skt.: *jīva*; Chi.: *ming zhe* 命者),²⁷⁷ or an “ego-maker” (Skt.: *ahankāra*; Chi.: *wo-man* 我慢) to explain the animation of the body.²⁷⁸

In his comprehensive study of the Brāhmaṇical explanations of dying posited by the Sāṅkhya and Vaiśeṣika scholars, Xuanzang comes to reject all of the doctrines rooted in the conception of a spiritual soul (Skt.: *ātman*) that survives death. Xuanzang finds fault with the notion that the faculties require an executive operator in the form of an *ātman*, a *puruṣa*, or an ego-making consciousness (Skt.: *ahankāra*) to explain the vital animation of the body. He summarily

as material provisions for the usage of the soul. The soul plays the role of the master of both the crude and subtle parts of the body: “The subtle body refers to the interior. The crude body refers to the exterior. The hands, feet, head, face, waist, weight and height, these are the full range of the human’s characteristics. 細身名為內。麤身名為外。此細身中手·足·頭·面·腹·背·形·量·人相具足。

Amongst the four Vedic traditions there are those sages/visionaries (*ṛṣi*) who say: the crude body has six kinds of bases (**āśrayas*): three kinds of bases are contributed by the mother, including blood, mustle, and tendon, while three bases are contributed by the father – together these form the six bases of the body.” 四皮陀中有諸仙人說如是言。麤身有六依。血肉筋三種從母生。白毛骨三種從父生。是六依身。

The crude external body serves to provide provisions to the internal subtle body. These are the nutritive inner provisions contained inside the subtle body, provided by the crude body, which emerge during birth and extent until [the subtle body] has departed 以外麤身，益內細身。是內細身，麤身所資，益將出胎時及至已出。

Since the five great material elements (*mahats*) outside serve as its [the human body’s] basis and original standing, we can liken it [the body] to the King and the Prince, for whom he [the King] supplies all manner of halls and palaces. It is there that he [the Prince] walks, eats, and sleeps. This is just like *prakṛti* in the way that it serves both the subtle and coarse bodies, providing a stable standing and basis by being capable of producing the five great material elements (*mahats*).”

以外五大為其住處。譬如王子他為起舍種種殿堂。是處應住，是處應食，是處應眠。自性亦如是。為細身及麤身，作依止處，能生五大。

²⁷⁶ Skt. and Chi. equivalents are based upon Xuanzang’s translation corpus and Paramārtha’s translation of Sāṅkhya-karika, stanza 69 – corresponding to Skt. based upon edition of Sharma Dutt, *Sāṅkhyakārikās*, 60-1.

²⁷⁷ Under the Skt. word *jīva*, Monier-Williams gives a specific definition germane to the early Vedic context: *m.* the principle of life, vital breath, the living or personal soul (as distinguished from the universal soul.”

²⁷⁸ The standard classical Chinese translation for the word *ahankāra* —*wo-man* 我慢 — overlaps between the contexts of Buddhist and Sāṅkhya doctrines. It is fair to say that it is understood in a more derogatory way within the Buddhist context than that of Sāṅkhya, however, for both sets of teachings, *ahamkara* represents an encumbrance to liberation (*mokṣa*). *Wo-man*, the standard Chinese term for *ahankāra* also can mean “self-conceit,” since it is also the term that Xuanzang uses for both *ahamkāra* and *abhimāna*. In the Buddhist context, *abhimāna* stands for one of four forms of attachment to the unchanging sense of self. Because of its association with attachment to the ego’s desires, *abhimāna* is considered to be an obstacle to liberation. However, it must also be pointed out that *ahankāra* plays a large role in the soteriology of the *Sāṅkhyakārikās* as part of the fetters that “shackle” the soul, as it were, inside a mortal human body.

dismisses these views because they rely upon the presence of unobservable entities and veer into the realm of the supernatural and the occult. At the same time, Xuanzang is keenly aware of the irony inherent in his position, as the Abhidharma taxonomy of the twenty-two *indriyas* contains an ample share of unobservable posits. Xuanzang, however, fiercely insists that the authentic, unalloyed doctrine of Abhidharma Buddhism has no place for supernatural entities of an occult nature. Essentially, he argues that the more biologically-based accounts regarding the survival of the human body provided by the Abhidharma Buddhist theories of the *indriya* are sufficiently robust to explain the complexity of living and dying.

The Doctrine of the Soul According to the *Sāṅkhyakārikās*

Xuanzang looks to the teachings of the ancient *Sāṅkhyakārikās*, the earliest surviving texts of the Sāṅkhya school of Hindu philosophy, in his exegesis of dying and the soul. The texts of the *Sāṅkhyakārikās* record the oral testimony of the Hindu deity Mahēśvara to the visionary ṛṣi, Kāpila (phonetically spelled Jiapiluo 迦毘羅), the “Tawny Headed Immortal” (黃赤頭仙人).²⁷⁹ Composed of seventy succinct stanzas in the noble and lyrical *ārya* meter, the *Sāṅkhyakārika* texts illuminate the relationship between the soul and the material world.

In the Sāṅkhya school of Hindu philosophy, the soul is the source of life. According to *Sāṅkhyakārikās*, the soul is the distinctly separate force that enlivens and animates the *indriyas*. To accomplish this, the soul must inhabit and operate the body. Therefore, within the Sāṅkhya schema, the soul is composed of the *puruṣa*, the *ahaṅkāra*, and the *indriyas*, or the *tattvas*. The *puruṣa* is the source of life and consciousness and the overseer of the body; the *ahaṅkāra* is the task-master and the intermediary between the *puruṣa* and the body that motivates the *tattvas*; and

²⁷⁹ Monier Williams Skt. Dictionary (hereafter, MW); Kuiji's *Great Commentary on the Gate of Logic* (*Nyāyapraveśa śāstra*) 因明大疏, ed. Mei Deyu 梅德愚, vol. 2 (Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju, 2013), 410.

the *tattvas* are the elements that exert force throughout the body to accomplish the tasks required for living.

In the *Sāṅkhyakārikās*, Mahêśvara says to the prophet Kāpila: “It is naught but the objective (Skt.: *artha*) of the *puruṣa* that provides the cause that performs action (*karaṇam*)” (SK 31c-d).²⁸⁰ While viewed as separate and distinct from the *indriyas*, the *puruṣa* functions to imbue the *tattvas*, via the intermediary of *ahaṅkāra*, with vitality and sentience. Because the *indriyas* are animated by the vital power of the soul, the desertion of the soul at death results in the ultimate and final dissolution of the *indriyas*. Dying is thus defined in the Sāṅkhya doctrine as the departure of the soul from the body.

The Sāṅkhya Doctrine of Twenty-Five *Tattvas*

The Sāṅkhya scholars build their explanation of living and dying upon the theory of the *tattvas*. The *tattvas* are defined as the fundamental elements that comprise human life and the material world. The classical Sāṅkhya doctrine of the twenty-five *tattvas* (Chi.: *ershi wu di* 二十諦)²⁸¹ is enumerated in the seventy stanzas of the *Sāṅkhyakārikās*. The theory of the *tattvas* provides an explanatory account of how the two basic elements of life — the *puruṣa*, the source of

²⁸⁰ Dutt, ed., *Sāṅkhyakārikās*, 31: *Puruṣārtha eva heturna kenacitkāryate karaṇam*|| 31||我意是因緣；無有別教作 (T2137:54.1253.a16-17).

²⁸¹ Kuiji’s *Great Commentary on the Nyāyapraveśa śāstra* preserves a polemical line of Buddhist anti-Sāṅkhya argument wherein the Buddhist disputant avails himself of the agreed-upon premise that “the *ātman* is classified under the *tattvas*,” to attempt to discredit the doctrine of the spiritual soul. The negative thesis that it is enlisted to support is that “the *ātman* must be impermanent.” Specifically, Kuiji classifies this inference as an inference agreed upon commonly within Buddhist traditions. Kuiji further argues that it should withstand the scrutiny of Sāṅkhya opponents because the example provided of “the 23 *tattvas* below *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*” evinces invariable concomitance with the property indicated by the reason (*hetu*) – namely, “belonging to the *tattvas*.” Kuiji states that the inference meets the third criteria for valid reasons in that the “the target property (*sādhya*) is completely absent from the negative example (*vipakṣa*).” In other words, *prakṛti* is considered to be permanent.如以佛法破數論。云汝我無常。許諦攝故。如許大等。此他比量無常之宗。二十三諦為同品。以自性為異品。許諦攝因。於同異品皆悉遍有。故是他共。

consciousness, and *prakṛti* (Chi.: *zixing* 自性),²⁸² the source of matter, or “Ur-matter,” (Watson, 2006) — combine to form a human being. It holds that the nature of the human being is dual and composed of the spiritual aspects of *puruṣa* and the material aspects of *prakṛti*. Sāṅkhya means “enumeration” (Chi.: *Shulun* 數論)²⁸³ and references the Sāṅkhya scholars’ penchant for deriving lengthy and “exhaustive classifications” (*Skt.*: *saṃgrahas*; *Chi.*: *she* 攝).

According to the Sāṅkhya tradition, Kāpila receives the teachings of the twenty-five *tattvas* from Mahêśvara, who states: “Those who know these twenty-five *tattvas*, know the immutable, root cause of nature.”²⁸⁴ With this statement, the deity proclaims that the twenty-five *tattvas* contain the keys to wisdom and liberation. According to this doctrine, the *puruṣa*, or the soul, is the first *tattva*, from which the subsequent twenty-four *tattvas* evolve.

Because it represents the foundational doctrine of the Sāṅkhya Brahmanical school, Xuanzang must contend with the taxonomy of the twenty-five *tattvas*. The placement of the *puruṣa* at the head of the list of the *tattvas* demonstrates how consciousness, or sentience, comprises the primary element from which all other aspects of the human being evolve.²⁸⁵ Xuanzang takes issue

²⁸² Chinese nomenclature takes *zixing* 自性 as equivalent to both *pradhana* and *prakṛti* – See Paramartha’s translation of SK stanza 22 reads: | 自性次第生；大我慢十六；十六內有五；從此生五大 *Prakṛttermahāḥstato ’haṅkāraśmāda gāṇaśca śoḍaśakāḥ* | *Tasmādapī śoḍaśakāt pañcambhyaḥ pañca bhūtāni* || 22||

In its glosses on SK 22.a, the *vṛtti* prose-commentary on this verse transmitted along with Paramartha’s Chi. translation of said verse takes the Chi. character *zixing* as synonymous for a range of terms: 自性次第生者。自性者。或名勝因。或名為梵。或名眾持。若次第生者。自性本有故，則無所從生。

²⁸³ The standard Chinese translation of Sāṅkhya means, literally, “number theory.”

²⁸⁴ “*Prakṛti* is the immutable, root cause [of life]. The *ātman* is the knower (*j ñātr*). Those who know the sphere of the genuine reality of 25 *tattvas*, and who know that they are neither increasing nor decreasing, attain determinate and final liberation from the three forms of suffering. As proclaimed in the stanzas on liberation (*mokṣa*) – if one knows the 25 *tattvas*, and abides in them in each and every place along the course of practice, in braiding their hair and sideburns, while tonsuring the top of the head, one will no doubt attain liberation.” 自性者無異本因。我者知者。諸人知此二十五真實之境不增不減決定脫三苦。如解脫中說偈。若知二十五隨處隨道住。編髮髻剃頭得解脫無疑 (T2137:54.1245.c05-08).

²⁸⁵ Zhizhou points to an analytical distinction between two different Chinese translations of the second *tattva* – *prakṛti*. Zhizhou states that the term “predominating nature” is reserved for *pradhana*, while self-nature is reserved for *prakṛti*. In his subglosses on Kuiji’s Great Commentary on the *Nyāyapraveśa*, Zhizhou writes:

with the primacy of the sentient self in the *Sāṅkhya* taxonomy, as he sees the *puruṣa* as conflated with, if not equivalent to, the soul. In the *Sāṅkhya* schema, the *puruṣa* is the animator of life, and the first *tattva* upon which all other *tattvas* are stacked. Xuanzang must address the issue of the *puruṣa* in the *Sāṅkhya* taxonomy if he is to further his agenda of expiating the soul from Chinese Buddhism.

The *Sāṅkhya* schema of the twenty-five *tattvas* begins with *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*. The primordial elements of *prakṛti* and *puruṣa*, according to the *Sāṅkhya* theory, capture the countervailing forces of mind and matter, the dual²⁸⁶ elements from which all life forms evolve. The first *tattva*, the *puruṣa*, is the center of consciousness and the spiritual nature of the human. The second *tattva*, the *prakṛti*, is the center of material energy, the source from which all matter is composed. *Prakṛti* is composed of the three vital qualities: life (Skt.: *sattva*), passion (Skt.: *rajas*), and ignorance (Skt.: *tamas*). In the *Sāṅkhya* theory, admixtures of these three elements form the personality, the temperament, and the somatic characteristics of the person.

According to Gauḍapada, the earliest Sanskrit commentator on the *Sāṅkhyakārikās*, the union of the first two *tattvas* of *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* is like the union of a “sighted lame man” with a “blind able-bodied man” (Stanza 21). The sighted and the blind men together comprise a human being, with a full range of visual and ambulatory capacities. The analogy constructed by Gauḍapada avers that pure consciousness and matter alone do not comprise an entity. It is the union of the first and second *tattvas* of the *puruṣa* and the *prakṛti* that creates a human with a full

“Predominating nature (*pradhāna*) terms that which will realize greatness (i.e., the third *tattva*). Self-nature only terms the unmanifest 23 *tattvas* (below *prakṛti/pradhāna*). When they seek to manifest themselves then they are termed “greatness” *mahat*.” 將成大等亦名勝性者。未變二十三諦但名自性將欲變時即名大等也。

²⁸⁶ Within secondary literature, *Sāṅkhya* philosophy is frequently dubbed as a “dualist” tradition. – for example, see the useful sourcebook by Larson and Bhattacharya, *Sāṅkhya: A Dualist Tradition in Indian Philosophy. Volume 4 of the Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies*, Karl H. Potter, ed. (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1987).

range of sensory, bodily, and psychological functioning.

The third *tattva* in this schema is *mahat*, or the greatness of the universal mind. *Mahat* emerges from the union of *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*²⁸⁷ and describes pure consciousness. *Mahat*, in turn, gives rise to the fourth *tattva*, “ego-making,” or *ahañkāra*. Gauḍapada states: “From greatness (Skt.: *mahat*), the ego or *ahañkāra* (Skt.: *vaikṛta*, *taijas*) is born.”²⁸⁸ *Ahañkāra* is the state of mind that interprets subjective experience and the force that enlivens the *tattvas*. *Ahañkāra* is the element that mediates consciousness with the activities of the other *tattvas*. It is the task-master that activates the *tattvas* to perform their designated functions. Without the power of *ahañkāra*, or ego-making, the transformation of the material elements of *prakṛti* into the organs of the body would not be possible. Stanza twenty-two of the *Sāṅkhyakārikās* enunciates the idea that the transformation of the material elements into a fully-fledged human being is enabled by *ahañkāra*. While ultimately responsible for sustaining the body, the *ahañkāra* does the bidding of the soul and more specifically the *puruṣa*, the core part of the soul, and the first and foremost *tattva* of the twenty-five *tattvas* in the Sāṅkhya taxonomy.

The fifth through ninth *tattvas* are the units of the material world that are perceived by humans through their senses of hearing, vision, touch, taste, and smell. The tenth through the fourteen *tattvas* are the massive elements of earth, water, fire, wind, and ether that comprise the physical universe. The fifteenth through the nineteenth *tattvas* are the sensory faculties of hearing,

²⁸⁷ Dingbin’s *Vinaya* commentary provides some elaboration on the process of *ahañkāra*’s emerging from the union of the first two *tattvas*: “In first place there is primordial nature (*pradhāna*). Alone, it remains dormant and unaroused. In second place there are the twenty-three *tattvas* including *mahat*, which arouse the perception and awareness. The second *tattva* (i.e., *prakṛti*) is great – this greatness is born out of the transformations of primordial nature. We liken it to the sprout that grows out of the seed – it gradually expands and fleshes out. In the third place is the *tattva* of ego-making, which refers to the ego-making tendencies dependent upon the soul. This is the very nature of the soul. From this very nature, greatness is born.” 一者。在冥性位。眠伏不起。二者。在大等二十三諦位中。便有覺悟。第二大諦。此從冥性轉變生也。猶如種子欲生芽時。漸脹大也。第三我慢諦。調恃我而起慢。即此為體。此即從前大生也。

²⁸⁸ This is actually Dut’ (1933, p. 34) translation, with modifications.

vision, taste, smell, and touch. The twentieth through the twenty-fourth *tattvas* are the faculties of grasping, locomotion, speech, procreation, and the excretion of liquid and solid wastes. The twenty-fifth *tattva* is the faculty of intelligence. This *tattva* is the most evolved of the *tattvas* and oversees the coordinated activities of the sensory, material, and intellectual *tattvas*.

The twenty-second stanza of the *Sāṅkhyakārikās* enumerates the sixteen *gaṇas*, or *vikāras*, that are produced by the *ahankāra* under the direction of the *puruṣa* for the pleasure of the *ātman*.²⁸⁹ The Chinese translation of *gaṇa* is tool or apparatus (Chi.: *ju* 具). The Sanskrit translation of *gaṇa* includes the concept of the tool, but additionally implies that the *gaṇa* is in the service of, or used by, a superior entity. Within the Sāṅkhya schema, the sixteen *gaṇas* are produced when the *ahankāra* binds *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* into the tools that are used to execute bodily and cognitive activities. In this process, the *gaṇas* become the mechanisms used by the *ahankāra* to generate the activities, such as breathing and moving, that are necessary to sustain human life. The actions of the *gaṇas* are willed by the *puruṣa*.

The first five *gaṇas* in the taxonomy are called the *tanmātras* (Chi.: *weiliang* 唯量). The Chinese translation of *tanmātras* is “things that are simply perceived.” The *tanmātras* correspond to *tattvas* five through nine, and are composed of the stimuli that are first perceived by the sensory mechanisms and then proceed to activate the sensory apparatus. The taxonomy of the *tanmātras* includes tactile objects, sounds, colors, flavors and smells. The remaining eleven *gaṇas* in the

²⁸⁹ The *vṛtti* prose-commentary on SK, stanza 19 enumerates the sixteen *gaṇas* that are produced by *ahankāra*: “Ahaṁkāra produces sixteen [*gaṇas*] in sequential order. The sixteen [*gaṇas*] include, firstly, the five *tanmātras*. The five *tanmātras* are sound, touch, color, flavor, and odor. Odorful things are, by nature, things that are capable of being smelt. Then, there are the five ordinary sense faculties. The five ordinary sense faculties are audition, tactition, vision, taste, and smell. Then come the five *karmēndriyāṇi*. The five *karmēndriyāṇi* are speaking, grasping, locomotion, procreation, and excretion. Then comes the mental faculty. These are the sixteen [*gaṇas*] that are born from *ahankāra*. Therefore, we say that greatness and *ahankāra* make sixteen *gaṇas*.” 慢次生十六。十六者。一五唯。五唯者。一聲二觸三色四味五香。是香物唯體唯能。次五知根。五知根者。一耳二皮三眼四舌五鼻。次五作根。五作根者。一舌二手三足四男女五大遺。次心根。是十六從我慢生。故說大我慢十六。

taxonomy of the sixteen *gaṇas* correspond to *tattvas* fifteen through twenty-five and include audition, tactition, sight, taste, olfaction, grasping, locomotion, speech, procreation, excretion and finally the *tattva* of the mind. These eleven *gaṇas* correspond to the eleven *indriyas*, or *tattvas* fifteen through twenty-five in the *Sāṅkhyakārikās* taxonomy of the faculties. Importantly, the eleven *indriyas* form a line of demarcation in the taxonomy between the human being and the non-human being. Within the Sāṅkhya schema, the eleven *indriyas* accomplish the physical and mental activities necessary for the generation and survival of the human being. The eleven *indriyas* bend to the will of the “taskmaster,” or to the *ahankāra*, and ultimately to the intention of the *puruṣa*, the first *tattva* and the supreme “owner” of the body.

The Twenty-Five *Tattvas* and the Eleven Faculties in the Sāṅkhya System

The Sāṅkhya taxonomy of the twenty-five *tattvas* is intended to describe the building blocks of life. Beginning with the *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*, the taxonomy of the twenty-five *tattvas* explains how human life, including the material organs, sensory capacities, physical actions and psychological states, evolves from pure consciousness and primeval matter. Within this classical schema, the eleven *indriyas* are viewed as the elements necessary to perform the functions necessary to sustain human life. The eleven *indriyas*, or the embodied faculties, are directly involved in the activities of the physical body and the conscious mind.

The Brāhmaṇical taxonomy of *Sāṅkhyakārikās* clusters the eleven *indriyas* of the human being into the five *indriyas* of physical action (Skt.: *pañca-karmēndriyāṇi*; Chi.: *wu zuoye-gen* 五作業根), the five *indriyas* of the ordinary senses (Skt.: *pañca-prajñēndriyāṇi*; Chi.: 五知根), and the *indriya* of the mind (Skt.: *buddhīndriyam*; *mānēndriyam*). According to the sequence standardized in the twenty-sixth stanza of the *Sāṅkhyakārikās*, the five faculties of physical action

include the faculties of grasping [lit., the faculty of hands], locomotion,²⁹⁰ vocalization, excretion, and procreation 舌手足人根大遺. The *indriyas* of the ordinary sense faculties are hearing, tactition, vision, gustation, and olfaction 耳皮眼舌鼻.²⁹¹ The eleventh faculty of the mind oversees and registers the sensations and physical inputs that are generated by the faculties of physical action and the senses.

In his commentary on the twenty-seventh stanza of the *Sāṅkhyakārikās*, Gauḍapada writes: “The faculties of action indicate [the faculties that] perform action. Among these, the voice speaks; the two hands perform all manner of transaction, the two feet move to and fro; the anus operates to excrete solid waste; the generative organ (Skt.: *upastha*) functions to procreate.”²⁹² Each description of the five sensory and the five physical faculties in the Sāṅkhya taxonomy is a metonymy for the corresponding physical and sensory apparatus. For example, the legs are metonymical for the physical activity of locomotion, and the ears are metonymical for the auditory apparatus.

In the theater of sensory and bodily activity, the *puruṣa* plays the role of an “observer” (Skt.: *prekṣavat*) or “mere witness” (Skt.: *ālocanamātra*; *sākṣitatva*; *draṣṭṛtva*).²⁹³ In the words of the nineteenth stanza of the *Sāṅkhyakārikās*, the *puruṣa* is “a seer and not a doer” (Skt.: *draṣṭṛtvam akartṛtvabhāva*).²⁹⁴ The *puruṣa*, in the metaphor of the theater, sits in the audience. Because it is

²⁹⁰ Paramārtha’s *vṛtti* commentary on *Sāṅkhyakārikās*, verse 27, glosses the faculty of locomotion as: “the capability of moving the lower torso below the navel.” 足在下分，能行臍下 (T2137:54.1252.b09).

²⁹¹ There are various Chinese renderings of these two sets of ten items total, but Paramārtha’s are generally accepted as standard, with minor variations by Xuanzang. See Paramārtha’s trans. of Guṇamati’s **Lakṣaṇa-śāstra* (Chi.: *Suixiang lun* 隨相論).

²⁹² Dutt, ed., *Sāṅkhyakārikās*, 27.

²⁹³ These three terms appear throughout the *Sāṅkhyakārikās*, and are roughly synonymous in the sense of “being a mere witnesser.” The locus classicus for this idea, and the first time it appears in the text is at stanza 19, hemistich b in Chinese 我證義成立 (T2137:54.1250.a03); hemistich d in the Skt., see Dutt, ed., *Sāṅkhyakārikās*, 22.

²⁹⁴ Dutt, ed., *Sāṅkhyakārikās*, 22.

essentially a passive observer, the *puruṣa* requires an intermediary to direct the faculties of the senses and of physical action. This intermediary is “the active one” or the *vaikṛtya-ahaṅkāra*. The *vaikṛtya-ahaṅkāra* is viewed as a surrogate for the *puruṣa* in that it is deputized by the *puruṣa* to direct the activities of the *indriyas*. The *vaikṛtya-ahaṅkāra* is also depicted as an appendage (Skt.: *aṅga*) to the *puruṣa*, in the way that the legs are connected to the torso. Because the *ātman* is composed of the *puruṣa* and the *ahaṅkāra*, the *vaikṛtya-ahaṅkāra* is seen, within this schema, as the active agent of the *ātman*.

At the heart of the *Sāṅkhyakārikās* taxonomy of the *tattvas* is the conceptualization of how life comes about and comes to an end. The foundational premise of the theory is that all human and non-human life begins with the union of the *puruṣa*, or mind, and *prakṛti*, or matter. As the *puruṣa*, *prakṛti*, *maḥat*, and *ahaṅkāra* work together to enliven the subsequent twenty-one *tattvas*, various forms of life emerge. Human life begins with the generation of *tattvas* fifteen through twenty-five in the Sāṅkhya taxonomy, the eleven *indriyas*. The line of demarcation between human and non-human life is at the fifteenth *tattva*.

The *puruṣa*, as the first *tattva* of consciousness, plays the foundational role of imbuing with life the twenty-four *tattvas*, including the eleven *indriyas* that comprise the human being. Because the generation of life implicates all the twenty-five *tattvas* in the Sāṅkhya taxonomy, it follows that the process of dying involves the degeneration of the twenty-five *tattvas* as well. Therefore, if human life begins with the generation of the eleven *indriyas*, then human dying necessarily begins with the degeneration of the eleven *indriyas*. Within the Sāṅkhya theory, the departure of the *puruṣa* initiates the degeneration of the eleven *indriyas* and therefore the process of dying. In this doctrine, the *puruṣa* is defined as the creator and the destroyer of the *indriyas*.

The Generation of the Eleven Faculties According to the Sāṅkhya Doctrine

The last third of the venerable *Sāṅkhyakārikās* is dedicated to a description of how the eleven *indriyas* are created through a process of ego-creation or ego-making (Skt.: *ahaṅkāra*; Chi.: *wo-man* 我慢; *wo-zhi* 我執). In this process, the soul, in the form of the *puruṣa*, *prakṛti*, *mahat*, and *ahaṅkāra*, creates the eleven *indriyas* that together perform the cognitive and physical activities of the human being. Verse twenty-seven of the *Sāṅkhyakārikās* states that the formation of the eleven human *indriyas* involves the *ahaṅkāra*, or the “ego-maker.” In this picture, the *ahaṅkāra* does the bidding of *puruṣa* by impelling the eleven *indriyas* to take up the tasks involved in the business of being human.

The role of the *ahaṅkāra* in the creation of the human life is central within the Sāṅkhya theory. This is because the *ahaṅkāra* is anointed by the *puruṣa* with the power to imbue the eleven *indriyas* with the vitality of life and consciousness. The *Sāṅkhyakārikās* depict the *ahaṅkāra* as the agent of the *puruṣa* who is deputized to imbue the eleven *indriyas* with the life force that initiates the sensory and physical activities and activates the various appendages and parts of the body. The *Sāṅkhyakārikās* also view the *ahaṅkāra* as the power behind the *puruṣa* to endow the human being with aspects of consciousness that include self-determination (Skt.: *adhyavasāya*; *adhyavaseya*), cognition, and metacognition.

The Degeneration of the Eleven Faculties According to the Sāṅkhya Doctrine

According to the Sāṅkhya doctrine, the degeneration of the eleven *indriyas* begins with the departure of the first *tattva*, the *puruṣa*, from the body. Because all *tattvas* are animated by the life-giving force of the *puruṣa*, the removal of the first *tattva* sets into motion a process by which the subsequent twenty-four *tattvas* begin to collapse.²⁹⁵ Dying occurs as the life-giving force of the

²⁹⁵ Paramārtha, vṛtti commentary on the 15th stanza of *Sāṅkhyakārikas* (T2137:54.1248.c29-30): “When the five *tanmātras* and the eleven faculties die out, there is no differentiation between the five *tanmātras*. This continues

puruṣa withdraws, causing *tattvas* fifteen through twenty-five, the eleven *indriyas* that sustain the life of the human, to disintegrate.

According to the Sāṅkhya tradition, at the time of the biological death of a human, the spiritual soul is liberated from its bodily fetters. In the penultimate stanza of the sacred seventy-stanza *Sāṅkhyakārikās*, the death of the human is articulated in terms of the loss of the *puruṣa* and the resultant deterioration of the material body. The time of dying is described in stanza sixty-nine of the *Sāṅkhyakārikās* and in the early Sāṅkhya commentaries as a gradual process whereby the psychic person survives in the form of the *puruṣa* and the physical faculties degenerate. In this process, the *puruṣa* is extricated from the body and released into space in the form of an “ethereal body” (Skt.: *guhyaśarīra*; Chi.: *xishen* 細神). The *guhyaśarīra* is concealed during life. It emerges in the process of dying and provides the *puruṣa* with a container within which it transmigrates into the ether for reincarnation into another corporeal body. The *Sāṅkhyakārikās* describe the act of departing the body as requiring the sheer determination (Skt.: *adhyavas*) and decisive will (Skt.: *atyāntikam*; Chi.: *bijing* 畢竟) of the *puruṣa*. Once deserted by the *puruṣa*, the body no longer contains the “mental effort”²⁹⁶ or the “resolution or determination” (Skt.: *adhyavasāya*, *adhyavaseya*; Chi.: *jue-ding* 決定)²⁹⁷ to survive. At this point, the body lacks life.

The second line of stanza sixty-nine describes how the corporeal body, once deserted by the *puruṣa*, decompensates into inert material elements. The abdication of the *puruṣa* reveals the material and elemental aspects of the body 捨身時事顯 (自性)²⁹⁸ that do not transmigrate. Paramārtha, in his commentary to the *Sāṅkhyakārikās*, writes: “What is left behind by biological

up to the point that the greatness (*mahat*) [of the individual] dies out and there is no longer any such distinction [as greatness] within *prakṛti*.” 五大十一根沒五唯中無差別，乃至大沒自性中亦無差別。

²⁹⁶ Definition found in Sir. Monier-Williams Skt. Dictionary.

²⁹⁷ Watson (2006) translates *adhyavasāya/adhyavaseya* as “determinative cognition.”

²⁹⁸ T2137:54.1261.c22.

death reverts to its primordial state by gradually decomposing into the constituent elements of the earth, water, wind, fire, and ether.”²⁹⁹

As described in the *Sāṅkhyakārikās*, when the *puruṣa* departs the body, the process of dying continues with the degeneration of the five ordinary senses. The sensory faculties of hearing, vision, taste, smell, and touch emerge from the five great eternal elements (Skt.: *mahābhūtas*) of space, fire, water, earth and wind. In the earliest surviving Sanskrit commentary by Gauḍapada³⁰⁰ and in the Chinese translation and exegesis of stanza sixty-nine, the five elements that compose the material objects of the five sense faculties (Skt.: *prāññēndriyāṇi*) disintegrate in the process of dying. The senses are thus deprived of their objective bases in the outside environment.³⁰¹ Because they are composed of the five *tanmātras* (*wu weiliang* 五唯量), or “the perceived form of five greatnesses” (Chi.: *wu da* 五大), the senses then undergo a “reversion to the primordial state” (Skt.: *pradhānanivṛtti*). Essentially they return to their original status as five great elements, or *mahabutas*. Each great eternal element that makes up part of a sensory faculty is related primarily to one or more *tanmātras*.³⁰² For example, the visual faculty includes elements of earth, water,

²⁹⁹ *Jin qishi lun*, fascicle three, stanza 68 *vṛtti* commentary (T2137:54.1261.c24): “Right when the body is deserted the karmic factors and non-factors previously produced, are annihilated. Right at this time that the body is deserted, the earthly great elements revert to the corresponding elements outside the body. This continues until the interior cavities within the body have reverted to the corresponding space/ether outside. This continues until the point that the mental faculty has reverted back to the five subtle/sensible elements (*tanmātras*).” 捨身時者，先所作法非法滅時，正捨此身時。內身有地大。還外地相應。乃至內空亦還空大。五根還五唯，乃至心根，亦還五唯。

³⁰⁰ Dutt, ed., *Sāṅkhyakārikās*, 90-91.

³⁰¹ The five elements have functional integrity with the five sensory organs, which allows us to perceive the external environment. Their presence is the reason for the existence of the senses themselves. However, according to the prose commentaries on *Sāṅkhyakārika* 68, with the dissolution of the body the five subtle elements composing the five cognitive faculties (*prāññēndriyāṇi*) returns to their original basis in the external environment, such that bodily wind is released into the atmosphere, earth-based material returns to the earth, *mutatis mutandis*.

³⁰² The *vṛtti*-style prose commentary transmitted by Paramārtha unpacks the rubric of five *tanmātras* and explains their correlation to five “massive elements” or *mahābhūtas*. See *Jin qishi lun*, fasc. 1, (T2137:54.1251.c17-22): “The faculty of audition is produced solely from sound (*śabda*) and it is of the same kind as the great element (*mahat*) of space – for this reason it can grasp sounds. The faculty of tactition is produced solely from contact (*sparśa*), and it is of the same kind as the great element of space/ether (Skt.: *ākāśa*) – for this reason it can only grasp sounds. The faculty of vision is produced solely from visible material and is of the same kind as the great

wind, and fire.³⁰³ Therefore, the decomposition of the sensory *indriyas* occurs when the body is abandoned by the *mahābhūtas* of earth, water, wind, fire, and ether.

The fourth century C.E. Buddhist scholar Guṇamati writes: “Because the five sensory faculties are born out of the five great material elements, when the five sensory faculties are annihilated, they revert into the five great elements of the material world. When the auditory faculty is annihilated, it reverts into ether, and when the ocular faculty is annihilated, it reverts into fire, when the taste faculty is annihilated it reverts into the watery element, smell reverts into the earth, and touch reverts into wind. Therefore, all of these factors [of the *indriyas*] are eternal.” 五根既從大生五，五根滅還歸五大，耳根滅還歸空，乃至鼻根滅還歸地，故諸法是常也。

³⁰⁴The five *indriyas* of the senses are considered to be eternal because they exist as part of five great elements that make up the physical universe.

As depicted in the penultimate verse of the *Sāṅkhyakārikās*, the soul, in the form of the psychic person or *puruṣa* that is encapsulated in in a mystical or subtle body (Skt.: *sūkṣmāśarīra*), survives death. The psychic person does not meet its end with biological death. Rather, at the time of death, the psychic person assumes a new subtle body, thereby avoiding the demise of the gross body. At this point, the body is a corpse, bereft of its animating principle. It returns to its primordial basis in the earth, and the psychic person, in the form of the *puruṣa*, hurtles off into the ether and the afterlife.

element of fire – for this reason it can only grasp visibles. The faculty of gustation is produced solely from fumes and for this reason it can only grasp tastes. The faculty of olfaction is produced solely from odors and it is of the same kind as the great element of water.” 耳根從聲唯生，與空大同類，是故唯取聲。鼻根從觸唯生，與風大同類，是故唯取觸。眼根從色唯生。與火大同類。是故唯取色。舌根從味唯生。與水大同類。是故唯取味。鼻根從香唯生，與地大同類，是故唯取香。

³⁰³ *Tattvasiddhi śāstra*, chapter 474 (T1646:32.266.b24) describes the case of the auditory faculty: “When the human dies the auditory faculty reverts into the ether” 人死耳根還歸虛空。

³⁰⁴ T32n1641p0167a17-19.

The *Puruṣa* and the *Tattvas* in the Sāṅkhya System

The Sāṅkhya theory of the *tattvas* is predicated upon the assumption that the *puruṣa* functions as the primary animator of the eleven *indriyas* and the body. In the text of the *Sāṅkhyakārikās*, the *puruṣa* is depicted as a charioteer who stands in the chariot of the body, holds the reins of the *indriyas*, and directs the movement of the chariot and the actions of the *indriyas*.³⁰⁵ In this picture, according to Frauwallner (1956, 1973), the *indriyas* function as the “work horses” who supply the “horse power” required to pull the chariot of the body forward.³⁰⁶ The ancient metaphor of the *puruṣa* as the charioteer provides a vivid example of how the Sāṅkhya theorists envision the relationship between the *puruṣa*, the *indriyas* and the body. The *puruṣa*, as the first *tattva* in the Sāṅkhya taxonomy, is pure consciousness and, by definition, disembodied. Therefore, the *puruṣa* requires a body and the power of the *indriyas* to animate life, just as the charioteer requires a chariot and the power of the horses to drive forward.

According to the Sāṅkhya theory, the *puruṣa* inhabits a living body furnished with senses, faculties for action, and a sentient mind upon which its intelligence relies. The *puruṣa* is imbued with *buddhi*, or conscious awareness, by the third *tattva* in the taxonomy, *mahat*, or greatness. *Buddhi* is great because it endows the *puruṣa* with the intelligence required to operate the faculties in a skillful and coordinated way.

The *puruṣa* is the core of the *Sāṅkhyakārikās* explanation of karma and the question of who

³⁰⁵ See Ratié & Eltschinger (2013, pp. 153-4) for the *Sāṅkhya karika* commentarial sources containing the formal analogy of how Devadatta drives the chariot in the same way that the *purusa* “drives” or impels the senses. Ratié and Eltschinger note in particular the Mātharāvṛtti, a commentary on SK, where Māthara specifies that where a bed, a chariot, or a house are for the individual, e.g., Devadatta, who lies in a bed, drives a chariot, and inhabits a house.”

³⁰⁶ Frauwallner, *History of Indian Philosophy*, trans. Bedekar (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1973), 15, concludes about this simile: “The body is, therefore, like a tool, from the activity of which one concludes about somebody who handles it.” This study contends that the role of the *indriyas* in this picture is as the “house-power” propelling the whole chariot.

is responsible for the effects of karma. However, the seminal stanzas of the Sāṅkhya tradition make the important qualification that the *puruṣa*, in and of itself, is not an active agent, or a *kartr*. Bryant (2013) points out that the important difference between the “Platonic and Abrahamic notions of the soul” is that the idea of the soul, according to the classical Sāṅkhya doctrine, does not directly manifest activities of a cognitive or physical nature.³⁰⁷

While the *vaikṛtya* ego manipulates the eleven faculties and is transformed in the process, the psychic person or the *puruṣa* remains unmodifiable. Paramārtha’s prose commentary to the fifty-fifth verse describes the True Soul (Ch.: *Zhenwo* 真我) as “neither increasing nor decreasing.”³⁰⁸ The term True Soul signifies the pure standing, and the seat of the soul within the *puruṣa*, that remains perennially unperturbed by the vacillations of the senses. This unalloyed form of the *puruṣa* provides a *principium individuationis* for the individual human that differentiates her, him, or them from other people.³⁰⁹ The *puruṣa* is the essential part of the soul whose presence makes for the continuation of the human individual. The *puruṣa* can thus be regarded as the *sine qua non* for human survival, precisely because it resides only in living bodies and because it

³⁰⁷ Bryant writes: “Unlike the Platonic and Abrahamic notions of soul, there are no psychic functions inherent in the *ātman* in Sāṅkhya. The *ātman* is covered by buddhi, intelligence; *ahaṁkāra*, ego; and *manas*, mind; but these are distinct, separable, and inanimate coverings of subtle *prakṛti* (at to be ultimately and ideally uncoupled from *ātman*, for the latter’s liberation from *samsāra*, the cycle of birth and death, to take place).” This study contends that Bryant’s remarks about the separable of the *ātman* from buddhi – the third *tattva* – apply with respect to the relationship between *puruṣa* and *buddhi*. E.F. Bryant, “Agency in Sāṅkhya and Yoga,” in M.R. Dasti and Bryant, eds., *Free Will, Agency, and Selfhood in Indian Philosophy* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2013), 7.

³⁰⁸ In his *Evolution of the Soul*, the dualist philosopher Swinburne, *The Evolution of the Soul* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1987), 145 argues that “the dualist would claim that souls do feel and believe, even if we do not naturally talk in that way. In ordinary talk perhaps minds, rather than souls, are, however, often given mental predicates – to be said to imagine things or feel weary, for instance.”

³⁰⁹ For the Sāṅkhya soul as *principium individuationis* between individuals, see Watson (2006), pp. 60-70; pp. 166-175, *passim*.

eventually deserts the mortal body at death.³¹⁰

In his examination of the relationship between *puruṣa* and the *indriyas*, Xuanzang takes issue with the Sāṅkhya conceptualization of the *puruṣa* as the principal force that directs the activities of the eleven *indriyas* and the body. For Xuanzang, the conceptualization of the *puruṣa* as an animator, director, or charioteer is antithetical to the three central tenets regarding the nature of the *indriyas*: one, that the *indriyas* do not operate autonomously; two, that the coordinated actions of the *indriyas* produce all of the activities of the body, ranging from sensory perception to cognition, and three, that at least three *indriyas* working together are required to sustain life. To Xuanzang, the primacy of the soul within the Sāṅkhya theory conflicts with the core Buddhist theory that views the coordinated actions of the *indriyas* as all that is necessary to explain living and dying.

Kuiji's Twenty-Six *Tattva* Taxonomy

The classical Sāṅkhya doctrine, articulated in the *Sāṅkhyakārikās*, postulates a set of twenty-five *tattvas* that comprise the range of the physical and psychological activities of a human being. In his commentary on the Sāṅkhya taxonomy of the twenty-five *tattvas*, found in the *Gateway to Logic*, Kuiji, Xuanzang's prominent disciple, states that, for Sāṅkhya, the “spirit-cum-*ātman*” (Chi.: *shenwo*) can be fully classified under the *tattvas*.³¹¹ Within the Sāṅkhya picture, a

³¹⁰ See Watson, *The Self's Awareness of Itself*, 60-70, passim, on the Sāṅkhya idea of the soul as the principle for individuating different human beings. Watson traces the evolution of the doctrine of the soul from the early, pre-classical context of the Upanisads and the Bhagavad-gīta, wherein the emphasis lies upon the “unity of Brahman and *ātman*,” (*Fan Wo he-yi* 梵我合一) to the classical doctrine that postulates the soul as the singular essence of an individual human being.

³¹¹ In his commentary on the *Nyāyapraveśa śāstra* (T1830:43.252, b26-29) Kuiji explains the spirit-cum *ātman* in terms of the collection of twenty-five *tattvas* that fall into nine groups. Kuiji writes: “Generally, the twenty five *tattvas* are ninefold: first, there is *prakṛti*; second, there is mahat; third, *ahaṅkāra*; fourth, the five *tanmātras*; six, the five cognitive faculties; seven, the five faculties of action; eighth, the faculty of intelligence; and ninth, the self qua knower.” 廣為二十五諦。一自性。二大。三我執。四五唯。五五大。六五知根。七五作業根。

soul is composed of an admixture of twenty-five *tattvas*, with the soul in the position of utmost primacy.

In his exegesis of the Sāṅkhya taxonomy, Kuiji highlights the idea that the soul is not separate, but rather a collection of all of the *tattvas*. In his schema of the *tattvas*, located in the *Great Commentary on the Nyāyapraveśa śāstra* (Yinming Zhengli lun dashu 因明正理門論大疏) Kuiji includes a twenty-sixth *tattva*, the “spirit-cum *ātman*,” or “the self-as-knower,” that follows the twenty-fifth *tattva* of *buddhīndriyam*, the faculty of intelligence.³¹² Kuiji’s twenty-six *tattva* is the intelligent individual that is invested with all of the preceding twenty-five *tattvas* in the classical Sāṅkhya taxonomy.

Kuiji’s taxonomy is significant in that he demonstrates that the soul is not separate or singular, but composed of all twenty-five elements. Paramārtha’s commentary on the fifty-first stanza of the *Sāṅkhyakārikās*³¹³ refers to the soul as the bearer or the container of the *tattvas*, or the “true soul.” Kuiji equates this terminology with *zhenwo*, or the “spirit-cum-*ātman*.” The spirit-cum-*ātman* is distinctly different from the *puruṣa*, the first *tattva*, in that it possesses both a material body and pure consciousness. Unlike the *puruṣa*, it is an active knower and doer of things in life, whereas the *puruṣa* is passive and requires intermediaries to conduct the activities of living. Kuiji’s formulation draws attention to the fact that the soul, as defined in the *Sāṅkhyakārikās*, is composed of many parts and cannot be easily disaggregated from the body and the *indriyas*.

Kuiji’s twenty-six-*tattva* taxonomy is intended to reflect the doctrinal agenda endorsed by

八心平等根。九我知者。 See edition of Mei Deyu 梅德愚 (Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju, 2013), vol. 2, 414; also see Kuiji’s *Study Notes on the CWSL* for this ninefold grouping (T1840:44.117.a13-16).

³¹² Within this body of exegesis developed across a number of his commentarial works, but laid out most succinctly in his *Great Commentary on the Nyāyapraveśa*, Kuiji slots the 25 *tattvas* into nine categories. The ninth category includes the self *qua* knower, to which he attaches the pejorative label, “spirit-cum-*ātman*.”

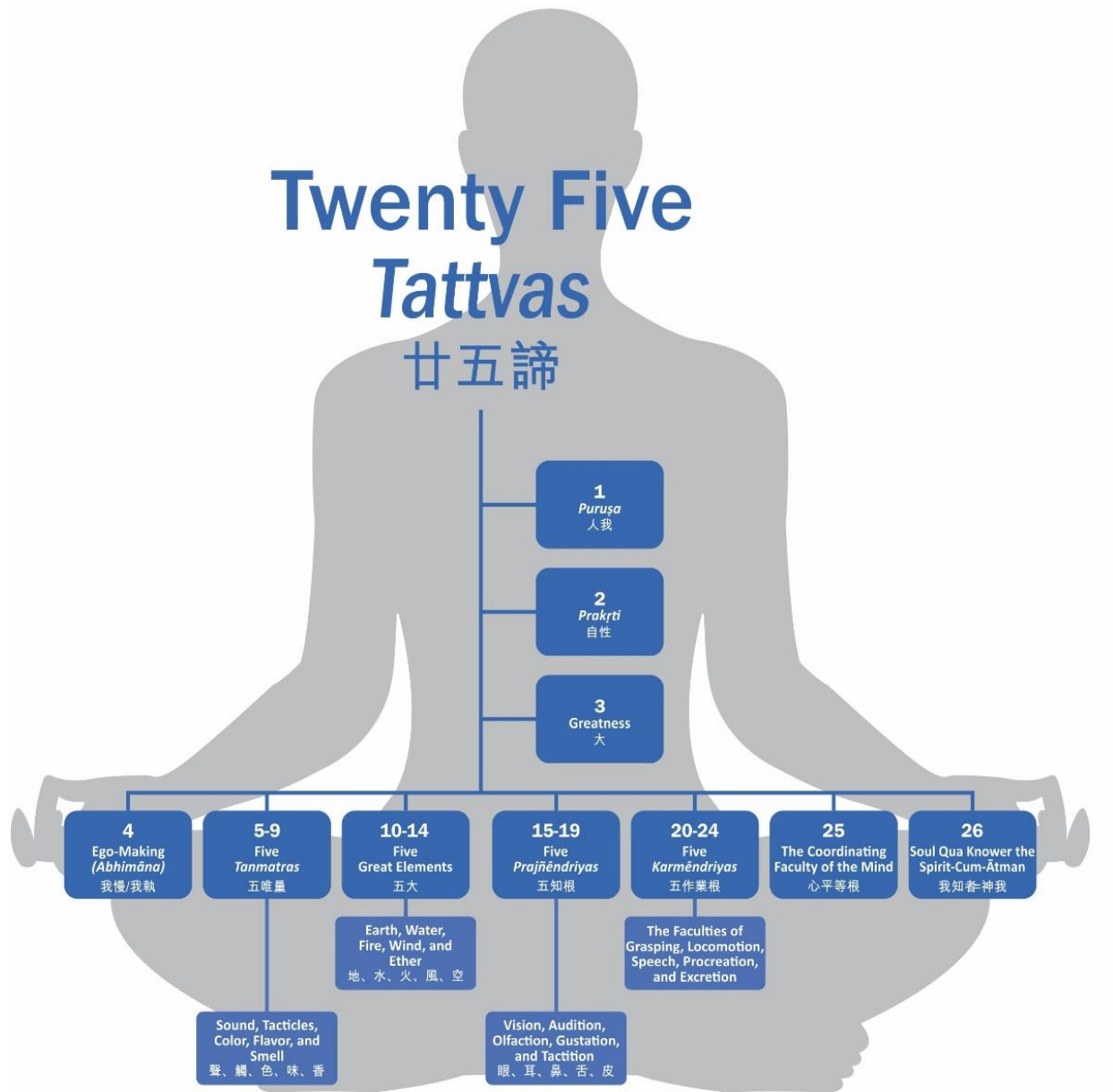
³¹³ *Jin qishi lun*, T2137:54.1258.a08-9.

Xuanzang that views the senses, vitality, and consciousness as encompassed within the entirety of the body. In his conceptualization of the spirit-cum-*ātman*, Kuiji views the soul in the Sāṅkhya taxonomy as the aggregation of the twenty-five *tattvas*. Kuiji regards the first *tattva*, the *puruṣa*, as pure consciousness, and therefore as insufficient to perform the myriad and complex activities of the soul. Xuanzang endorses Kuiji's view that the depiction of the Sāṅkhya *puruṣa* does not provide a robust description of how the soul realizes the activities of living. Additionally, Xuanzang is concerned with what he regards as a misconstrued definition of the soul and the *puruṣa* and how subsequent philosophers misleadingly and mistakenly conflate the soul with the *puruṣa*.

Xuanzang intends to discredit the concept of a life-giving spirit that is separate from the *indriyas*. Kuiji's phrase spirit-cum-*ātman* is an inside joke, a tongue-in-cheek jab at the unobservable and occult spirits that he and Xuanzang believe haunt the Sāṅkhya theories. Kuiji's analysis of the Sāṅkhya schema furthers Xuanzang's theory that the *indriyas* alone are required for survival and fortifies their agenda of isolating and expiating the notion of a soul from Chinese Buddhism.

Kuiji's³¹⁴ Sāṅkhya taxonomy of the twenty-five *tattvas* is illustrated in the following:

³¹⁴ This diagram of the 25 *tattvas* is adapted from an encyclopedic Japanese 19th-century work of exegesis on the *CWSL*, entitled *Crown and Guide to the CWSL* (Jpn: *Kandō jōyūishiki ron* 冠導成唯識論), p. 60, recto. It is essentially derived from Kuiji's exegesis on the 25 *tattvas* located in his Great Commentary on the *Nyāyapraveśa śāstra*.



Xuanzang's Disputes with the Plain-Spoken Brāhmin at Nālanda University

In his exegesis of dying, Xuanzang must address five central doctrinal issues within the *Sāṅkhya* theory of the *tattvas*. Xuanzang draws upon his vast and detailed understanding of the *Sāṅkhyakārikās* to undermine these five theoretical linchpins in the doctrine of the *Sāṅkhya* soul.

These concepts are the idea of the soul as the locus of sensory experience; the notion of the soul as the bearer of the twenty-five *tattvas*; the role of the *ahankāra* in the functioning of the soul; the idea that the soul is endowed with three vital qualities that enable the body to survive: *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*; and finally, the depiction of the soul, or the *ātman*, as the master of the eleven *indriyas*.

As these five ideas form the foundation of the *Sāṅkhya* conceptualization of dying, Xuanzang takes great care to address them within his extensive translation corpus and within his original works, the CWSL and the *Demonstration of Consciousness-Only*. To support his argument that the loss of the soul is not necessary to explain dying, Xuanzang must refute the notion of the soul as described within the overarching *Sāṅkhya* theory of the *tattvas*.

In addition to his translation corpus, Xuanzang's methodical discussions of the *Sāṅkhya* relationship between the soul and the *indriyas* are found in *The Biography of the Tripitaka Master Xuanzang*, composed in 665 C.E. by his loyal disciple and acolyte, Huili. While it can be aptly described as a hagiography, Huili's biography contains the records and transcripts of important testimonies and debates conducted by Xuanzang while he was residing in India. The debate between Xuanzang and Suwen, the Plain-Spoken Brāhmin, held at the University of Nālanda, a large Buddhist monastery in Northern India, between 635 and 640 C.E. is recounted in the fourth fascicle of the biography. This debate is significant in that it provides a succinct representation of Xuanzang's refutation of the *Sāṅkhya* conceptualizations of the soul.

The Story of the Nālanda Debate

The narrative of this important debate begins when Xuanzang discovers sixty-four theses nailed to the gates of the Nālanda monastery.³¹⁵ One paper contains the provocative statement:

³¹⁵ Huili, *Biography of the Tripitaka Master*, fasc. 4:: "At that time there was a Lokāyatika materialist who had come [to the University] to raise objections and spark dispute. At that point, he had written forty theses and had hung them from the University gate. They read: "If there is someone who can refute a single one of these these, then I

“There is no soul.” Another paper states: “Anyone who can prove the existence of the soul and the afterlife can decapitate me.” The papers are the handiwork of an unknown person proffering the heterodoxy of the Lokāyatika (Chi.: *Shunshi dao* 順世道) Materialist doctrine.

After no one is either willing or able to mount a response to the challenge of the Cārvāka Materialist, Xuanzang sends a servant, under the cover of darkness, to tear down the theses from the university gate. The servant is discovered and detained by a Brāhmin named Suwen, who also goes by the moniker of “Mr. Plain-Spoken.” The Brāhmin interrogates the servant and demands that he retrieve Xuanzang. Xuanzang appears at the Nālanda Gate and the debate with the Plain-Spoken Brāhmin ensues.

Very little is known about the Plain-Spoken Brāhmin apart from the fact that he engaged in the public debate with Xuanzang and that he was a staunch defender of the Sāṅkhya doctrine. According to Huili, the Plain-Spoken Brāhmin was a free-speech advocate who objected to the removal of the bulletins from the university gate. The actual statements of the Plain-Spoken Brāhmin in the debate are not recorded by Huili. Revealing his doctrinal bias and his unwavering support of Xuanzang, Huili presents only the arguments that uphold the Buddhist positions

will apologize by decapitating myself.” 時復有順世外道來求論難，乃書四十條義，懸於寺門曰：「若有難破一條者，我則斬首相謝。」

A few days passed and no one had risen to mount a response. Master Xuanzang dispatched a servant from his quarters to go out and get the notes on the Cārvāka doctrine and destroy them by trampling them underfoot. 經數日，無人出應。法師遣房內淨人出，取其義毀破，以足蹠躪。

The Brāhmin, asked, outraged: “Who are you?” “The servant replied: “I’m a servant of Mahāyānadeva (Xuanzang’s moniker).” That Brāhmin [at the gate] was also known by the moniker “Mr. Plain Spoken.”). The Dharma-master summoned him to come in, and brought him before Dharma-master Śīlabhadra and, with Worthies (= monks) as witnesses, engaged him in debate, interrogating (徵) [at first] the tenets of his school, and then passing on [歷] to the theses (所立 = *siddhāntas*) of [additional] non-Buddhist schools. 婆羅門大怒，問曰：「汝是何人？」答曰：「我是摩訶耶那提婆奴。」婆羅門亦素聞法師名。法師令喚入，將對戒賢法師及命諸德為證，與之共論，徵其宗本，歷外道諸家所立。ashamed and humiliated, he became speechless. 慚恥更不與論 (emended from 語 on basis of Song, Yuan, and Ming editions). Xuanzang’s moniker while in India was apparently Mahāyānadeva, a nickname given to him. 摩訶耶那 See T2053:50.247.a11. After holding forth unchallenged promoting Mahāyāna against all rivals at a major debate sponsored by King Śīladitya (= King Harsha), praises are heaped on Xuanzang, and that was the name the Mahāyāna advocates gave him.

regarding no-soul, and none of the Brāhmaṇical counter-arguments.

In the audience at the dispute with the Plain-Spoken Brāhmin are faculty members from Nālanda University, disciples of Xuanzang and the Yogācāra expert and esteemed mentor of Xuanzang, Sīlabhadra. The debate opens with Xuanzang precisely, and in the proper order, reciting the twenty-five Sāṅkhya *tattvas*. Xuanzang states: “The Sāṅkhya establish the doctrine of twenty-five elements (*tattvas*). The great elements (*mahats*: earth, water, wind, fire, and ether) evolve from *prakṛti*. Ahaṅkāra evolves out of the *mahats*. That (*prakṛti*) produces, in order, the five *tanmātras*,³¹⁶ five *mahats* [as the sense objects], and eleven *indriyas*. The twenty-four elements (*tattvas*)³¹⁷ attend to and provide for the soul. They are enjoyed by the soul” 至如數論外道，立二十五諦義，從自性生大，從大生我執，次生五唯量，次生五大，次生十一根，此二十四並供奉於我；我所受用。

In his recitation of the doctrine of the twenty-five *tattvas*, Xuanzang faithfully represents the Sāṅkhya system and demonstrates his mastery of the texts of this Brāhmaṇical tradition. Huili describes how Xuanzang methodically dismantles the premises that undergird the Sāṅkhya definition of the soul, or the *ātman*, as a *puruṣa* that is endowed with a material body. In the debate, Xuanzang proves that the soul can neither be conflated with the *puruṣa* nor separated from the *tattvas*. He argues that, by definition, the Sāṅkhya soul is embedded within the *tattvas* and that any attempt to extricate or separate the soul from the *tattvas* violates a strict interpretation of the Sāṅkhya scriptures.

³¹⁶ The Chinese translation for the Sanskrit word *tanmātra* means, literally, “that which is known to exist merely by virtue of/by dint of being perceptible” (*weiliang* 唯量).

³¹⁷ Puguang, *Study Notes on the Kośa*, fascicle 3 (T1821:41.58.a09-12): “the core of the ego is thought/thinking. By nature it is a mere experiencer/enjoyer but not an agent (*kartṛ*). The remaining 24 *tattvas* are ‘mine’ (*ātmīya*). They are what I enjoy and put to use.” 我以思為體。性但是受者而非作者。餘二十四諦是我所。是我之所受用。

As the Nālanda University debate proceeds, Xuanzang uses the internal inconsistencies and incoherencies in the ancient textual material of the *Sāṅkhyakārikās* to dismantle the Sāṅkhya doctrine of the existence of the soul. In doing so, he furthers his lifelong mission of expunging what he and his supporters regard as supernatural forces in the form of the *ātman* from Chinese Buddhism, once and for all.

Debunking the Notion of the Soul as a Locus of Sensory Experience

The *Sāṅkhyakārikās* describe the soul, or the *ātman*, as a subject, or an active agent, that is endowed with the capacity to experience sensory phenomena. In the *Sāṅkhyakārikās* and in the prose commentary of Gauḍapada, the *ātman* is described as an “enjoyer” and an “experiencer” (Skt.: *bhoktr*)³¹⁸ of the material realm. Within the Sāṅkhya schema, “the twenty-four *tattvas* essentially serve and provide for the soul-they are what the soul gets to enjoy” 此二十四並供奉於我，所受用。The Chinese translation of the Sanskrit term *bhoktr* is a two-character compound. that means “to enjoy, and to put to use” (Chi.: *shou-yong* 受用). A very literal interpretation of this phrase implies that the *ātman* is the enjoyer and the user of the *tattvas*. Gauḍapada specifies that the *ātman*, as the enjoyer and experiencer of sensation, is composed of three parts: the *puruṣa*, the *ahankāra*, and *prakṛti*. The *ahankāra* serves as the active agent that, together with *prakṛti*, invests the remaining *tattvas* with the capacity for sensation. Gauḍapada makes the important distinction that the *puruṣa*, on its own, is not an enjoyer or experiencer of the sensory world

After summarizing the doctrine of the *tattvas* at the Nālanda Gate, Xuanzang turns to the Sāṅkhya teaching of the *puruṣa* as the “enjoyer and experiencer” of the twenty-four *tattvas*.

³¹⁸ The doctrine that the *puruṣa* “experiences” sensations finds its *locus classicus* in the first line of stanza 17 of *Sāṅkhyakārikās*, stanza 17 *saṃghātaparāthavāt triguṇādiviparyayādadhīṣṭhānāt| puruṣo'sti bhoktrbhāvāt kaivalyārtham pravṛtteḥśca|| 17||* (Dutt 1933, p. 20). “*Puruṣa* exists in perfect isolation (*kaivalya*) because of the fact that the activity *pravṛtti* [of it] is based upon the inversion of the three qualities, and because of the fact that the compounded things (*saṃghāta*) exists for the purpose of someone else.”

Demonstrating his penetrating knowledge of the *Sāṅkhyakārikās* to the crowd of acolytes and protagonists attending the debate, Xuanzang faithfully represents the Sāṅkhya concept of the *ātman* as the subject of sensory experience and as an entity that enjoys and makes use of the *tattvas*. Additionally, in a rejoinder that appears in the CWSL, Xuanzang returns to discuss the Sāṅkhya concept of the *ātman* as the user and the enjoyer of the *tattvas*. Xuanzang and the compilers of the CWSL employ the metaphor of a potter who makes an earthen jar (Skt.: *ghaṭa*) to enjoy drinking. In this metaphor, the potter represents the soul who uses the *tattvas* to experience and enjoy the activities of living, in this case the pleasure of consumption.

The CWSL dismantles the notion of the soul as the enjoyer and the experiencer of the *tattvas* by employing his extensive knowledge of the Sāṅkhya scriptures and by highlighting the internal inconsistencies within the doctrine. The soul within the Sāṅkhya doctrine is viewed as unchanging, eternal, and unsullied. This depiction is incongruent with the picture of the soul as a user of the *tattvas* and an enjoyer and experiencer of the sensory world. Xuanzang capitalizes on this inconsistency in his metaphor of the soul as the potter. To Xuanzang, the humble potter who creates a cup to enjoy drinking is not equivalent to the immutable and untaintable conception of the Sāṅkhya soul.

Xuanzang avers that the Sāṅkhya conceptualization of the *ātman* as the enjoyer and the experiencer of the twenty-five *tattvas* is untenable. His argument is as follows: Because the *puruṣa* is eternal and unchanging, it cannot be modified by material phenomena. The capacity to experience sensation occurs as the *puruṣa* becomes linked with the second and third *tattvas*, *prakṛti* and *ahaṅkāra*, and the subsequent twenty-three *tattvas*. As the *puruṣa*, *prakṛti*, and *ahaṅkāra* activate the *tattvas*, the *ātman*, as defined by the embodied *puruṣa*, obtains the capacity to enjoy and experience pleasure and pain. This involves a modification of the *puruṣa* and places it at risk

of contamination from the material realm. Therefore, the depiction of the essence of the *ātman* – the pure *puruṣa* – as the enjoyer and experiencer of sensation is incongruent with the definition of the *ātman* as unchanging, unsullied, and eternal. Xuanzang views the idea of the *ātman* as the experiencer and enjoyer of the *tattvas* as inconsistent with Sāṅkhya theory on its own terms.

Xuanzang continues to dismantle the idea of *ātman* as the enjoyer and experiencer of the sensory world in his translation of the *Gate of Logic*, a textbook used by schools of Indian philosophy spanning the Buddhist, Brāhmanical and Jain traditions. This text includes a three-part syllogism that attempts to prove that the soul, as constituted by the *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*, is the locus of experience. A logical argument widely maintained by Sāṅkhya commentators, the syllogism is as follows: The soul is the subject of thinking, the subject of experience and the subject of thinking about experience. The reason for this is that the soul enjoys and makes use of the twenty-three *tattvas*. The example of this is that the soul makes use of the twenty-three *tattvas* in the same way the potter makes use of an earthenware cup for drinking.

In his translation of the *Gate of Logic*, Xuanzang concludes that the three-part syllogism used to prove that the soul is a locus of experience suffers from a logical error. Within the system used to construct a syllogism, the terms and the definitions used in all three propositions: the thesis statement, the reason and the example, must correspond to clear and agreed-upon points of reference. Furthermore, these points of reference must adhere to conventions that are acceptable to both the disputant and the opponent. Specifically, the definitions of the subject and the predicate must be agreed upon if the conclusion based on the three propositions is to stand.

Xuanzang takes issue with the first proposition of the syllogism, “The soul is the subject of thinking.” He charges that the predicate, “thinking,” does not fit the subject, “the soul,” when it is defined as the combination of *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*. Given that the activity of thinking is extrinsic

to the material part of the soul, the *prakṛti*, Xuanzang avers that the predicate remains unestablished (Skt.: *aprasiddha*; Chi.: *bucheng* 不成). If, however, the subject formed by the *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* is supplemented with additional *tattvas*, such as the sensory faculties, “thinking” could become an essential quality of the subject. Because the *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* are isolated from the remaining twenty-three *tattvas*, the subject by definition cannot think or experience. Xuanzang points out that the combination of the *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* is too feeble to support the robust content of experience that is associated with the embodied soul of the *Sāṅkhyakārikās*. Xuanzang therefore eviscerates the concept of the *ātman* as the enjoyer and the experiencer by highlighting the error of logic in the syllogism.

In his translation of the *Gate of Logic*, Xuanzang defines the soul or the *ātman* as the union of *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*. He uses the pronoun “I (Ego)” (Chi.: *Wo* 我) to capture the idea of the soul as a thinker and an experiencer of the material realm. In using the pronoun “I,” Xuanzang endows the soul with the capacity to think and differentiates the *puruṣa* from the *ātman* as the experiencer of the twenty-three *tattvas*. With this distinction, Xuanzang demonstrates his fidelity to the Sāṅkhya idea of the soul as the embodied *puruṣa*, while highlighting the problem of investing the soul with the capacity for sensory experience and thought. If the soul is, by definition, eternal and unchanging, how can the soul be the bearer or enjoyer of changing thoughts and changing experiences? To a Buddhist, who does not accept the notion that changing thoughts must belong to an unchanging bearer, the burden of proof is not met.

Debunking the Notion of the Soul as the Bearer of the Twenty-Five *Tattvas*

The *Sāṅkhyakārikās* explicate the soul, or the *ātman*, as the bearer (Skt.: *adhithatr*) of the *tattvas*, the essential elements that compose and sustain life. They depict the soul as a container or vessel with the capacity to store, nurture and maintain the twenty-five *tattvas*. Within the Sāṅkhya

schema, the soul is responsible for the cohesion and the restoration of the *tattvas*. Without the presence of the soul, the *tattvas* disassemble and dissolve. In the debate with the Plain-Spoken Brahman, Xuanzang takes issue with the Sāṅkhya notion of the soul as the bearer of the twenty-five *tattvas*.

After reciting the sequence of the *tattvas* to the audience at Nālanda University, Xuanzang proceeds to deconstruct the conception of the soul as the bearer of the twenty-five *tattvas*. His argument is founded upon his strict definition and interpretation of the Sāṅkhya schema of the *puruṣa* as the unchanging Spirit (Skt.: *Brahman*³¹⁹; Chi.: *Fan* 梵) and *prakṛti* as the changing material reality-the first two *tattvas* from which all aspects of the soul and the material body evolve.

Xuanzang dismantles the notion of the soul as the bearer of the *tattvas* with the following argument: If the soul is composed of the *puruṣa*, the first *tattva*, and the subsequent twenty-four *tattvas*, it cannot be the bearer of the *tattvas*. Xuanzang contends that if the *puruṣa* is assigned to the task of containing the other *tattvas*, it will fail because the *puruṣa* is disembodied and therefore cannot bear the *tattvas*. He states: “The *puruṣa* is eternal and unchanging. In and of itself, it is not involved in either supporting or restoring the twenty-four *tattvas*. Only with *prakṛti* can the *puruṣa* bear the rest of the twenty-three *tattvas*.”

Embedded within the Sāṅkhya conceptualization of the soul as the bearer of the twenty-five *tattvas* is the concept of the soul as the bearer of karma. In the Sāṅkhya schema, karma is defined as the good and bad actions, as well as the merits and demerits, accumulated by a person during life. In this picture, the *ātman* is shouldered with the karmic responsibility for the effects of the painful, pleasurable or neutral actions performed by the human being. Xuanzang avers that

³¹⁹ Sir Monier-Williams *Skt. Dictionary*: “the one impersonal universal Spirit manifested as a personal Creator and as the first of the triad of personal gods.”

the *ātman*, when defined as the *puruṣa*, is, quite literally, not up to the task of bearing karma. This conceptualization of the *ātman* as the bearer of karma has enormous implications for Xuanzang's exegesis of dying and death.

Xuanzang concludes that the Sāṅkhya conceptualization of the soul as the bearer of the twenty-five *tattvas* is untenable for two reasons. First, because the *puruṣa* is pure consciousness and disembodied, it requires the capacities of the twenty-four *tattvas* to bear the soul; second, because the soul is composed of the *puruṣa* and a material body composed of the *tattvas*, it cannot simultaneously be the bearer of the *tattvas*. Xuanzang, therefore, views the Sāṅkhya theory of the soul as the bearer of the *tattvas* as internally incoherent.

Dismantling the Relationship of the *Ahaṅkāra* to the Soul

The *Sāṅkhyakārikās* view the *ātman* as endowed with the capacity to empower, direct, and coordinate the sensory, physical, and cognitive functions necessary to sustain human life. According to Sāṅkhya theory, the invisible forces that work for the *ātman* are responsible for the visible activity of human life. Implicit in this picture is a mysterious “spirit-cum-*ātman*” (Chi.: *shenwo* 神我) that pulls the levers that operate the human being. Xuanzang takes issue with the idea of a “ghost in the machine” that works within the body to make human activity possible. For Xuanzang, the notion of the spirit-cum-*ātman* demonstrates what he regards as an over-reliance on the supernatural and the occult in the Sāṅkhya explanations of life and death.

The *Sāṅkhyakārikās* unequivocally state that the *puruṣa* is “a spectator” (Skt.: *prekṣavat*) in the theater of the body. As a spectator, the *puruṣa* does not get involved in the actions of *prakṛti* or *maḥat*, or in any of activities of the remaining *tattvas* that transform the material elements into the eleven *indriyas* that generate and sustain human life. The idea of the *puruṣa* as the *prekṣavat* is significant in the Sāṅkhya doctrine because the *puruṣa*, by definition, is pure and untainted. Any

activity that requires contact with the material world is executed at the behest of the *puruṣa* by the *ahankāra*. In the theater of the body, the *ahankāra* plays the role of a surrogate who is anointed by the *puruṣa* to do whatever is necessary in the material world to generate life.³²⁰ Essentially, the *ahankāra* is sent by the *puruṣa* into the defiled material realm to do the dirty work required to sustain life. The *puruṣa* thus remains undefiled.

In his recitation of the Sāṅkhya doctrine in the dispute with the Plain-Spoken Brāhmin at the Nālanda Gate, Xuanzang adheres to the spirit and the letter of the hallowed nineteenth stanza of the *Sāṅkhyakārikās*. Here Xuanzang upholds the Sāṅkhya view of the *puruṣa* as a *prekṣavat*, a passive observer. The classical Sāṅkhya texts are consistent and explicit in their position that the *puruṣa*, *simpliciter*, is not an agent (Skt.: *karṭṛtva*) or an agentive entity. Sāṅkhya doctrine locates the source of agentive power outside the *puruṣa* and within the material trappings of the body. In the commentary to stanza nineteen, *Yuktiḍīpikā* states: “It [the *puruṣa*] does not exist in the form of an agent, because of the fact that it is by nature imperturbable (Skt.: *aprasava*).”³²¹ Bryant writes: “To be an agent means to be able to ‘produce’ an action, and this either entails the agentive entity undergoing some internal change or admixture with some other external entity and thereby undergoing change.”³²² Since the *puruṣa* is by definition unchanging and eternal, it cannot also be an agent that is involved in the various and changing activities of living.

Gauḍapāda, in his commentary, and *Yuktiḍīpikā* make the important stipulation that the *puruṣa* is not implicated in the operation of the corporeal organs of the body. In the Sāṅkhya schema, the *puruṣa* does not operate the sense faculties or any of the *tattvas*, including the eleven

³²⁰ The second line of stanza 67 of *Sāṅkhyakārikās* reads, see Dutt, ed., *Sāṅkhyakārikās*, 69: *Prakṛtiṃ paśyati puruṣaḥ prekṣakavadavasthitaḥ svasthaḥ*//67cd//

³²¹ *Yuktiḍīpikā*, ed. Tripathi (Krishnadas Academy, 1999), 117: *Akarṭṛbhāvaḥ, aprasavadharmitvāt*.

³²² Bryant, “Agency in Sāṅkhya,” 19.

indriyas that sustain human life. The role of transforming the materials of the world into the organs and activities of the body falls to the “derivative” (Skt.: *vaikṛtya*)³²³ *ahañkāra*, also known as the “active” (Skt.: *niṣkṛta*)³²⁴ *ahañkāra*. The *vaikṛtya-ahañkāra* serves the *puruṣa* as the active agent who is charged with contacting and manipulating the elements of the material world. The *vaikṛta ahañkāra* interacts with the three material elements that activate the eleven *indriyas*: *sattvas*, *rajas*, and *tamas*. According to Gauḍapāda, only the *vaikṛtya-ahañkāra* can engage in the process of transforming (Skt.: *pariṇāma*) the material elements into the eleven *indriyas*. Additionally, the *vaikṛtya-ahañkāra* is involved in the alterations of the external material of the five *tanmātras*³²⁵ that ultimately stimulate the sensory *indriyas*. For example, the *vaikṛtya-ahañkāra* activates the process of taking in material from the outside world, such as food, and transforming it into nutrients for use by the body.

In the Sāṅkhya schema, neither the *puruṣa* nor the *indriyas* are conceived of as possessing agentic power. Kuiji rightly states that the *puruṣa* is weak 實我用劣.³²⁶ It is the *vaikṛtya-ahañkāra*, and the *vaikṛtya-ahañkāra* alone, that possesses the strength and the willpower to activate the *indriyas*. Charged by the *puruṣa* with the responsibility of willing the *indriyas* into the activities required to generate and sustain life, the *vaikṛta ahāṅkara* is the power behind the throne. In his Chinese rendition of stanza forty-two of the *Sāṅkhyakārikās*, Paramārtha states that “the intentions

³²³ Kuiji’s comments read: “For the Sāṅkhya masters, the five factors including the eye are (identical to) the five cognitive faculties (*pañca-prajñēndriyāṇi*). The pillow and the cot are factors formed through the accumulation of five types of sensible objects (Skt.: *tanmātras*; Chi.: *wei-liang* 唯量).”其數論師，眼等五法，即五知根，臥具床座，即五唯量所集成法。(T1840:44.129.b02-3).

³²⁴ The word “*vaikṛta*” is a *vṛddhi*-derivative from “*vi-kṛt*,” meaning “to alter.”

³²⁵ For Gauḍapāda’s glosses on SK 25, see Dutt, ed., *Sāṅkhyakārikās*, 27. Gauḍapada’s commentary on this stanza says that “From the derivative ego there proceeds the eleven-fold constituency which is characterized by *sattva*. *Sāttvika ekadaśakaḥ pravartate vaikṛtādahāṅkārāt*.

³²⁶ Kuiji, *Great Commentary on the Gate of Logic*, fascicle 3, T1840:44.129.b11.

of the *ahaṅkara* serve as the causal basis (for the *indriyas*)” 我意用為因。³²⁷ This means that the *indriyas*, because they are of a material nature, are modifiable only with the will, intention, and action of the *vaikṛtya-ahaṅkara*. In this picture, the *vaikṛtya-ahaṅkara*, under the direction of the *puruṣa*, recruits the *indriyas* into active duty. This is accomplished by activating the three vital elements of life. Within this schema, the *ātman* is given the power to sustain and replenish the three vital qualities of life: *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*.

The *ātman*, described in the Sāṅkhya scripture as the embodied *puruṣa*, is thus a collection of passive and pure and of agentic and defiled elements. This conceptualization is at odds with the picture of the soul as an unchanging and pure entity. Watson (2006, p. 95): describes how, by conflating the *puruṣa* with the Ultimate or True Soul (Chi.: *Zhenwo*), Sāṅkhya assigns active agency to the faculties: “Sāṅkhya souls are completely inactive experiences (*bhoktr*) in the form of pure sentience (*caitanya*): mental occurrences such as pleasure, pain and cognition thus happen not to them but to the psycho-physical organism, in particular, its mental faculties.”

Debunking the Doctrine of Three Vital Qualities: *Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*

Within the Sāṅkhya taxonomy, the second *tattva*, *prakṛti*, is defined as the primeval substrate from which the three vital qualities that invest the body with life materialize. It is from *prakṛti* that the three primary *guṇas* – *sattva*, life, goodness or pleasure; *rajas*, passion or pain; and *tamas*, delusion or obscurity³²⁸ – emerge. Dingbin 定賓, a contemporary of Xuanzang who is known for his prolific scholarship on the Buddhist monastic discipline (Skt.: *vinaya*), states: “By

³²⁷ T2137:54.1255.b05.

³²⁸ Xuanzang uses the phonetic renderings of *sachui* 薩埵, *chuici* 埵刺, and *damo* 答摩. Paramārtha uses different phonetic renderings (i.e., *sachui* 薩埵, *luoshe* 羅闍, and *duomo* 多磨), as well as the semantic renderings as “pleasure” 樂, “suffering” 苦, and “delusion and opacity.” 癡闇.

its very nature *prakṛti* is composed of the three vital qualities (Skt.: *guṇas*).”³²⁹ While each *guṇa* is distinct, all three are based on the primordial material principle, or “Ur-matter.” According to the Sāṅkhya theory, the three *guṇas* are present in human beings in various amounts and proportions. The admixture of *sattvas*, *rajas*, and *tamas* is responsible for determining the personality, temperament, and somatic characteristics of the human being. Human beings also have the unique capability to alter the levels of the three *guṇas* in their bodies and minds through ritual and practice.

Xuanzang precisely and accurately recites the Sāṅkhya theory of the three vital qualities in his debate with the Plain-Spoken Brāhmin at the Nālānda Gate. In his exegetical work, in both his Abhidharma corpus and in his CWSL, Xuanzang demonstrates his fluency in the Brāhmaṇical scriptures and enlists his expert knowledge to highlight the inconsistencies and contradictions in the doctrine. In the dispute at Nālānda Gate, Xuanzang exploits the systemic problems in the theory of the *guṇas* to erode the credibility of the Sāṅkhya doctrine of the *ātman* as the bearer of the qualities that distinguish life from the death.

Xuanzang posits that the Sāṅkhya definition of the *ātman*, as defined by the *puruṣa*, the *prakṛti* endowed with the three *guṇas* and the eleven *indriyas*, as the container of all that is required for life, is incoherent. In the Nālānda debate, Xuanzang deconstructs the Sāṅkhya conceptualization of the *ātman* as the bearer of the qualities that distinguish life from death. In his argument, Xuanzang strictly defines and describes the *guṇas* according to the scripture of *Sāṅkhyakārikās*, highlights insufficiencies in the theory of the three *guṇas* to differentiate the

³²⁹ Dingbin’s *vinaya* commentary (X733:42.223.c01-3) states that: “three qualities are the nature of *prakṛti*. There are three meanings inherent in *sattva*: ‘austere,’ ‘covetous,’ and ‘pleasurable.’ Next, *rajas* also contains three meanings: ‘naked,’ ‘confused,’ and ‘painful.’ Then, *tejas* also contains three meanings: dark, confused, and aversive.”三德為性，調薩埵者。自有三義。一、黃。二、貪。三、樂。次刺闍者亦有三義。一、赤。二、瞋。三、苦。

indriyas, discredits the conceptualization of the *ātman* as the provider and executive operator of the sensory *indriyas*, and debunks the notion that the five physical *indriyas* are dependent upon the *guṇas* to function. In his systematic deconstruction of the Sāṅkhya theory of the *guṇas*, Xuanzang decisively concludes that the vital qualities of life are not borne by the *ātman*. This position is taken by Xuanzang as further evidence to discredit the Sāṅkhya idea that a supernatural soul, in the form of the *ātman*, is necessary to explain survival.

On the Sāṅkhya Definition of the Three Vital Qualities of Life

In his argumentation against the Sāṅkhya doctrine of the soul, Xuanzang focuses on the seventeenth stanza of the *Sāṅkhyakārikās* as a cynosure for the Sāṅkhya idea of the soul as the bearer of the vital qualities that pertain to a living thing. As evidence for the existence of the soul, the seventeenth stanza of the *Sāṅkhyakārikās* cites the presence in the living being (Skt.: *sāttvika*) of “three different modifications of the three attributes” of the *guṇas* (Dutt 1933, p. 30).³³⁰ In Paramārtha’s Chinese rendition of stanza seventeen, the three *guṇas* are described as the “branches” of the soul and valorized as the ultimate “roots” of life.

The *Sāṅkhyakārikās* scriptures elevate *sattva* among the three qualities or *guṇas* that animate the *indriyas* of the body. Monier-Williams defines *sattva* as “the quality of purity or goodness regarded in the Sāṅkhya philosophy as the highest of the three *guṇas* or constituents of *prakṛti* because it renders a person true, honest, wise and a thing pure, clean, etc.” While the word for life in Buddhism is also *sattva*, the Buddhists attribute a more neutral meaning to the term as compared to the very sanguine Brāhmaṇical interpretation of *sattva*. In the Sāṅkhya lexicon, the term *sāttvika* is an epithet for the bearer of life. The term *sāttvika* is used by Gauḍapāda in his sub-

³³⁰ For original Skt. of Gauḍapāda’s commentary see Dutt’s ed., *Sāṅkhyakārikās*, 21: *Triguṇabhāvanaviparyayāc ca puruṣabahutvaṃ siddham* | This appears as one of three reasons that the soul is particular to the individual – see Watson, *The Self’s Awareness of Itself*, 60.

glosses on the seventeenth stanza of the *Sāṅkhyakārikās* to indicate the living human.

The idea of *sattva* as the highest or the foremost of the three *guṇas* presupposes a hierarchy that does not capture the Sāṅkhya formulation of the three vital qualities. Rather than being configured as a feudal monarchy, with the *sattva* in the position of the king who presides over the *rajas* and *tamas*, the three *guṇas* are viewed as a triumvirate. Each member of the triumvirate has equal standing, in that each of the *guṇas* carries a specific quality that, when combined with the others, enables and activates the eleven, twelve, or thirteen *indriyas* of the body.³³¹

Although the ancient taxonomy codified in the *Sāṅkhyakārikās* lists eleven faculties that are tools for the soul, the *Sāṅkhyakārikās* also contain rubrics of twelve *ahaṅkāra* and thirteen *indriyas*. The *Sāṅkhyakārikās* list the “thirteen efficacious tools” of the soul as the five ordinary senses, or *prājñendriyāṇi*; the five faculties of action, or *kārmēndriyāṇi*; intelligence (Skt.: *buddhi*), ego-making (Skt.: *ahaṅkāra*), and mind (Skt.: *manas*; Chi.: *yi* 意).³³² The important difference between the rubrics of twelve and thirteen faculties is that the former treats the mind (Skt.: *manas*) as independent from the other thirteen faculties. All of the Sāṅkhya rubrics list the ordinary senses before the faculties for physical action and highlight the mind as a singularly important and empowering tool for the *ātman*. The identification of the *indriyas* as the tools of the *ātman* is fortified by the Sāṅkhya theory that the *indriyas* are composed of the three *guṇas*. The three qualities of *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas* are said to account for the variegated functions and different dispositional natures and capacities of the eleven *indriyas*.

³³¹ See *Vṛtti* commentary on stanza 36 of *Sāṅkhyakārikās* (T54n2137p1254a17-23).

³³² The *Vṛtti* commentary to Stanza 32 of Paramārtha’s Chi. trans. of *Sāṅkhyakārikās* reads: “‘The instrumental tools numbering thirteen,’ indicates the ‘instrumental tools,’ that are spoken of in many places in this treatise. The number is determinate and restricted to thirteen: namely, five cognitive faculties, five faculties for action, *buddhi*, *ahaṅkāra*, and *manas*.” 「作具數十三」者。此論中處處說「作具」，決定唯十三。五知根•五作根、及覺•慢•心等 (T2137:54.1253.b11-19).

In stanza eighteen of the *Sāṅkhyakārikās*, the three *guṇas* are likened to the three sons of a great Brāhmin. Each of the sons has a different disposition: the first is bright and joyful; the second is fearful and averse to difficulties and discomfort; and the third is ignorant and confused. While the temperaments of the sons are separate and distinct, their individual characteristics influence and inform one another. If there is a shift in the balance of power among the sons, the overall dynamic among the three is altered. For example, if the third son becomes more powerful than his older brothers, his ignorance will dominate their interactions.

In his *vr̥tti* commentary, Paramārtha builds upon the metaphor of the three vital, agentive powers and the relationship between the three rival siblings sired by a great Brāhmin.³³³ The metaphor of the three sons of the Brāhmin appears in the context of a discussion on the relationship between *prakṛti*, the material principle, and the soul. While Paramārtha generally uses examples adduced in earlier commentary by Gauḍapāda in his discussions, the metaphor of the three siblings is unique to this text.³³⁴ Within this example, the Brāhmin is meant to stand for the singular self and is identified with the soul and its ego-making power (Skt.: *ahaṅkāra*). The three sons of the Brāhmin are a synecdoche for the interaction between the three discrete factors, or *guṇas*, that make up the personality of the individual. Just as each of the three *guṇas* evinces a defining

³³³ The *vr̥tti* commentary to *Sāṅkhyakārikās* 18 (T2137:54.1249.c22-27) adduces the example of the Brahmin's three sons, each characterized by different personality traits based upon the distribution of their three *guṇas*: "Granted that the personality is one, its three qualities should not contain differences. We liken it to one Brāhmin who sires three sons. One [of the sons] is bright, welcoming, and joyful. Another [son] is trepidatious of difficulties and discomfort. The other [son] is wicked, benighted, and idiotic. 若人一者。三德應無異。如一婆羅門生於三子。一聰明歡樂。二可畏困苦。三闇黑愚癡。

If their personalities were all the same, when one son becomes joyful, then the other two should be equally joyful. The same should follow for discomfort or idocy. If you say that [the three qualities] can be likened to stringing pearls together or the gum of the myrrh tree (Skt.: **viṣā*; Chi.: *pixi* 毘細), then the personality is unitary. But this doctrine is not correct. It is for this reason that the five references (i.e., the five examples referred to in *vr̥tti* commentary to *Sāṅkhyakārikās*, verse 16), are meant to instill understanding that the personality contains plural elements." 若人一者。一人喜樂一切同喜樂。苦癡亦如是。汝說貫珠及毘細譬。故我一者。是義不然。是故因五義則知我有多。The analogy of the string of pearls appears in the commentary to the preceding verse, where it is understood to indicate the underlying unity of "many pearls strung *together on one string*." 珠多繩一。

³³⁴ This example is found in Paramārtha's *vr̥tti* commentary, but is not attested in Gauḍapāda's commentary.

characteristic, each of the three siblings carries a defining temperament.³³⁵ Separate and distinct, yet fundamentally inseparable and indivisible within a single personality, each of the three qualities engages in the productive cooperation necessary to manifest the quality of the individual. In the Sāṅkhya schema, this karmic activity is willed into action by the soul.

As an alternative to the metaphor of the *guṇas* as the sons of the Brāhmin, the simile of the three *guṇas* and the string of three pearls is offered by Gauḍapāda and Paramārtha in their Chinese commentaries on stanza eighteen of the *Sāṅkhyakārikās*. In this description, the three *guṇas* are like three pearls on a necklace. While each of the three pearls is separate and distinct, they are also strung together on a single strand of thread. The three pearls represent the disparate aspects or separate dispositions of the person, while the string represents the unity of the personality. Here the commentaries of Gauḍapāda and Paramārtha emphasize the idea that while the characteristics of the human are composed of the three discrete features of *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tejas*, the personality as an entity is unified. A key hemistich in stanza eleven of this work (SK 11a) states that the "three *guṇas* are mutually inseparable" 三德不相離.³³⁶

While all three *guṇas* are present in each human being, the relative amount of each is said to determine the specific quality, nature, and activities of the *indriyas*. It is the balance and relative

³³⁵ Dingbin writes: "If one seeks a comprehensive discrimination between them, then yellow red, and black are the attributes of color. Cupidity, anger, and delusion are attributes of the mind. Pleasure, pain, and aversion are attributes of personal experience. They exist in two stages: firstly, in the primeval stage; and secondly, in the dormant, unaroused stage. The [first two] *tattvas* are exist throughout the stages of the evolution of mahat and the other twenty-three *tattvas* [below *purusa* and *prakṛti*]. We liken it to the way that the sprout grows out of the seed, gradually increasing in size and becoming fleshed out. The third *tattva* – *ahaṅkāra* – which refers to the conceit that is aroused by self-serving – this is what *ahaṅkāra* is as an entity." 次答摩者亦有三義。一黑。二癡。三捨。若總辨者。黃赤黑即是色德。貪嗔癡即是心德。樂苦捨是受用德。其位有兩。一者。在冥性位。眠伏不起。二者。在大等二十三諦位中。便有覺悟。第二大諦。此從冥性轉變生也。猶如種子欲生芽時。漸脹大也。第三我慢諦。調恃我而起慢。即此為體。

³³⁶ *Sāṅkhyakārikās*, verse 1, *vṛtti*, translated by Paramārtha (T2137:54.1246.a29-30), "The branches of the *mahats*, etc., are three kinds of properties: *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tejas*. These branched properties depart from the root property [of mahat]; but if not for the root property, they would not be realized." 大等諸末有三種德。一樂。二苦。三癡闇。此末德離本德。末德則不成。

proportion of the *guṇas* inherent in the *indriyas* that determine the sensory, physical, and cognitive sensibilities of the individual. Returning to the metaphor of the three sons of the Brāhmin, if the balance of power between the three son shifts over time, the political climate changes as well. For example, if *tejas* predominates over *sattvas*, or *rajas*, the human being will become more phlegmatic in demeanor.³³⁷ Similarly, if *rajas* predominates over *sattva* and *tejas*, the person will become more bellicose in disposition. An increased concentration of *sattva* makes a person more spirited and vivacious in demeanor and more vigorous in his physicality.³³⁸ Although the balance and distribution of the three qualities may change over the life of a person, the presence of the three *guṇas* is an invariable fact of life.³³⁹

The Discrimination of One Faculty From Another in Terms of the Three *Guṇas*

The Sāṅkhya theorists suggests that the *ātman* is the container, generator, and operator of the eleven *indriyas*. In this schema, the *ātman* is viewed as the *puruṣa*, the *prakṛti*, the *ahankāra*

³³⁷ *Vṛtti* commentary on *Sāṅkhyakārikās* 11c (T2137:54.1247.c14-17): “When joy and pleasure predominate, they are capable of overcoming anxiety, confusion, and benightedness. We liken it to the ever increasing light of the sun that is capable of overcoming the moon, stars, etc.” 若喜·樂增多，能伏憂癡闇，譬如盛日光。能伏月星等。The simile of “sun’s brightness overcoming the moon, stars, etc.,” to one of the three *guṇas* overcoming the others makes use of a clever, but untranslatable, pun on the Chinese character *fu* in its senses as both “to subdue” and “to hide.” The primary meaning of this character, according to the ancient Chinese lexicographer Xu Shen is “to subdue.” The text continues: “When anxiety and worry predominate (i.e. *rajas*), and when benightedness can overcome anxiety and joy, darkness and benightedness predominate. These are capable of subduing any sense of joy and/or pleasure, just like the increasingly bright luminescence of the sun is capable of overcoming the stars and the moon such that the stars and moon are no longer visible. When anxiety and worry predominate, they are capable of subduing joy, pleasure, and benightedness just like the growing brightness of the sun overcomes the brightness of the stars and sun, such that they are no longer visible. We liken the three *guṇas* to the three sticks that are capable of keeping each other upright, and that are capable of supporting each other. They are capable of sustaining their [mutual] irrigation.” 有時憂惱能生喜癡。有時癡能生憂喜。若闇癡增多。能伏憂喜樂。亦如日盛光。星月明不現。若憂惱增多。能伏喜樂癡。亦如明日光。能伏星與月。...如三杖互能相依，能持澡濯等。

³³⁸ Paramārtha, *vṛtti* on *Sāṅkhyakārikās*, verse 23 (T2137:54.1251.a19-22): “When *sattva* increases, it is capable of overcoming *rajas* and *tamas*. Then, the ego is joyous and pleased, and hence, evices the four attributes that define *sattva*.” 若薩埵增長。能伏羅闇及多摩。是時我多喜樂故得法等四德。是名薩埵相。These four attributes are meritoriousness (Skt.: *dharma*; Chi.: *fa* 法), wisdom (Skt.: *prajñā*; Chi.: *hui* 慧), distance from desire (Skt.: *vairāga*; Chi.: *liyu* 離欲), and independence (Skt.: *aiśvarya*; Chi.: *zizai* 自在).

³³⁹ A doggerel sloka is found in Gauḍapada’s commentary (Dutt, *Sāṅkhyakārikās*, 15): *Rajas* forms a pair with *sattvam* and *sattvam* forms a pair with *rajas*. *Tamas* refers to the pair of both *rajas* and *sattvam*. *Rajaso mithunaṃ sattvaṃ sattvasya mithunaṃ rajaḥ/ Ubhayoḥ sattvarajasor mithunaṃ tama ucyate|| devībhāgata.*

and the eleven *indriyas*. The *ahaṅkāra* is anointed by the *purusa* to transform the three vital qualities of *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas* into the eleven *indriyas*. The three *guṇas* are viewed as the tools and the raw materials used by the *ahaṅkāra*, under the direction of the *ātman*, to create the eleven *indriyas*. Within the Sāṅkhya theory, therefore, the eleven *indriyas* are composed of and enlivened by the three qualities of *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*. Additionally, the Sāṅkhya theorists assume that the visible physical activity of the body is direct evidence of the presence of the three vital qualities of life. Because the three vital qualities of life are viewed as the tools and the materials of the *ātman*, the physical activity of the body is proof of the presence of the *ātman*.

Xuanzang takes issue with the assumption that the physical evidence of the three *guṇas*, the presence of life, passion, and ignorance in the human being, is sufficient to prove the existence of the soul. In discrediting this idea, Xuanzang uses his knowledge of the Sāṅkhya taxonomy to highlight the internal inconsistencies within the Sāṅkhya theory of the *indriyas*. His overarching argument is intended to highlight the over-reliance within the *Sāṅkhyakārikās* scriptures on the *ātman* as the entity responsible for the generation and operation of the *indriyas*.

In composing his argument, Xuanzang focuses on the theory of the *guṇas*. At the center of his discomfort with the Sāṅkhya theory of the *guṇas* is this question: How is it possible that the diverse expression of human life originates from the three material substrates of *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*? More specifically, Xuanzang questions how the admixtures of three substances can account for the diverse range of physical activities of the human being and how the presence and the proportions of the three *guṇas* can differentiate one *indriya* from another. In his rationale, Xuanzang focuses on several dilemmas that result in unsavory and unwanted consequences for the Sāṅkhya theory of the three *guṇas*.

Huili's biography contains a transcript of the reasoned critique of the Brāhmaṇical

taxonomy used by Xuanzang in the dispute with the Plain-Spoken Brāhmin. In the debate, Xuanzang begins by articulating the Sāṅkhya doctrine of the three *guṇas*. Xuanzang accurately states the Sāṅkhya concept that the proportion of the three *guṇas* within each of the eleven *indriyas* determines the differences among them. The Sāṅkhya theory holds that each of the eleven *indriyas* can be differentiated from the others according to the percentage of the three vital qualities within each *indriya*. For example, the *indriya* of seeing is composed of material infused primarily with *sattvas*, and the *indriya* of tasting is made of material suffused predominately with *rajas*.

Xuanzang contends that the idea that the *indriyas* can be differentiated from one another by the three *guṇas* is insufficient to explain either the versatility of the *indriyas* or the complexity of the activities that are executed by the body and the mind. In the Nālāṇḍa debate, Xuanzang asserts that the Sāṅkhya taxonomy of eleven faculties contains both conceptual lacunae and redundant posits. He exposes a core vulnerability in the Sāṅkhya theory with a conditional statement: If the *indriyas* are made of the same three components, then the *indriyas* should be more similar to one another than different. Huili records the *reductio ad absurdum* argument formulated by Xuanzang in the debate as follows:

Mahat (i.e., the third tattva in the Sāṅkhya taxonomy) is formed by the three *guṇas*. If the three *guṇas* are mutually-identical, then their mutual-identity holds between all three of the *guṇas*. Granted that the three *guṇas* are mutually-identical, and that the mutual-identity holds for all of them, it would then be the case that each and every one of *indriyas* possesses all the equivalent functions.又此大等各以三成，即一是一切。若一則一切，則應一一皆有一切作用。

Otherwise, if you do not grant that this is so, then for what reason do you adhere to the unitary nature of all *indriyas* in terms of the three *guṇas*? 既不許然，何因執三為一切體性？

If one grants that the *indriyas* are identical, then all *indriyas* are identical, such that the organs of eating, seeing, etc., are then identical to the conduits expelling liquid and solid waste. Moreover, each *indriya* would possess the functional ability of one another, such that the organs, such as those used for eating and hearing, should be able to smell odors and to see visible things.”又若一則一切，應口•眼等根即是大•小便路。又一一根有一切作用，應口•耳等根聞香、見色。

So, if that is not the case, then for what reason do you still maintain that the three *guṇas* form all of the *indriyas*? How could someone of any intelligence establish such a theory? 若不爾者，何得執三為一切法體？豈有智人而立此義？³⁴⁰

As recounted by Huili, Xuanzang’s argument is the knock-out blow from which the Plain-Spoken Brāhmin cannot recover. Xuanzang’s final rhetorical flourish forces the Brāhmin to concede the debate. In his concession, the Plain-Spoken Brāhmin drops to his knees and implores Xuanzang to become his guru.³⁴¹

The dilemma that Xuanzang articulates in his riposte to the Plain-Spoken Brāhmin narrowly concerns the relationship of the three *guṇas* to the eleven *indriyas*. He opens his statement by articulating the Sāṅkhya theory of the origin of the three *guṇas* in the third *tattva* of *mahat*, or the “greatness of the individual.” In his CWSL, Xuanzang exploits the Sāṅkhya commitment to the equivalence of the evolutionary history of the *guṇas* and extends the idea to its ultimate and absurd consequence: If the three *guṇas* are made from the same material, then all of *indriyas* should

³⁴⁰ T2053:50.245.b16-21.

³⁴¹ Huili’s obsequious biography (T2053:50.245.b27-c1) describes the Brāhmin’s emasculating defeat in the debate with Xuanzang: “The Brāhmin was at a complete loss, being without words. He stood up and bowed to Master Xuanzang: ‘I admit defeat to you, now I take you as my Master to form a compact with you as a disciple.’” Master Xuanzang says to the Brāhmin: “Now, say that ‘I shall officially take the surname Shi, son of the Buddha Śākyamuni, and vow to now harm other humans,’ and submit to being my slave, and follow my teaching and charge.” The Brāhmin was delighted, and reverentially followed Xuanzang back to his residence. Those in the audience were naught without words of awe. 婆羅門默無所說，起而謝曰：「我今負矣，任依先約。」法師曰：「我曹釋子終不害人，今令汝為奴，隨我教命。」婆羅門歡喜敬從，即將向房，聞者無不稱慶。

possess the same functions.³⁴²

In the Nālaṇḍa debate, Xuanzang raises a dilemma regarding the “common activities” (Skt.: *samānyavṛtti*) shared by the eleven human faculties. If one is to faithfully abide by the Sāṅkhya theory of three qualities and agree that these qualities constitute the disposition and function of the eleven *indriyas*, it follows that each of the eleven *indriyas* should possess the same capacities. Xuanzang points out the absurdity of this notion somewhat graphically, noting that the mouth does not smell things, and the ears do not see things. In his oral debates and in his written compilation in the CWSL, Xuanzang maintains that there is an unwarranted consequence in the idea that the blending or comingling of three *guṇas* forms the *indriyas*. The unfortunate collary to this idea is that if the eleven *indriyas* are amalgams of the basic material, it should be impossible to distinguish one *indriya* from another. The *Sāṅkhyakārikās* attempts to resolve this dilemma by emphasizing that while each *indriya* is composed of the three same ingredients, the proportions of the three *guṇas* vary within each *indriya*. The Sāṅkhya theorists maintain that the variety of functions and the diversity of activities of the *indriyas* can be explained by alterations in the proportions of the three basic ingredients of life.

In the denouement to his remarks on the Sāṅkhya taxonomy of the eleven faculties, Xuanzang makes a scatological joke. He states that if one is to hew literally to the Sāṅkhya doctrine, then the anus and the mouth should be equally capable of expelling solid excrement. Conversely,

³⁴² The related passage in the CWSL, fasc. 1 (T1585:31.2c.17-21) reads: “Furthermore, *mahat* is formed by three factors. These the three factors cooperate with and oversee one another such that they become undifferentiated; and if so, the perceptible cause and effect, along with the mahats, and the *indriyas* lose any sense of differentiation from one another. If that were indeed the case, then a singular faculty should obtain all the objective spheres (*viśayas*). 又大等法皆三合成，展轉相望應無差別，是則因果唯量諸大諸根差別皆不得成。若爾一根應得一切境。Otherwise, it should be the case that all objective spheres (*viśayas*) and all faculties should obtain it, so whatever is visible to the common sense of worldly people that what's alive or not alive, pure and defiled things which are perceived or inferred should be undifferentiated from each other – this is a grave error.” 或應一境一切根所得，世間現見情與非情淨穢等物現比量等，皆應無異，便為大失。

the anus should be able to utter words. Xuanzang uses this rather crude example to highlight the unwanted consequence of failing to establish a more credible principle of individuation between the five faculties of action.

In his CWSL, Xuanzang reprises the *reductio ad absurdum* argument he uses in the disputes with the Plain-Spoken Brāhmin regarding the relationship between the *indriyas* and the *guṇas*. He states that without a stronger theory of the evolution of the *indriyas* and a more robust explanation for the differences in their composition and functioning, the theory of the *guṇas* does not hold. Xuanzang argues that the theory of the three *guṇas* is insufficient to account for the sheer diversity of activity evidenced by the *indriyas*. The idea that the vast, variegated, specific and distinct functions of the *indriyas* emerge from the permutations of three fundamentally similar elements is a weak explanation for complexity of human life. Xuanzang demonstrates that this idea leads to an absurd conclusion. If all *indriyas* are composed of three *guṇas*, then all *indriyas* are essentially the same. Therefore, the diversity of the variegated *indriyas* cannot be explained with the theory of the three *guṇas*.

In his CWSL, Xuanzang formulates the horns of the dilemma in the Sāṅkhya theory of the three *guṇas* as follows: If the three *guṇas* are uniform or “homogenous” (Chi.: *zong* 總), in that when they combine, their specific identities dissolve, then the *Sāṅkhyākārikās*’ teaching that the *guṇas* are distinct and separate entities is obscured. If the three *guṇas* are “heterogeneous” (Chi.: *bie* 別) in that when they combine, they retain their distinct characteristics and identities, then the *Sāṅkhyākārikās*’ teaching that the *guṇas* are cohesive is violated.

If the three *guṇas* are homogeneous, Xuanzang states: “As entities they should be like their defining characteristics, which fade into one. But both as entities and in their characteristics they

are quite obviously threefold” 體應如相冥然是一，相應如體顯然有三。³⁴³ Xuanzang states: “If you say that the three *guṇas* are distinct as entities, but similar in their visible characteristics, then you violate the import of your own tenets in that as entities and in terms of characteristics, they are one” 若謂三事體異相同，便違己宗體相是一。³⁴⁴

Here Xuanzang raises several thorny questions regarding the nature of the *guṇas*. Are the three *guṇas* essentially distinct from one another, or are they the same? When combined, do the three *guṇas* retain their distinct differences? When combined, do they retain their similarities? The *Sāṅkhyakārikās* describe the three *guṇas* as basically similar due to their common origin in *prakṛti*, the second *tattva*. Whence then do the differences among the *guṇas* arise?

The *Sāṅkhyakārikās* adumbrate a response to these questions. They posit that when the three *guṇas* are combined, they retain their unique and distinct qualities. Rubenstein (2014)³⁴⁵ supports this Sāṅkhya principle in her sweeping study of ancient to modern cosmologies. She states: “Sameness is more ‘allergic’ to mixing than difference is.” Sāṅkhya theory maintains that the difference between the three *guṇas* is more “immune” to mixing than the sameness derived from their origin in *prakṛti*.

Xuanzang does not concur with the conclusion that the distinctions between the three *guṇas* of *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tejas* are maintained when they are combined. The CWSL cites that “the nature of the three *guṇas* is basically similar. Because they are similar, the characteristics that they express are also basically similar.” For example, the state of being energetic, or *sattva*, and the state of being sluggish, or *tejas*, can be viewed as existing on a continuum of feeling states, rather than as

³⁴³ T1585:31.2.c06.

³⁴⁴ T1585:31.2.c05-6.

³⁴⁵ Rubenstein (2014), *Worlds without End: The Many Lives of the Multiverse* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press), 32.

distinctly separate feeling states.

Kuiji agrees that the three *guṇas* lack sharp distinctions and are therefore more alike than different. Because of this, Kuiji posits that the differences among the three *guṇas* are likely to be diluted when they are combined. He states that the *guṇas* “as functional entities, are mutually interchangeable, and as such, are equivalent to one another” 體用更互相即.³⁴⁶ Kuiji builds upon the concerns raised by Xuanzang regarding the mutual equivalence of the *guṇas* by introducing another dilemma within the theory. He avers that the differences among the *guṇas* are in name only and that the blending of three similar entities serves to dilute the already subtle distinctions among them. He supports Xuanzang’s position that the theory of the three *guṇas* is insufficient to explain the differences among the *indriyas*.

Kuiji extends the problem of mutual equivalence to debunk the claim that the three *guṇas* determine the differences in human temperaments and dispositions. In the Sāṅkhya theory, the three *guṇas* combine in various amounts and proportions and, in doing so, form the unique personality and characteristics of an individual. While changes in the physical functioning or in the physical or characterological traits of the human necessarily involve changes in the admixture of the *guṇas*, these transformations unfold gradually, “without discernable alterations between the present and previous forms” 前與後體無別.³⁴⁷

This principle of “indisciminable” or incremental change is directly relevant to the process of how the three *guṇas* adhere to form the personality and temperamental disposition of a person. If, for example, a woman named Devadattā becomes more *sāttvikā*, or vibrant and vivacious, and less *tejas*, or negative and gloomy, the change in her outward demeanor is attributed to a change

³⁴⁶ T1830:43.254.b08-9.

³⁴⁷ T1830:43.251.a22.

in the proportions of the *guṇas*. In this case, the balance between *sattva* and *tejas* has changed, with the qualities of *sattva* becoming more salient than the qualities of *tejas*. While Devadattā appears to be more vibrant, there has been no sudden change in her overall temperament. This lack of abrupt change is because the essential differences among the three qualities that make up Devadatta's personality have dissolved through the blending of the three qualities that make up her unique personality. Kuiji, in his analysis of the theory of personality formation through the blending of the *guṇas*, concludes that the theory of the *guṇas* is insufficient to explain the subtlety and the variety of the human temperament.

In the CWSL, Xuanzang and his team of compilers critique the Sāṅkhya taxonomy for its over-reliance on the *ātman* as the activator of the *indriyas*. Returning to the Sanskrit sources, Xuanzang examines the idea presented by Guṇamati's (Chi.: *Qiunamodi* 求那摩底; *Dehui* 德慧) *Treatise on Definitions (Lakṣaṇa śāstra)*³⁴⁸ that the *indriyas* are merely "efficacious instruments" and cannot function without an *ātman*, in the form of an embodied *puruṣa*, to activate and operate them. On the nature of the *indriyas*, Guṇamati writes:³⁴⁹ "The efficacious instrument is like the ordinary axe, saw, etc. – the efficacious instruments of the craftsperson. Its function is like what serves as the bed, the table, etc. – the mind and faculties are exactly this way: the soul employs them to see visibles and to hear audibles. It is for this reason that we term the mind and faculties efficacious instruments [for the soul]. The *ātman* takes these up and uses them to see visible things and to hear things. Hence, there are termed efficacious instruments." 名作器者，如世間斧鋸等，

³⁴⁸ The former is the phonetic transliteration, while the latter is the Chinese translation of his name based upon its semantic meaning.

³⁴⁹ Guṇamati's treatise found only in Paramārtha's Chi. translation from the 6th century. The full title of this treatise in two fascicles is found in the colophon: Commentary on the Treatise on the *Definitions of Things from which are Excerpted The Sixteen Elements (tattvas)* 十六諦義出隨相論釋.

是工巧人之作器。其用之作床机等；心及根亦爾。我用之見色聞聲，故名作器。³⁵⁰ This idea is attested in verse twenty-five of the *Sāṅkhyakārikās*,³⁵¹ in which the *puruṣa* is depicted as the operator of the *indriyas*, via the *ahaṅkāra*, the mediator between the *puruṣa* and the body with its full complement of sensory and physical organs. Xuanzang takes issue with this fundamental idea and states that the *puruṣa* is eternal, pure, and unchanging and therefore cannot be involved with the activities of the body.

The CWSL goes on to opine on an inconsistency between the notion of three vital qualities adduced in Sāṅkhya theory and the doctrine of “real-personhood”³⁵² exemplified in the *puruṣa* or spiritual part of the person. In both the text of his debate with the Plain-Spoken Brāhmin and his CWSL, Xuanzang poses a fundamental challenge to the dualistic Sāṅkhya view. If the spiritual nature of the human is independent of the material qualities of life, then how does the *puruṣa* serve as a legitimate principium of individuation between different humans? An explanation is needed for how the three material qualities of the body, together with the soul, invest the body with the capacity to survive. The ability to survive is vested in the continuous cooperation of faculties throughout the body. It is also one of the capacities that is invested in the body by the soul.

Xuanzang’s Refutation of the Notion of the Soul as the Master of the Eleven Faculties

The *Sāṅkhyakārikās* describe the soul (Skt.: *ātman*) as the master (Skt.: *rājan*) of the eleven embodied *indriyas* that are responsible for the sensory and physical actions of the human being. Because they are viewed within the Sāṅkhya schema as the defining components of the human being, the eleven *indriyas* and their relationship to the soul are of doctrinal significance. Therefore,

³⁵⁰ T1641:32.168.b20-3.

³⁵¹ Dutt, *Sāṅkhyakārikās*, 27.

³⁵² The stipulation on “real personhood” here is the basic idea that the *ātman* as a *dravya* or substantially realm entity.

the conceptualization of the *ātman* as the master of the *indriyas* is a crucial organizing premise in the Sāṅkhya theories of life and the nature of death. Because of the centrality of the Sāṅkhya concept of the soul as the master of the activities of life, Xuanzang takes exquisite care first to reconstruct and then to refute this concept in his effort to reinforce his theory of the faculties and uphold the Buddhist tenet of no-self.

In his debate with the Plain-Spoken Brahmin, Xuanzang uses the metaphor of the master and the servant to describe the relationship of the soul to the *indriyas* as depicted in the *Sāṅkhyakārikās*. Calling upon his vast knowledge of the Sāṅkhya scriptures, he states: “The twenty-four *tattvas* can be likened to the servant that attends to the king. The soul is the king, the locus of intelligence, sensory and affective experience. The twenty-four *tattvas* serve at the pleasure of the king.”

After demonstrating his comprehensive understanding of the Sāṅkhya doctrines of the *puruṣa*, the eleven *indriyas* and the *ātman* at the Nalanda Gate, Xuanzang concludes that the Sāṅkhya conceptualization of the soul as the master of the eleven *indriyas* is unsustainable. In the formulation of his argument, Xuanzang faithfully represents the Sāṅkhya tenets, and then highlights the inconsistencies in the definitions of the key terms. He accurately renders the Sāṅkhya definitions of the *puruṣa* as disembodied and the *ātman* as embodied. The *ātman*, as defined in the *Sāṅkhyakārikās*, is composed of the *puruṣa* and the eleven *indriyas*. Without the *puruṣa* and the embodied eleven *indriyas*, the *ātman* does not exist. Therefore, the *ātman* cannot be the master of the eleven *indriyas*. Again, Xuanzang debunks the conceptualization of the soul as the master of the *indriyas* by emphasizing that the *ātman*, as defined in Sāṅkhya theory, does not have agentive power without the eleven *indriyas*.

The *Sāṅkhyakārikās* clearly state that the eleven *indriyas*, *tattvas* fifteen through twenty-

five in the Sāṅkhya taxonomy, empower the soul. It follows that the soul cannot be the master of the *indriyas* while simultaneously being empowered by them. Xuanzang's use of the metaphor of the soul as the king of the *tattvas* in the text of the *Sāṅkhyakārikās* illustrates an ideological problem that he sees as coursing throughout the Sāṅkhya theory-the conflated and misconstrued definitions of the *puruṣa* and the *ātman*.

Xuanzang references the words of the *Sāṅkhyakārikās* that describe the *puruṣa* as “a mere witness” (Skt.: *ālocanamātram*) and not an active enjoyer of the material realm. The *puruṣa* requires the *indriyas* to, quite literally, get things done. Without being provided for or served by the twenty-four *tattvas*, the *puruṣa* is impotent. With this precise definition, Xuanzang contends that *puruṣa*, in and of itself, is weak and cannot sustain the human body. Without the twenty-four *tattvas*, the *puruṣa*, simpliciter, is not enough to sustain life. Life requires the *puruṣa*, along with the *prakṛti* and the twenty-three *tattvas* working together in coordinated activity. According to the Sāṅkhya definition of the *ātman*, as composed of the *puruṣa* and the embodied *indriyas*, the *ātman* cannot be the master of the *indriyas*. With this line of argument, Xuanzang highlights the contradiction inherent in the Sāṅkhya theory of the twenty-five *tattvas* and the *puruṣa*.

In his exegesis of the Sāṅkhya taxonomy, Xuanzang defines the *ātman* as the union of the *puruṣa*, the spiritual aspects of life, with *prakṛti*, the physical aspects of life. He then extends the metaphor used in the *Sāṅkhyakārikās* and states that twenty-three *tattvas*, rather than the twenty-four enumerated in the Nalanda debate, serve at the pleasure of the soul. Regardless of the number of *tattvas* pictured as serving the *ātman*, Xuanzang ultimately concludes that the notion of the *ātman* as the master of the eleven *indriyas* is incoherent and representative of a doctrinal flaw that permeates the Sāṅkhya scriptures.

In his discussion of the soul as the master of the *indriyas*, Xuanzang divides his argument

into two parts: a refutation of the idea that the five cognitive faculties are dependent upon the soul and a refutation of the idea that the physical faculties are dependent upon the soul. The Sāṅkhya theorists argue that the five sensory faculties of vision, hearing, smell, taste, and touch are directed by, and exist for the purposes of, a force outside of the body. Xuanzang refutes this argument by saying that the *puruṣa*, or the operator of the sense faculties, is a composite of the faculties, and therefore, by definition, not external to the faculties.

The Refutation of the Five Sensory Faculties as Dependent Upon the Soul

The Sāṅkhya theorists state that the five sensory faculties (Skt.: *prāṇjñêndriyāṇi*), *tattvas* fifteen through nineteen, require the presence of an agent to direct and organize their activities. Deemed inert instruments within the Sāṅkhya schema, the sensory *indriyas* require the presence of an agent, or a being outside of the *indriyas*, to activate, operate and coordinate them. Because the Sāṅkhya theorists define the *indriyas* as lifeless tools, the faculties must be used by a being who is imbued with sentience, intelligence, or *buddhi*. In the Sāṅkhya theory, this sentient being is charged with lending purpose and intention to the *indriyas*. As recorded in stanza seventeen of the *Sāṅkhyakārikās* and in the commentary on this text by Gauḍapada, the responsibility for operating the sensory faculties is borne by the *ātman*. The *ātman* is therefore seen as the force outside of the *indriyas* that lends purpose and intention to the faculties and allows them to actualize their designated functions.

Within the Sāṅkhya schema, the sentient being that activates the *indriyas* and imbues them with purpose is defined as non-composite (Skt.: *asaṃhata*), or simple and pure. This reflects the Sāṅkhya assumption that entities that are *asaṃhata* are uniquely able to use entities that are composite (Skt.: *saṃhata*), or composed of various component parts. In this picture, the *ātman* is defined as *asaṃhata*. The term *ātman* is used to denote the entire apparatus that is built upon the

puruṣa, the first and foremost of the twenty-five *tattvas*, in conjunction with *prakṛti*, the second *tattva*, *mahat*, the capacity of intelligence and the *ahankāra*, the agent endowed with the power to execute the purposes and aims (Skt.: *arthas*) of the *puruṣa*. The *indriyas* in this picture are viewed as composite, or *saṃhata*, because they are composed of various elements of the material world.

Xuanzang takes issue with the Sāṅkhya postulate that the sensory facilities are dependent on the *ātman* for two reasons: first, this idea runs counter to his theory of the *indriyas*, and second, it violates the cardinal Buddhist tenet of no-self. In his extensive analysis of the *indriyas* and in his exegesis of dying, Xuanzang argues that an executive operator, in the form of an *ātman*, is not required to enliven or operate the sensory *indriyas* or to sustain life. In his effort to lend rigor to Buddhist philosophy and to eradicate any vestige of the supernatural from the theory of the *indriyas*, Xuanzang uses Indic philosophical principles in his rebuttal to the Sāṅkhya postulate of the sensory facilities as dependent on the *ātman*.

Xuanzang expresses his argument in a three-part syllogism drawn from the *Nyayapravesa Sastra*, *The Treatise on the Gate to Logic*, the primer of logic composed by Śāṅkarasvāmin, the protégé of Dignāga. While Xuanzang was not the original author of this Buddhist anti-Sāṅkhya argument, he was the first to translate it into Chinese and to provide the exegetical commentary on the core text of the logical argument. The formal inference attempts to prove the Sāṅkhya doctrine that the soul, as constituted by the embodied *puruṣa*, operates the sensory faculties. The inference also includes a counter-argument with two points: one, that a non-composite entity cannot control another non-composite entity, and two, that only a non-composite entity with intelligence can control a composite entity. Here the Sāṅkhya theorists assert that the *ātman*, when defined as a non-composite entity that is imbued with intelligence, is uniquely equipped to use the *indriyas*. In the Sāṅkhya picture, the *indriyas* are defined as composite entities without the benefit of sentience.

Because the *ātman* is conceptualized within the Sāṅkhya schema as non-composite and imbued with intelligence, it has the singular capacity to invest the composite *indriyas* with intention and purpose.

While the version of this formal inference survives in Sanskrit in the *Nyāyapraveśa śāstra* composed by Śaṅkarasvāmin,³⁵³ it appears earlier in the *Sāṅkhyakārikās* and in *The Treatise Conforming to Definitions*, written by Guṇamati in the fourth century. Although Guṇamati uses the syllogism in the context of a Buddhist polemic against the Sāṅkhya theorists, he reproduces the text of the storied Sāṅkhya argument faithfully in his treatise. In his commentary, he reiterates the Sāṅkhya doctrine positing the ordinary sensory faculties as formally analogous to “tools” or “provisions” for use by the *ātman*.

A logical argument widely maintained by the Sāṅkhya commentators, the syllogism with the counter-example is as follows:

Thesis: The soul (*ātman*)³⁵⁴ [site/locus (*pakṣa*)] is what enjoys (*bhokṭṛ*-in Chi., “lit., enjoys and puts to use” 受用) the eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue and the tactile organs, the sensory faculties (*prājñendriyāṇi*).³⁵⁵

³⁵³ As the argument appears initially in the NP, the main formulation takes the subject to be the “sense organs,” and the predicate to be “exist for the sake of someone else.” The *ātman* appears in the genitive case, indicating the objective genitive. This actually is Tachikawa’s translation, with heavy modifications, pp. 125-6.

³⁵⁴ The term found in the original Sanskrit text of the *Nyāyapraveśa śāstra* is *ātman*. See edition of Dhruva, *Nyāyapraveśakaśāstra* of Baudh Ācārya Diñnāga, (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1930), 5. Qian Yu 虞愚 interpolates the “spiritual soul” as the subject-locus (*pakṣa*) of the syllogism: “It should be the case that since the pillow of composite nature is something put to use by the the provisional self formed by the combination of five aggregates, it is not something put to use by the non-composite, eternal, spiritual soul (*shenwo*). On the other hand, since the spiritual person exists eternally from the beginning, being non-composite by nature, it is not capable of putting the eyes to use.” 盖積聚性之臥具，既為積聚性眼之五蘊合和假我所用，絕不為非積聚性常住之神我所用。反之，神我既本有常住而非積聚性，則不能用於眼。— see Qian Yu, *Yinming Xue* 因明學 (*Studies on Hetu-vidyā*) (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1999, Reprint in 2007), 27.

³⁵⁵ The Sanskrit text merely has “the eye, etc.” (*cakṣur ādi*). The interpolation of the other four cognitive faculties is based upon Kuiji’s reconstruction of the inference.

Reason: Because the five sensory faculties are composites by nature (saṅghātatvāt 積聚性).

Example: Just the way that the ātman used the bed (śayana) or the stool (āśana), etc. 如臥具等。³⁵⁶

Counter-Example: The ātman does not use another ātman. Devadattā cannot control Yajnadattā.

The thesis in the syllogism states that the *ātman* is the user and the enjoyer of the sensory faculties. Xuanzang translates this as “The eye must serve for the use of another.” The reason in the syllogism states that the five sensory faculties are, by nature, composites. Xuanzang translates the reason as: “This is because of the fact that the eye is a composite thing; composite things always must find use by something else.” 眼等必為他用；積聚性故。(T32n1630_p0012). The example in the syllogism states that the *ātman* uses the bed and the stool. The doctrinal implication of the syllogism is that the *indriyas* depend upon an *ātman* to operate them and that without the *ātman*, the activities of *indriyas* are not actualized. It also posits that the *indriyas*, because they are by nature composite, require a non-composite *ātman* to enliven and activate them.

The Sāṅkhya theorists deploy the analogy of the *ātman* using the bed and the stool to emphasize that without the motivating force of the *ātman*, the sensory faculties will remain inert. In the example, the bed and the stool are viewed, like the *indriyas*, as inanimate objects. When a person uses a bed to sleep on, or a stool to sit on, that person puts the bed and the stool to use. Without the person sleeping on the bed or sitting on the stool, the bed and the stool remain unused and therefore inanimate. The bed requires a sleeper and the stool requires a sitter to fulfill their intended functions.

³⁵⁶ Xuanzang’s Chinese says “like the mattress or pillow.”

Within this logical argument, the very existence of the *indriyas* is predicated upon the presence of the *ātman*. The sensory *indriyas* require the *ātman* to obtain their full efficacies. As such, the senses are said to exist as “efficacious instruments” available for the use of the *ātman*. Gauḍapada states that an *indriya* without a soul is like a “mattress” (Skt. *palyāṅka*) without a sleeper a “stool” (Skt.: *āsana*) without a sleeper.

The two premises that undergird the Sāṅkhya logical argument are first that the sensory *indriyas* exist “for the purpose of someone else” (Skt.: *parārtham*), and second that the “someone else” that the *indriyas* exist for is a non-composite entity. In their exhaustive studies of the Sanskrit sources of this inference, Ratie and Elschinger (2013) draw attention to the Sāṅkhya premises regarding composite and non-composite entities. They write that within the Sāṅkhya schema, composite entities “always exist for the sake of an entity distinct from them” (2013, pp. 155-173). In his *Great Commentary on Nyāyapraveśa*, Kuiji specifies that the five sensory faculties are regarded as composite entities because they are constituted of various material components. Returning to the example in the syllogism, Kuiji states that a bed composed of a solid base, a hard frame, a covering cloth and so forth is a composite entity.³⁵⁷ He continues that a sense *indriya* is composed of multiple parts and therefore is a composite entity. The sensory *indriya* of the eye, for example, is composed of multiple biological components, including a lens, an iris, a retina, vitreous fluid, various nerves, and liquids such as tears and blood, that function to lubricate and nourish the eye and facilitate the action of seeing.

Because the sensory *indriyas* are defined as composite entities (Skt: *saṃghātātva*) according to the reason presented in the logical argument, they require a non-composite operator

³⁵⁷ For this analysis on the composition of the *śayana*, the *sapakṣa* of the inference, see Gauḍapada’s commentary on SK 17. See Dutt, ed., *Sāṅkhyakārikās*, 20; English trans. by Dutt, *Sāṅkhyakārikās*, 27-8.

to perform their functions. According to stanza seventeen of the *Sāṅkhyakārikās*, the role of the non-composite operator of the *indriyas* is fulfilled by the *puruṣa*, in conjunction with *mahat* and the *ahaṅkāra*. The *Sāṅkhyakārikās* are consistent in their provision that the *puruṣa* is simple, unitary and non-composite. The abstract *puruṣa* obtains concrete, physical power only when it resides in a corporeal body and becomes conjoined with the active *ahaṅkāra*. The stipulation that the *ahaṅkāra* must be present for the *ātman* to realize its full physical power and force is consistently maintained in the *Sāṅkhyakārikās*. The Sāṅkhya conceptualization of the *ātman* as non-composite, or *asaṃhata*, and simultaneously composed of various elements such as the *puruṣa* and the *ahaṅkāra* renders the *ātman* composite or *saṃhata*. The definition of the *ātman* as non-composite thus becomes incoherent on its own terms.

In his recounting of this argument in the *Nyāyapraveśa Sastra*, Śankarasvāmin notes that the premise that the *indriyas* serve for the use an entity other than themselves rests upon the assumption that the entity is non-composite. Ratié and Elschinger (2013, p. 161) observe that by adhering to the notion that the operator of the *indriyas* can only be a non-composite entity, “the Sāṅkhya leaves itself open to the Buddhist assault all the more since the teleological argument is stated in such a way that the *puruṣa*, understood as pure, uncomposed, and inactive consciousness, ends up being equated with the empirical individuals that the Sāṅkhya itself regards as composed entities.”³⁵⁸ Here Ratié and Eltschinger emphasize that the vulnerability in the Sāṅkhya argument hinges upon the conceptualization of the *ātman* as non-composite. Again, the very conceptualization of the *ātman* as having the power to activate the sensory *indriyas* renders the *ātman* non-composite. The crux of the critique of the Sāṅkhya conception of the self as the bearer

³⁵⁸ C.f. *Yuktiḍīpikā*, where perceptible individuals such as Devadatta are presented as composed entities in contrast with the imperceptible person. See *Yuktiḍīpikā*, Tripathi, ed. (Krishnadas Academy, 1999), 89, commentary on *Sāṅkhyakārikās* 17.

of the *indriyas* hinges on the theoretical confusion regarding the non-composite and composite nature of the *ātman*.

Kuiji, and the seventh-century Indian Jain philosopher, Haribhādrasūri, provide crucial critiques of the logical validity of this formal inference. In their commentaries, they conclude that the Sāṅkhya inference is unacceptable because it violates the rules of the science of reasons (Skt. *hetu-vidyā*). Because the syllogism contains terms that are not consistently defined between the Sāṅkhya disputant and the Buddhist opponent, the argument does not hold. More specifically, because of the incoherency of the argument regarding the nature of the *ātman*, it inadvertently makes the case that the sensory *indriyas* are operated by a composite *ātman*. In the form of the logical argumentation developed by Dignāga and recorded in the *Nyāyapraveśa śāstra* by Śaṅkarasvāmin, the argument is damaged because the reason and the counter-example express a fundamental inconsistency regarding the nature of the *ātman*.

Kuiji and Haribhādrasūri focus on the internal incoherence of the Sāṅkhya argument that the *ātman* is required to operate the *indriyas*. According to both Kuiji and Haribhādrasūri, it is the *ahaṅkāra*,³⁵⁹ under the direction of the *puruṣa*, that provides the motivational force to operate the *indriyas*. This further muddies the Sāṅkhya definition of the *ātman* as non-composite. Additionally, Kuiji's analysis of the counter-argument that the *ātman* cannot operate another *ātman* highlights an inconsistency in the example that disproves the counter-argument on its own terms. He notes that in the counter-argument, Devadattā is described as an *ātman*, and therefore by definition is non-composite. It is stated in the text, however, that "Devadattā has both a neck and a throat." If

³⁵⁹ Dhruva, ed., *Nyāyapraveśa*, 27.

Devadattā has both a neck and a throat, then Devadattā cannot be a non-composite entity.³⁶⁰ Like the stool that services it, the *ātman* of Devadattā contains various parts. The counter-argument is therefore internally inconsistent.

From the position of the Sāṅkhya disputant, it could be admitted that a non-composite or *asaṃhata* entity could act on a composite entity via an intermediary. This makes room for the idea that the *puruṣa* could operate the *indriyas* via a mediator in the form of a composite *ahankāra*. However, the *ahankāra* is an interpolation and is not found in the inference recorded in the original text. It is extraneous and therefore inadmissible in support of the Sāṅkhya argument. Xuanzang, with his meticulous knowledge of the Brahmanical scriptures and the rules of Indic argumentation, refutes the notion of the sensory *indriyas* as dependent on the soul using the inconsistencies and incoherencies imbedded within the Sāṅkhya doctrine.

The following examination conforms to the order of the Sāṅkhya taxonomy of eleven faculties and to the sequence of Xuanzang's anti-Brahmanical arguments in turning to the five faculties for action.

Xuanzang's Refutation of the Sāṅkhya Doctrine of Five Faculties of Action

The Brāhmaṇical taxonomy of the Sāṅkhya states that the eleven *indriyas*, *tattvas* fifteen through twenty-five, together comprise the human being. Within the Sāṅkhya schema, the five faculties of physical action (Skt.: *pañca-karmēndriyāṇi*; Chi.: *wu zuo-ye gen* 五作業根), *tattvas* twenty through twenty-four, are designated to accomplish the five specific tasks deemed essential to the sustenance of human life. According to the sequence of the *tattvas* that is standardized in the twenty-sixth stanza of the *Sāṅkhyakārikās*, the tasks of the five faculties of physical action, or

³⁶⁰ Not only in this case, but in general, one must not conflate the *ātman* with the *puruṣa* because, on contrast to the active *ātman* inhabiting a body, the disembodied *puruṣa* abides in a state of pure consciousness (*caitanya*) unimpeded by disruptive sensations.

the *karmêndriyāṇi*, are grasping, moving, speaking, urinating and defecating, and procreating.

Within the Sāṅkhya taxonomy, the nomenclature of each of the physical *indriya* is synonymous with the organ and the specific activity with which it is associated. As such, there is a one-to-one correspondence between each physical *indriya* and the biological apparatus that is required to execute its characteristic physical activity. Therefore, within the Sāṅkhya schema, each of the five physical *indriyas* is defined as both an aspect of the body and its intended physical function. For example, the *indriya* of the hand is defined as the faculty of grasping, the *indriya* of the foot is described as the faculty of walking, the *indriya* of the voice box is the faculty responsible for the ability to speak words, the *indriya* of the anus is associated with physical action of expelling liquid and solid waste from the body and the *indriyas* of the female or the male genital organs are known as the faculties of sexual pleasure and procreation.

As postulated in the *Sāṅkhyakārikās*, each of the physical faculties for action, or the *karmêndriyāṇi*, functions independently. Additionally, each of the faculties for action is viewed as uniquely qualified to perform the activity for which it is specifically designed. Within this schema, the entire apparatus that is required to execute a designated physical function is contained within each specific *indriya* for action. For example, the third *karmêndriyāṇi*, the faculty of speaking, is composed of the individual components of the apparatus that allow a human to utter words. The faculty of speaking therefore includes the lips, teeth, tongue, palate, mouth, larynx, esophagus, abdomen, and all other organs involved in the production of speech. In the Sāṅkhya taxonomy, each of the five physical faculties controls the entire process of a designated physical action independently and without the benefit of collaboration with other faculties. Each *indriya* is viewed as autonomously functioning within this framework.

Xuanzang takes issue with the Sāṅkhya postulate that the highly complex physical

activities of the human body can be explained by the operation of five independent and self-contained faculties. He argues that the Sāṅkhya theory does not provide a sufficient explanation for how the specific physical *indriyas* accomplishment designated tasks without the coordinated efforts of other *indriyas*. Additionally, Xuanzang notes that even when the five faculties for physical activity are viewed as operating in a coordinated manner, the Sāṅkhya theory remains hamstrung by redundancies and incoherencies. In his exegesis of dying, Xuanzang is compelled to refute the Sāṅkhya theory of the physical faculties to uphold the Buddhist tenet that the coordinated action of multiple *indriyas* is necessary to sustain life.

In his effort to bolster his theory of the faculties and refute the Sāṅkhya theory of the five faculties of physical action, Xuanzang turns to the Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma texts, to the elaboration of these texts by Vasubandhu and Saṅghabhadra and to his Buddhist contemporary Yaśomitra. The exegeses of the Sāṅkhya theory of the five physical *indriyas* appear in the Chinese translation of *The Treasury of the Abhidharma* composed by Xuanzang and in the commentary on this work by Saṅghabhadra. The arguments formulated by Xuanzang to dispute the Sāṅkhya theory of the physical *indriyas* are additionally taken up by Yaśomitra in his commentary on *The Treasury of the Abhidharma*.

In his refutation, Xuanzang identifies two considerable problems in the Sāṅkhya theory postulating the *karmêndriyāṇi* as capable of performing the five physical actions of life. He first takes issue with the conceptualization of the five physical *indriyas* as operating independently and with autonomous sources of power. He then highlights how the functions of the physical faculties overlap with one another and therefore do not reflect the unique purposes for which they are designed.³⁶¹ Taken together, these two arguments undermine the Sāṅkhya theory that the five

³⁶¹ Saṅghabhadra points out the problem of the overlapping domains of the five faculties for action in his *Clarification of Tenets*, fasc. 5 (T1563:29.79.6a17-19). This passage is found in Xuanzang's Chinese translation

physical *indriyas* perform the functions for which they are designed without the benefit of other *indriyas*. Xuanzang concludes that the physical *indriyas* must interact with other *indriyas* to produce the five physical actions enumerated in the *Sāṅkhyakārikās*. In this examination, Xuanzang reaffirms the three cardinal tenets of the Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma theory of the *indriyas*: one, that the *indriyas* do not possess autonomous sources of power; two, that the *indriyas* collaborate with other *indriyas* to perform their designated functions; and three, that this collaboration involves the activity of more than three faculties.

The Refutation of the Five Physical *Indriyas* as Capable of Independently Performing the Five Actions

In the twenty-fifth stanza of the root text of the Sāṅkhya scriptures, the venerable *Sāṅkhyakārikās*, the five faculties of physical action, or the *karmēndriyāṇi*, are enumerated. In his summary of the singular characteristic actions of the five faculties of action, Yaśomitra states: “The Sāṅkhyas postulate that the faculties of speech and other actions are to be differentiated from the visual and other [sensory] faculties. The faculty of the hands (Skt.: *pāṇīndriyam*) does the grasping, the faculty of the two feet (Skt.: *pādēndriyam*) does the ‘walking to and fro’ (Skt.: *caṅkramaṇa*), the faculty of the voice box (Skt.: *vāgindriyam*; Chi.: 語具)³⁶² does the talking, the faculty of anus (Skt.: *pāvyendriyam*) does the does the expelling of liquid and solid waste and the faculty of the genitals (Skt.: *upastha*) performs the functions of sexual pleasure and

of Saṅghabhadra’s work, but not in the Tib. translation: “The error of the confused overlapping (of *indriyas*) refers to the Sāṅkhya establishing faculties which overlap with one another. The error of the confused overlapping occurs because of the fact that the mouth (like the hands) is capable of grasping things and expelling things (i.e., vomitus), and because of the fact that the hand and the legs are both capable of moving forward with force. So, with these examples there is the error of overlapping domains.” 雜亂失者。彼所立根應成雜亂。口能執取及棄捨故。手足俱有執行用故。有如是等雜亂過失。

³⁶² *Kandō jōyūshiki ron* 冠導成唯識論, ed., Saeki Gyokuga 佐伯旭雅(1828–1891), (Kyoto: Hōzōkan 法藏館 1887), 60, recto, glosses Xuanzang’s Chinese translation of *vāgindriyam*, *yu-ju* 語具, as: “the mouth, tongue, etc., required for speech.” 語所需口舌等此。

reproduction.”³⁶³

Xuanzang, in his translation of the Abhidharma discussions of the physical *indriyas*, points out a problem with the Sāṅkhya conceptualization of the faculties of action as possessing the power to function independently. The Abhidharma sources that are preserved in the body of Chinese translations by Xuanzang take up the action of “walking” as a paradigmatic case to demonstrate the problem with conceptualizing the *kārmēndriyāṇi* as autonomously functioning and self-sufficient. In this example, the Sāṅkhya definition of the physical *indriya* of walking presents insuperable difficulties that reveal a basic deficiency in the underlying theory. The *Sāṅkhyakārikās* postulate the faculty of “locomotion,” or *pādēndriyam*, as one of the five faculties built for action. According to the classical Sāṅkhya taxonomy, the faculty of locomotion, or *pādēndriya*, is distinguished by the characteristic capability of walking. The faculty of locomotion is rooted in the legs and feet and is viewed as the source of the dominant force that is “sufficient to get [the feet, legs and the body] moving and walking” 足於行步.

Enlisting the example of the faculty of walking, Xuanzang asks how, without an executive operator to wield them, the “two feet” (Skt.: *padau*) can possibly move on their own accord (section 1.4.2). Buddadeva (Chi.: *Juetian* 覺天),³⁶⁴ a Sarvāstivāda authority, adduces this argument as follows: Because the physical organs of the feet are “hard to set into motion,” they require the collaboration of the mental faculty to “get going.”³⁶⁵ Xuanzang and Buddadeva point

³⁶³ For Yaśomitra’s text see Shastri, ed., *Sphuṭārtha, Sāṅkhyāḥ cakṣurindriyādivyatiriktāni vāgindriyādīni kalpayanti—vāgindriyaṃ yena ca vacanaṃ kriyate, pāṇindriyaṃ yena kiñcid drayamādīyate, pādēndriyaṃ yena viharāṇam kriyate, caṅkramaṇamityarthaḥ, pātīndriyaṃ yena purīṣotsargaḥ kriyate, upasthēndriyaṃ kāyēndriyaikadeśavyatiriktam yenāndanāḥ sukhaviśeṣaḥ prāpyate*.

³⁶⁴ See Robert Buswell’s pathbreaking article on Buddhadeva’s ontology, “Buddhadeva: Materials toward an assessment of his philosophy,” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 25.6 (1997), 561-587.

³⁶⁵ In a passage found in Xuanzang’s *Mahāvibhāṣa*, fascicle 153 (T1545:27.736.b14), Buddhadeva writes: “The faculty is, by definition, determinately set so it’s difficult to get it into motion.” 根者決定，難可搖動。In other words, it takes some “outside” effort to get the faculty moving and active. Buddhadeva draws the example of “the

out that the feet do not have an autonomous source of power to activate them, and therefore require another *indriya* to initiate the activity of walking. Regardless of how physically fit or well-outfitted they might be, two feet cannot simply “boot-strap” their way up a hill.

Yaśomitra, like Xuanzang, maintains that the capacity for initiating and sustaining movement in the body resides in the kinesthetic apparatus, or the bodily faculty of *kāyêndriyam*. They propose that the faculty of *kāyêndriyam*, which is viewed as unconfined to a specific location in the body, is required for the physical action of moving. Walking, according to the Abhidharma theorists, requires the action or the karma of *kāyêndriyam* in addition to the apparatus of the two feet. In his commentary on the “Discrimination of Faculties,” Yaśomitra states that the physical action of movement comes about with the convergence of three elements: an applicatory intention, a thought “to move the foot,” and *kāyêndriyam*. With this line of reasoning, the Sarvāstivāda scholars highlight the theoretical problems inherent in the Sāṅkhya definition of the five physical *indriyas* as self-sufficient.

The same holds for talking, as more than one faculty is involved in this task as well. In his commentary regarding the limitations of the Sāṅkhya theory of the independent functioning of the physical *indriya* of speaking, Saṃghabhadra writes:

The stimulation and the emission of speech depends upon the conditions of the lips, teeth, palate, pharynx, larynx, etc., and not on just the voice box (Skt.: *vāk*), because these do not have different causes and because the mental application and discursive thought are the predominant cause (Skt.: *pradhāna-hetu*). The hands and armpits, the vocal cords, the windpipe, strings and breath – these are capable of serving as causes because they discharge sounds and words – so we should not just establish the tongue as the vocal faculty. 依脣齒

image of the mirage” 影像陽焰 to exemplify, like the faculty, something without causal efficacy in the operative sense that *saṃjñā*, by contrast, carries with it. The real faculty cannot be parasitic on something else.

腭咽喉等緣發起言音。非但依舌。無異因故。又尋伺等。於發言音。是勝因故。又諸手腋。管絃息等。皆能為因。發言音故。不應唯立舌為語根。³⁶⁶

Samghabhadra, in his commentary found in the *Treasury of Abhidharma*, uses the example of the faculty of *vāgindriyam* to critique the Sāṅkhya postulate of the faculties for action as independent and self-sustaining. According to Samghabhadra, the faculty of speaking, narrowly defined in the Sāṅkhya schema as the voice box, is not sufficiently equipped to generate the various activities involved in the process of uttering sounds. The *vāgindriyam* does not bear the “self-sufficient power” (Skt. *aiśvaryam*; Chi.: *zizai-li* 自在力) to speak on its own. He argues that the act of speaking is not limited to the products of the voice box but also includes the actions of the mouth, lips, nose and lungs. Samghabhadra makes it clear that the physical action of speaking depends upon not only the *indriya* of speaking, but also other parts of the body and other *indriyas*.

Yaśomitra, in his very precise examination of the case of speaking, pinpoints the methodological problem of causal insufficiency in the Sāṅkhya schema. He avers that there are multiple variables, including the presence of air in the atmosphere, that affect the physical action of vocalizing. In his Chinese rendering of the faculty of speaking, Xuanzang uses the term “apparatus” (Chi.: *ju* 具) to imply that the faculty of speaking is constituted of a set of provisions that includes the throat, teeth, thorax, lips, and abdomen. In his rationale for using the term *ju*, Xuanzang suggests that the *vāgindriyam* alone cannot be a faculty. In short, the voice box, simpliciter, does not contain the factors that are necessary and sufficient to produce speech. Additionally, the *vāgindriyam* is not capable of drawing upon or activating the other *indriyas* that are necessary and sufficient to execute the action of speaking.

Xuanzang reasons that the problems with the causal insufficiencies in the faculties of

³⁶⁶ Ny, fasc. 9 (T1562:29.379.11 -14); Also XZL, fasc. 5 (T1563:29.796.08-14).

speaking and walking holds for other faculties of action as well, including the faculties of locomotion and excretion. Additionally, Yaśomitra, Saṃghabhadra and Xuanzang unequivocally reject the idea that complex actions such as speaking meaningful words or negotiating one's way up a hill require the action of an executive power that exists beyond the faculties. These authors dismiss the idea of an overlord or a chief executive that delegates the work of executing the five physical actions to others and then claims the lion's share of the credit for their accomplishments.

In his commentary in *AKBh* 2.1, Yaśomitra points out an additional reason to discount the Sāṅkhya conceptualization of the voice box as equivalent to the faculty of physical action. He argues that because humans are not born with the ability to utter words, the development of the faculty of speaking involves training, and therefore the action of karma and other faculties. He states: “For as soon as it is born, even without power, it is by way of the trained eye that one sees visibles (Skt.: *rūpas*), but it is not by way of the eyes that one makes speech. Hence, the voice box (Skt.: *vāk*) is not warranted to be (serve as a) a faculty because that exceeds the scope of the faculty qua causal factor (*dharma*).”³⁶⁷ In his commentary on Xuanzang's Chinese translation of the *Treasury of Abhidharma*, Huiyun, a late seventh-century Buddhist scholar, points out an issue linked to Yaśomitra's observation. He avers that an activity that requires training, such as vocalizing words, does not refer to an innate human capability.³⁶⁸ Because the *indriyas* are viewed within the Sāṅkhya schema as innate to the human, the question of training calls the independence of the faculty of speaking into question.

³⁶⁷ Shastri, ed., *Sphuṭārtha*, 144: Jātamātro hi bālakovinaiva śikṣayā cakṣuṣā rūpāṇi paśyati, na tvevaṃ vacanaṃ karoti| tasmā dīndriyadharmatīkrāntatvāna vāk indriyaṃ bhavitumarhati|

³⁶⁸ Huiyun's 慧暉 exegesis on the *Treasury* reads: “as far as refuting the five faculties of action (*karmendriyāṇi*), the mechanism of speech should be like vision in that it does not require training, just as it [vision] is capable of seeing things. But speech only becomes fully realized with training. Moreover, since initial impulse (*vitārka*) and discursive application (*vicāra*) together are capable of making speech, these should be established as their own faculty.” [0144c24] 破五作業根者，語具如眼不要學，即能見色。語即要學方成。又尋伺能發語，應立此為根。

In his auto-commentary on the first verse of *The Discrimination of Indriyas*, Vasubandhu closely examines the case of digestion, the biological function for which the faculty of excretion, or *pāvyendriyam*, is expressly designed. He adduces this example to demonstrate a fallacy in the Sāṅkhya postulate that the independent faculty of *pāvyendriyam*, or the anus, takes care of the excretion of solid and liquid waste.³⁶⁹ Vasubandhu proposes that the anus does not accomplish the entire scope of the activities of excretion. He states: “the mouth and the anus share the common function of excretion.” In a rather crude example, Vasubandhu makes the point that because vomitus is expelled by the mouth, the function of excretion is not limited to the domain of the anus. Additionally, Vasubandhu observes that according to the Sāṅkhya theory, the physical action of excretion (Skt.: *pāyurindriyam*) occurs when the muscles of the anus contract to expel waste.³⁷⁰ Vasubandhu rebuts this idea by pointing out that the anus is not the predominant power source in the activity of expelling waste. He notes that “heavy things always fall in a void; further, wind pushes this matter and forces it to go out.” With this reasoning, Vasubandhu intimates that other physical actions within and outside the body, such as gravity, are responsible for excretion. Therefore, the anus is not the only organ or *indriya* involved in the activity of excretion.

The challenge from the Buddhist Abidhamarikas is aimed at the root of the Sāṅkhya doctrine of the faculties, the premise that the five faculties of action are self-contained, self-sufficient and designed to “go it alone.” The line of attack, however, fails to hit the intended target

³⁶⁹ The reason that Vasubandhu further takes up the *upasthendriyam* (“procreative faculty”) is that Sāṅkhya takes this term to cover both the sexual parts of the organism and part of the faculty of proprioception (*kāyendriyam*). The *upastha* is thus conceived as “distinct from the male or female organ, which is one part, one locus of the organ of touch (*kāyēndriyaikadeśastripuruṣēndriyavyatiriktakalpita*).” In his commentary on Vasubandhu’s *kośa*, Yuanhui points out that part of *upastha* is dominant with respect to both liquid and solid excretion, and those parts of *upastha* corresponding to the sexual organ are dominant with respect to sexual pleasure.

³⁷⁰ Xuanzang’s translates the Sanskrit word *payurendriya* in a derogative way as “the locus of liquid and/or solid excretion” 大•小便處. Paramārtha crudely renders this item as “anus”—see Paramārtha’s trans. of Guṇamati’s *Lakṣaṇa-śāstra*: “There are five *kārmēndriyāṇi*: the mouth, the hands, the legs, the anus, and the bimodally-gendered procreative faculty.” 業根有五。一口。二手。三脚。四尻。五男女根。

for one reason. The characterization of the *karmendriya* that is formulated by the Buddhists in their rebuttal is based on a misapprehension of the original Sāṅkhya sources. The *vr̥tti* commentary to the *Sāṅkhyakārikās*, transmitted along with Paramārtha's Chinese translation of the scriptures, explicitly states that the hands and the feet are a metonymy for the faculties of grasping and locomotion. Simply put, the possession of two hands does not provide the sufficient conditions for grasping. According to the *Sāṅkhyakārikās*, a single faculty never supplies the sufficient conditions for action. The faculties of action are thus conceptualized in the early Sāṅkhya scriptures as the entire apparatus required to execute the five physical actions.

The Buddhist counterargument to the Sāṅkhya concept of the causal independence of the faculties for action is based on the observation that the physical faculties, simpliciter, do not possess the power to activate themselves. According to the Buddhists, the Sāṅkhya schema does not provide a sufficient explanation for the motivation of the physical faculties. The Buddhists argue that “the physical *indriyas* can only execute tasks in conjunction with the coordinating faculty of the mind (Skt.: *samkalpakamindriyam*).”³⁷¹ Returning to the example of walking, the mind is needed to initiate the action of getting the feet moving. Additionally, the mind is needed to sustain the movement of the feet, because the feet cannot coordinate themselves autonomously. Vasubandhu states: “Even with the exercise of the two feet with the heavy element in space, the faculty, as such (Skt. *indriyatva*), does not go anywhere. Because it should be impelled by

³⁷¹ *Jin qishi lun* (T2137:54.1251.c22), *vr̥tti* commentary on *Sāṅkhyakārikās*, 26: “Five faculties for action have five tasks. When this faculty of gustation is associated with the mental faculty, it is capable of speaking words, sentences, and tasting flavors. When the faculty of grasping (lit., “the hands qua organ”) is associated with the mental faculty it is capable of performing crafts and grasping things, etc. When the faculty of locomotion (*pādendriyam*) is associated with the mental faculty, it is capable of moving strait forward, etc., and up and down the path. When the faculty of human procreation (*ānandendriyam*) is associated with the mental faculty, it is capable of sexual pleasure and begetting children. When the faculty of solid excretion (*pāyorindriyam*) is associated with the mental faculty, it is capable of expelling solid waste.” 五作根有五事。是舌根與知根相應。能說名・句・味。手根與知根相應，能作工巧・執捉等。足根與知根相應，能行平等高下路。人根與知根相應。能作戲樂及生兒子。大遺根與知根相應。能棄於糞穢。

wind.”³⁷² In their critique of the Sāṅkhya conceptualization of the five physical *indriyas*, the Buddhists conclude that because the physical *indriyas* are not intrinsically motivated to act, they are not self-sufficient.

The Refutation of the Five Physical *Indriyas* As Singular and Unique in Their Functioning

The Sāṅkhya theorists posit that the five physical faculties are uniquely and singularly designed to accomplish their designated functions. The Abhidharma theorists, in addition to their concerns about the validity of the theory of the self-sufficiency of the five faculties, highlight an inconsistency in the Sāṅkhya concept of the physical *indriyas*’ specificity of functioning. They point out that the five faculties execute tasks other than those they are expressly designated to accomplish as delineated within the Sāṅkhya taxonomy. The Buddhists enlist this idea in their rebuttal of the Sāṅkhya theory and position the causal redundancy of the physical *indriyas*³⁷³ as at odds with the conceptualization of the five faculties as self-contained and singular in their functioning. This rebuttal to the Sāṅkhya claims of the self-sufficiency and uniqueness of the physical *indriyas* is articulated in the Sarvāstivāda *Abhidharma*, as well as in the original text of *The Treasury of Abhidharma* by Vasubandhu and its Chinese commentaries.

Within the Sāṅkhya theory, the five physical faculties for action have very specific and singular tasks. For example, the faculty of speech is designed for the vocalization of words, and the faculty of excretion (Skt.: *pāvyêndriyam*) is designed to expel waste from the body.

³⁷² Pāyorapi nendriyatvamutsargo gurudravasyākāṣe sarvatra patanāt| vāyunā ca tatpreraṇāt| AKBh. 2.6 (Pradhan, 1967 p. 40).”

³⁷³ On the basis of these observations, Abhidharma commentators try to make the that three of the so-called “faculties for action” – namely, the “faculty of solid excretion” (*pāyu*), the “faculty of speech,” and “faculty of procreation” – are in fact trivial posits undeserving of the name “faculty.” What these three items have in common is that they were designed for very specific and singular tasks. However, they are well capable of executing tasks beyond those for which they were expressly/specifically designed. Moreover, other faculties are well capable of executing the work for which they were explicitly/expressly designed.

Additionally, within Sāṅkhya theory, each of the faculties of action is viewed as having the capacity to accomplish its designated task without the involvement of other faculties. Within this framework, there is no redundancy among the faculties or overlapping of their functions.

In their painstakingly detailed commentaries on the *Treasury of Abhidharma*, Xuanzang and his prolific disciples and collaborators Puguang 普光 (645?–664 C.E.) and Fabao 法寶 (dates of birth and death unknown) single out the faculties of speech and excretion as particularly flagrant examples of the problem of redundancy within the Sāṅkhya conceptualization of the physical *indriyas*. The commentaries of Puguang and Fabao appear in their study notes on Xuanzang’s Chinese translation of the *Treasury of Abhidharma*. Here Xuanzang’s disciples demonstrate their lockstep reasoning in lodging the following complaint:³⁷⁴

Presently, we conform to the Sāṅkhya tenet of eleven faculties that generate the activities of five sensory faculties making the counter-argument: [For Sāṅkhya], the “provisions for speech/apparatus of speech” (*vāk*) refers to the physical tongue (lit. “the fleshy tongue”) which is dominant in speaking. The hands are dominant in grasping things. The feet are dominant in walking. The rectum/anus (Chi. lit., “the locus of expelling solid waste”) is dominant in expelling waste, while the urethra (lit., “the locus of liquid excretion”) is dominant in sexual pleasure. Since either of these two is dominant, they should both be established/postulated as faculties. 今約彼宗十一根中五作業根為難：語具謂肉舌於語有增上，手於執增上，足於行增上。大便處於棄捨便穢增上；小便處於姪欲樂事增上。此等竝增上，應立為根。

In the Sāṅkhya taxonomy, the fourth faculty, the action of excretion, is defined as “the locus for expelling liquid and solid waste” (Skt.: *pāyu*; Chi.: *dabian-chu* 大便處). The word *pāyu*, used in the Sāṅkhya texts, most literally means anus. Puguang and Fabao observe that the use of

³⁷⁴ Fabao makes this line of argument at: T1822:41.514.b28-c3; Puguang makes this argument at T1821:41.58.b04-9.

the word *pāyurindriyam*, as enshrined in the *Sāṅkhyakārikās*, is problematic because it does not include the urethra as a locus for expelling liquid waste. To his credit, Xuanzang renders the term *xiaobianehu* (大小便處), which includes both the anus and the urethra. Fabao and Puguang point out the deficiency in this nomenclature to highlight the problem with the specificity of function in the Sāṅkhya texts.

Drawing upon Vasubandhu's discussion of the capacities attributed by the *Sāṅkhyakārikās* to the faculty of excretion, or *pāvyēndriyam*, in the auto-commentary on the first verse of his "Discrimination of Faculties," Puguang and Fabao attempt to illustrate the methodological tenet that multiple faculties are involved in all physical actions. They further debunk the Sāṅkhya idea of the singular purpose of the faculty of excretion by arguing that the physiological processes of digestion and the expulsion of waste from the body involve additional faculties and physical forces. They conclude that no single faculty is sufficient to accomplish the vital tasks of excretion. With this observation, the Abhidharma commentators conclude that the theory of the faculty of excretion, as enshrined in the *Sāṅkhyakārikās*, is a trivial posit.

In his polemical sub-commentary on Vasubandhu's auto-commentary on the first stanza of the second chapter of the *Treasury of Abhidharma*, Saṅghabhadra highlights the problem of redundancy in the Sāṅkhya taxonomy. The arguments leveled by Saṅghabhadra indict the methodological approach of demarcating the faculties based on one specific or characteristic action. Saṅghabhadra writes: "The tongue [in addition to the voice box] is part of the capability of vocalization, and the nose is extensively involved in breathing."³⁷⁵ The fact that the same faculty

³⁷⁵ *Clarification of Tenets*, fasc. 5, and *Nyāyanusāra śāstra*, fascicle 9 contain virtually the same passage, only the final sentence in bold font is found in *Nyāyanusāra* but not in the presentation of the passage: "The gravest error in their (i.e., the Sāṅkhya), is that they establish faculties without restriction or limitation. If the faculty of gustation is distinct from the faculty of speech, then must be granted that the faculty of olfaction is distinct from the faculty of breathing. This is because the tongue provides capability of speaking, and like the nose it is implicated in breathing. If one thing [the tongue] has significant causal efficacy in another thing [breathing], then it will be postulated as a faculty. Thus, the throat and larynx, the teeth, lips, and abdomen are all involved in

does what others are explicitly designed to do is inconsistent with the definition of the faculty in terms of a characteristic task.

Based upon the principle of collaboration among faculties, Vasubandhu concludes that the faculties of proprioception and gustation are involved in the ingestion, digestion, and ultimately the expulsion of piecemeal food. Although they are related in terms of their functioning, the capacities for the ingestion, digestion and the expulsion of food do not form an independent *indriya*. Vasubandhu concludes that digestion must be explained as an example of an action requiring the coordination of different *indriyas*.

Puguang and Yaśomitra elaborate on the idea that more than one action of the body falls under the physical action of expulsion. The *Mahāvibhāṣa* states: “That which is motivated by wind is not [motivated] by the bodily faculty” 風勢所轉非有身根.³⁷⁶ Puguang develops Vasubandhu’s thought that “wind should not be established because it induces the power of wind to put things out, which has nothing to do with the anus itself.” Yaśomitra elaborates that “heavy food,” because it is “difficult to digest,” is expelled by wind, and not by an independent faculty.³⁷⁷ He also argues

chewing and swallowing, and the matters involved in the assimilation [of food], etc. All of these elements are dominant [in eating], so they each should be postulated as faculties. Some hold that all of these elements serve as causal basis, and give rise to specific effects, since they are all dominant in action, and as such, should be postulated as faculties. Thus, Kāpila is engaging in puerile games. He shouldn’t admit that the apparatus of speech is an *indriya*. **Since it is not-sufficient without becoming combined together with other *indriyas* that are in fact the most dominant in the action** 太過失者。彼所立根。應無限量。若舌根異，語根異者，應許鼻根，與息根異。如舌能語，鼻通息故。若此於彼，少有作用，即立為根，是則咽喉，齒脣肚等，於諸吞嚼，攝持等事。有增上故，應立為根。或一切因。於生自果。皆增上故。應並立根。故迦比羅如童子戲。不應許彼語具等根。非足 (emended from 定, based upon Gong edition) 無雜極增上故 (T29n1562p0379b23-29).

³⁷⁶ Again, *Mahāvibhāṣa* 131 clearly states that “without the element (*dhātu*) of wind/air, there should be no movement.” 若無風界應無動搖。

³⁷⁷ Yaśomitra’s commentary on the relevant patch of text in Vasubandhu’s AKBh 2.6 in Shastri, ed. *Sphuṭārtha*, 144 runs: “...and it’s set into motion by wind” — with that pure (undigested) constituency (*śucidravya*) [by wind setting it into motion] in the case of something heavy (difficult to digest), precisely on the part of wind there should be that action [taking place], not on the part of the faculty/organ of chewing (*pāṭhvindriyam*), because it [the action] is not attained [*√labh*] by that. *vāyunā ca tatpreraṇāditi/vāyunā tasya gurorśucidravasya preraṇā/vāyoreva tat karma syāt, na pāṭhyvindriyasya; tadanupalabdeḥ*.

that gravity is involved in the expulsion of waste: “It is in the nature of heavy things to fall downward through an air chamber.” The Abhidharma theorists suggest that the elevation of the anus to the vaunted status of a physical faculty is problematic in and of itself.

The arguments aimed at denying that the voice constitutes its own faculty are predicated upon the idea that the voice cannot be truly innate, as it requires some training to be exercised properly. Not so the faculties of solid and liquid excretion, the fourth *karmendriyas* postulated in the *Sāṅkhyakārikās*. Vasubandhu singles out the dual faculties of excretion as particularly trivial elements posited by the Sāṅkhya system. However, his criticism is based upon a different reason than the reason used in the cases of the voice and locomotion. Saṃghabhadra cites this as a paradigmatic case to indict all the five faculties for action as resting upon trivial and gratuitous posits.³⁷⁸

The critiques leveled by the Buddhists against the five faculties for action as envisioned by the Sāṅkhya theorists fall short because the early Buddhist polemics are predicated upon a fundamental misapprehension of the Sāṅkhya doctrine that is laid out clearly in the *Sāṅkhyakārikās*. According to the *Sāṅkhyakārikās*, the faculties of action are conceptualized as the entire apparatus required to execute the five physical actions, and not simply singular organs. Garbe³⁷⁹ describes

³⁷⁸ Saṃghabhadra writes in fascicle nine of his *Nyāyanusāra*, in his commentary on the beginning of the second chapter of Vasubandhu’s *Treasury of Abhidharma* (AK2.1): “Although congenitally blind people hear talk of ‘color,’ they don’t comprehend the different visible characteristics of ‘blue,’ etc. Although the hands can grasp things, they are not established as a ‘faculty,’ because the mouth can also grasp things. The feet are not termed a ‘faculty’ in moving, since snakes, fish, etc., also move but not with feet. The locus of discharging solid waste (i.e., anus/rectum) is capable of expelling things, but it is not termed a ‘faculty,’ since the mouth is also capable of expelling things. Where the mistake of confusing things lies here is in the establishing things as faculties which results in confusion, precisely because the mouth is capable of grasping and expelling things, just as either hands or feet are equally capable of grasping things in their movements. With these [examples], the line of reasoning leads into error.” 諸生盲人雖聞說色，不了青等差別相故，手於執取不應名根，口等亦能執取物故。足於行動不應名根。蛇魚等類，不由於足有行動故。出大便處，於能棄捨不應名根，口等亦能有棄捨故。雜亂失者，彼所立根應成雜亂，口能執取及棄捨故。手足俱有執行用故。有如是等雜亂過失。

³⁷⁹ See Richard Garbe, *Die Sāṃkhya-Philosophie: Eine Darstellung des Indischen Rationalismus Nach Den Quellen* (Berlin: H. Haessel. 1894), 25.

the five *kārmendriyāṇi* as “something of the mind (Skt.: *atīndriyam*), to be opened/unfolded from their functions, and not to be confused with the visible organs in which they are situated.”³⁸⁰ This qualification clearly disaggregates the faculties for action from the crude faculties of the body. In this regard, the understanding of the five faculties for action founded in the *Sāṅkhyakārikās* ultimately withstands the line of scrutiny of Xuanzang and the Abhidharma critics.

Xuanzang’s overall argumentation against the Sāṅkhya doctrine of the soul lays bare an Achille’s heel in the Sāṅkhya doctrine. Schterbatsky (1920, p. 3) describes this weakness as the discrepancy between the “eternally-passive” *puruṣa* and the perennially “active” *indriyas* that execute the actions willed by the soul.³⁸¹ While the *puruṣa* and the *indriyas* make up the apparatus that enables the action of the soul, the *puruṣa*, simpliciter, is portrayed as an inactive witness in the theater of the body. The eleven *indriyas* of the corporeal body are responsible for the effortful work involved in executing the actions of the soul. The soul emerges from this picture as a collective concept endowed with the powers of the physical body, while its essence – the *puruṣa* – is passive and inactive. In contrast, the soul depicted in the Vaiśeṣika scriptures is mobile and active.

After dispensing with a comprehensive study of the Sāṅkhya tradition, Xuanzang undertakes an investigation of the classical Vaiśeṣika (Chi.: *Sheng-lun* 勝論, *Weishi shi* 衛世師) texts and their commentaries. His immersive studies of the Vaiśeṣika sūtras and the commentary on these texts focus on the theories that posit the soul as the entity that animates the body in life

³⁸⁰ Richard Garbe writes: “Sie sind etwas übersinnliches (*atīndriya*), aus ihren Functionen zu erschliessendes und nicht mit den sichtbaren Organen zu verwechseln, in denen sie ihren Sitz haben. Unter den Functionen (*vṛtti*) hat man sich ein Hinauswachsen (*sarpaṇa*) der Sinne aus ihren körperlichen Sitzen gedacht und ihren Ursprung in dem Individuum, nicht in einem von Aussen kommenden Reiz gesucht.” See Garbe,

³⁸¹ As Schterbatsky writes: “the position of an eternal passive Soul alongside with an active but unconscious intellect (*buddhi*) is indeed a very weak point in the Sāṅkhya system, a point which invites criticism.”

and forsakes the body in death. In his analyses, Xuanzang detects the subtle influence of the Brāhmaṇical theory of the soul on Chinese Buddhist philosophy. Concerned about the infiltration of theories that rely upon invisible forces for the animation of the body and for the loss of vitality that occurs in dying, Xuanzang looks for more rigorous and scientific explanations. He attempts to revitalize Buddhist theory by finding accounts of the physical activity of the body and the process of dying that do not depend upon unobservable entities, such as an *ātman*.

The Vaiśeṣika Conceptualization of the Soul

While residing in India, Xuanzang became concerned with what he believed to be a pervasive attachment within the flourishing Buddhist Pudgalavāda tradition to the Brāhmaṇical idea of an eternal *ātman*. The Pudgalavāda, one of the five Indic traditions of Buddhism, holds that a person, in the form of the *ātman*, or an “eternal spirit” (Chi.: *shen* 神), survives death. During his travels along the Silk Road, Xuanzang noticed the idea of the eternal *ātman* proliferating among the Brāhmaṇs and the Buddhists practicing in India and Central Asia. Upon his return to China, he witnessed prominent Buddhists perpetuating the idea of a soul as an eternally transmigrating entity.

Xuanzang’s writings consistently deny the existence of any supernatural entity that survives death, whether in the guise of an eternal spirit, a “cloud soul” (Chi.: *hun* 魂), a “white soul” (Chi.: *po* 魄) or a “numen” (Chi.: *ling* 靈). He regards the appropriation of terminology that describes an enduring spirit entity, even when used to forge a rapprochement with Brāhmaṇical or Daoist belief systems, as scripturally unfounded. To Xuanzang, the idea of an eternal spirit is a fundamental misinterpretation of the teachings of the Buddha and contradictory to the Buddhist tenet of no-self.

Alarmed by the attempts of his Buddhist colleagues to smuggle a soul into Chinese

Buddhism, Xuanzang turns to the Vaiśeṣika scriptures to repudiate, and therefore block, a source of the infiltration of the Brāhmaṇical doctrine of the soul into the Buddhist system. Xuanzang's targeted arguments against the Vaiśeṣika doctrine are driven by his agenda of expiating the soul from the Buddhist picture of dying and death. By doing this, Xuanzang intends to rescue Buddhism from intrusion by crypto-Brāhmaṇical theories that posit the presence of a supernatural person who survives in death.

Vaiśeṣika is recognized as one of the six Brāhmaṇical schools that flow from the Vedic traditions of Hinduism. The name of this philosophical tradition is derived from the Sanskrit word *vaiśeṣa*, which means “particularity.” *Viśeṣa* is also the name of the sixth *padārtha*, or ontological category, within the grand Vaiśeṣika taxonomy that categorizes everything in the universe.³⁸² The foundational scriptures of the Vaiśeṣika school of Hindu philosophy are the *Vaiśeṣika Sūtras* (Chi.: *Sheng lun jing* 勝論經). These sūtras record the oral testimony of the sixth-century B.C. Indian sage and visionary Ulūka 優樓迦. A somewhat mythical figure, Ulūka,³⁸³ in his uncompromising search for truth, is said to have survived in an isolated mountain retreat by eating millet and other grains. Also known as “the All-Seeing Owl” (Skt.: *Ulūka*; Chi.: *Wenlunjia* 嚙露迦; *Xiuliu* 鵲鷗), or the “grain eater in the night,” Ulūka is regarded as the founder of Vaiśeṣika. The written collection of his aphorisms, also known as the *Ulūka Sūtras*, forms the scriptural basis of the Vaiśeṣika doctrine.

While inheriting the doctrine of the soul from the Sāṅkhya school, the Vaiśeṣika philosophers develop a distinct notion of the soul. Throughout the works of the classical Vaiśeṣika theorists, the soul is envisioned as the substrate holding the vital powers of life, the motivator of

³⁸² Kumar, *On Knowing and What There is to Know* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 33-35.

³⁸³ Kuji refers to Ulūka using the derogatory epithet “Barn Owl,” implying that he is hermetical. This epithet derives from the semantic translation of Kāṇada's name, and is not implied in the phonetic transliteration.

the physical activities necessary for living, the restorer and rejuvenator of the body and the bearer of karma. Kaṇāda's conceptualization of the *ātman* as the driver of all actions and the substance of life is consistent with his Brāhmanical forbearers. The sūtras of Kaṇāda, however, defend the position that the soul, per se, survives death and continues throughout the afterlife until it becomes associated with a new body. Unlike the Sāṅkhya *ātman*, “in early Vaiśeṣika by contrast, the soul itself migrates” (Watson, 2006, p. 63).

Xuanzang was familiar with the hallowed sūtras of Kaṇāda and was likely introduced to them as a novitiate monk in China. While in India from 630-640 C.E., Xuanzang read the original texts in Sanskrit and a compilation of the *Vaiśeṣika Sūtras* composed by the sixth-century Vaiśeṣika scholar Candramati. Upon his return to China, he undertook a translation of the Candramati summary of the Vaiśeṣika philosophy and an extensive study of the later commentaries. With the Vaiśeṣika doctrine deeply in his bones, Xuanzang formulated his rebuttal to the Vaiśeṣika doctrinal premise that the soul is necessary to explain survival and death.

The Vaiśeṣika *Padārthas* and the *Ātman*

The Vaiśeṣika scholars build their explanation of the existence of life and the *ātman* on the theory of the *padārthas*, or the objects of experience. Within the Vaiśeṣika doctrine, the *padārthas* comprise a comprehensive taxonomy of the basic constituents of reality. The *padārthas* are defined as all objects that can be known (Skt.: *jñeya*) and named (Skt.: *abhideya*). In his exegesis of the Vaiśeṣika theories of life and death, Xuanzang investigates the earlier anti-Brahmanical treatises of Guṇamati that describe the “ontological categories,” the six *padārthas*, that categorize all aspects of experience (Kumar, 2013). The *padārthas* are analogous to the *tattvas* of the Sāṅkhya doctrine. Both taxonomies define the basic ontological and primitive elements of existence in their philosophical canons.

In the first lines of the *Vaiśeṣika Sūtras*, Kaṇāda says: “The goal is knowledge of the *padārthas*. Knowledge of the *padārthas* is the comprehensive knowledge of both dharma and *tattvas*” (Jambuvijaya, 1961, p. 1). Kaṇāda states that the ultimate path to liberation (Skt.: *moksha*) is disclosed in the *padārthas*, the system that explains the dharma and the *adharma*, the merits and demerits that accumulate over the course of present and past lives. According to the Vaiśeṣika doctrine sent down from the prophet Kaṇāda, to know the *padārthas* means to comprehend a grand taxonomy that explains the nature of the universe (Kumar 2013).

The classical Vaiśeṣika doctrine of the six *padārthas* is enumerated by Kaṇāda in the *Vaiśeṣika Sūtras*. Huili notes that Xuanzang, in the debate with the Plain-Spoken Brāhmaṇ at the Nālanda gate, recites the first six *padārthas* in the standard sequence laid down by Kaṇāda.³⁸⁴ Faithfully reciting the taxonomy, Xuanzang states: “The Vaiśeṣika masters postulate six *padārthas*: substance (Skt.: *dravya*), quality (Skt.: *guṇa*; Chi.: *qiuna* 求那; *de* 德), action (Skt.: *karman*), being (Skt. *bhava*);³⁸⁵ sameness or homogeneity versus difference or heterogeneity (Skt.: *sāmānyaviśeṣa*);³⁸⁶ and inherence (Skt. *samavāya*).”³⁸⁷ 勝論師立六句義，謂實、德、業、有、

³⁸⁴ Tang Yongtong’s massive survey of materials for the study of Vaiśeṣika preserved in Chinese crossreferences the Vaiśeṣikasūtras with both the Dasapadārtha *sastra* and Aryadeva’s Catuṣṣataka *sastra*. His findings show that all of these texts share a fundamental agreement on the sequence of the six padārthas, even as they differ in some of the finer details of the nomenclature. The only discrepancies between Aryadeva’s and Candramati’s texts are due to difference in the translation style of Kumārajīva and Xuanzang. See *Tang Yongtong quanji*, vol. 2, 183.

³⁸⁵ See Puguang’s *Study Notes on the Kośa* (T1821:41.95.a05): “What is *bhāva*? It is the *padārtha* that combines the mixing of *dravyas*, *guṇas*, and *karman*. All of it [*bhāva*] is graspable by the *indriyas*.” 何者為有性。謂與一切實·德·業句義和合。一切根所取。

³⁸⁶ Puguang, *Notes on the Kosa*, fascicle 5: “sameness and difference (*sāmānyaviśeṣa*) refers to the cognition of sameness” (T1821:41.94.b27). Puguang’s point in making this stipulation that the fifth *padārtha* of *sāmānyaviśeṣa* refers to the “cognition of sameness and difference,” is that this refers only to the similarities and differences between sentient things – that is, things with “awareness.” Puguang refers to the correct idea that *sāmānyaviśeṣa* references only sentient things as “*sāmānyaviśeṣa* with restricted sense,” while he refers to the mistaken idea that it includes also insensate things as “the unrestricted sense.”

³⁸⁷ Daoyi’s sub-glosses on Zhizhou’s commentary on *Nyāyapraveśa* contains an inferential argument attributable to Vaiśeṣika that attempts to prove the real existence of *samavāya qua padārtha*: “Vaiśeṣika establishes an inference that the referent of *samavāya* is something that really exists. Reason (*hetu*): since it is classified as one of the six *padārthas*. This is because of the fact that the other five *padārthas* are inferable.” 勝論立比量云立：和合義（是有法）定是實有。因云：六句中隨一攝故，由如五句此是比有也。

同異性、和合性，此六是我所受具，未解脫已來受用前六；若得解脫，與六相離，稱為涅槃。In his recounting of the Nalanda Gate debate, Huili reports that Xuanzang attests to the Vaiśeṣika doctrine that the *padārthas* comprise all of the entities that make up the body and the soul, as well as the karma that they generate throughout life.³⁸⁸ Xuanzang also states: “The six *padārthas* are the range of things experienced by the soul.” 此六是我所受具。

While Kaṇāda enumerates six *padārthas* in the Vaiśeṣika sūtras, other classical Vaiśeṣika texts include a seventh category of non-existence (Skt. *abhāva*) in their taxonomies. Other listings, including the taxonomy of the *padārthas* in Xuanzang’s Chinese translation of Candramati’s treatise, enumerate up to ten *padārthas*.³⁸⁹ Despite quibbles about the number of *padārthas* in the Vaiśeṣika taxonomy,³⁹⁰ the sequence and the definitions of *padārthas* one through six – substance, quality, action, being, particularity and inherence-as they are codified in the seminal Vaiśeṣika

³⁸⁸ Puguang provides some helpful and concise glosses on the third through sixth *padārthas* of the classical Vaiśeṣika taxonomy: “The third [*padārtha*] is ‘action’ (*karman*). It is explained as the action that is motivated by the real “subject” [of action.] The fourth *padārtha* is ‘sameness.’ It is explained as the sameness that describes the sameness pervasive to a discrete entity that is real. The fifth [*padārtha*] is ‘difference’ (*viśeṣa*). It is explained as the difference that discriminates between one real thing and another. The sixth is inherence (*samāvaya*): it is explained as something that is engendered from plural factors and that obtains their causal efficacy.” 三、業。解云：謂動作是實家業。四、同。解云：體遍實等，同有名同。五、異。解云：唯在實上，令實別異。六和合。解云謂與諸法為生至因 (T1821:41.94.c07-11).

³⁸⁹ Frauwallner, *History of Indian Philosophy* (1956, reprinted 1973), vol. 2, 142-5, *passim*. There is the question surrounding the representativity of this text, since it presents an atypical taxonomy of ten categories or *padārthas*, rather than the more standard six-fold or seven-fold taxonomies, which are attested in original Skt. sources such as the *Praśastapādabhāṣya*. However, Frauwallner’s *History of Indian Philosophy* treats the tenfold along with the more standard taxonomies – see volume two of his authoritative synoptic study, the second volume of which covers “the Nature-Philosophical Schools and Vaiśeṣika (vol. 2, 3-180, *passim*). Jizang 吉藏, the famous Sui-Dynasty scholastic of “mixed” Persian and Chinese ancestry, is only familiar with the sixfold taxonomy.

³⁹⁰ Xuanzang’s translation of Candramati’s work differs slightly from the view reported by Xanzang in the transcript of his dispute with the Plain-Spoken Brāhmin at the Univeristy of Nālanda. Judging by the record of Xuanzang’s translation of his Treatise on the Ten Padārthas, Candramati acknowledges four extra *padārthas* in addition to the six given in the standard sequence: (i.e., *dravya*, *guṇa*, *karman*, *sāmānya*, *viśeṣa*, and *samavāya*). Maticandra enumerates the three additional *padarthatas* as (7) *śakti* (potency), (8) *aśakti* (impotency), (9) commonness (edition of Ui Hakuju (1977) reconstructs as “*sāmānya-viśeṣa*”) and (10) *abhāva* as the 7th, 8th, 9th, and 10th *padārthas*, respectively. Puguang’s *Study Notes on the Treasury*, fascicle 5 says that the standard sequence of six is “based upon the early to middle-period old masters of Vaiśeṣika” 若依勝論宗中先代古師 (T1821:41.94.b29). Although atypical in this respect, Frauwallner, *History of Indian Philosophy*, vol. 2, 104-132, *passim*, nevertheless takes Xuanzang’s text seriously enough to avail himself frequently of its meticulous discussions of the *padārtha* taxonomy in his synoptic investigation of the Vaiśeṣika natural philosophy.

sūtras (1.1.4) are a matter of general acceptance among Vaiśeṣika authorities.

Within the Vaiśeṣika schema, the first two *padārthas*, *dravyas*, and *guṇas*, are regarded as the fundamental building blocks of life. *Dravyas* and *guṇas* are regarded as the two ontological categories of which everything in the universe is composed. The first *padārtha* of *dravya* includes the nine real substances of earth, air, water, fire, ether, space, time, soul, and mind. The second *padārthas* of *guṇas* (Skt.: *guṇapadārthas*; Chi.: *deju yi* 德句義) includes the twenty-four qualities of color, taste, smell, tangibility, number, size, separateness, conjunction, disjunction, haecceity or this-ness, that-ness, awareness, pleasure, pain, desire, anger, effort, weight, liquidity, moistness, impulse, meritorious action, non-meritorious action, and sound.

In the Vaiśeṣika theory, the *dravyas* are further divided into two categories of tangible and the intangible substances. The first four *dravyas* of earth, water, fire, wind, and air are tangible substances, and the last five *dravyas* of space, time, direction, soul, and mind are intangible substances. In the ontological theory of the Vaiśeṣika, the tangible substances composing the four elements of the material world are palpable. Intangible substances are the five elements that cannot be touched and are known to exist because of inferences that are made about their physical presence. In the *Daśapadārtha śāstra*, Candramati adduces the “substance of the jar” to explicate the differences between a tangible and an intangible substance. In Candramati’s example, an earthenware jar is regarded as composed of two parts: the atomic particles of clay that compose the jar and the atomic particles of ether that exist within the inner contours of the jar. The shape, firmness and weight of the clay jar are qualities that are palpable and therefore tangible. The substance of ether contained within the jar does not register with the tactile faculties and is therefore regarded as intangible.

The doctrine that distinguishes between tangible and intangible substances is important to

the Vaiśeṣika theorists because it supports the idea that the visible activities of the body provide evidence or inferential signs (Skt.: *liṅga*) for the presence of the soul. Because the soul is regarded as an intangible substance, the existence of the soul, by definition, must be inferred. The basis for the inference of the soul, according to the Vaiśeṣika doctrine, is in the physical activities of the body. Gunamati faithfully enumerates the five outward signs that indicate the presence of the soul animating the body, according to the *Vaiśeṣika Sūtras*. They are inhalation, exhalation, blinking, eye contact, lifespan, and vitality (Skt.: *āyurjīvītā*).

According to Kaṇāda, each of these outward signs provides dispositive evidence for the existence of a soul. The activities of the body, for example breathing, sensory experiencing and psychological, are proof of the work of the soul. While not all activities of the body are visible, all bodily functions are regarded as direct evidence of the existence of the soul. According to Vaiśeṣika doctrine, both involuntary actions, such as the beating of the heart, and voluntary activities, such as walking up a hill, are enabled by the soul.

While bearing similarities to the Sāṅkhya doctrine regarding the primacy of the soul in living and dying, the Vaiśeṣika reliance on the theory of the *padārthas* differentiates the two Brāhmaṇical doctrines of the soul. Within the Vaiśeṣika taxonomy, the soul is situated firmly within the first and foremost category of real entities in the universe, the *padārtha* of *dravyas*, or substance.³⁹¹ The Vaiśeṣika philosophical treatises unanimously support the foundational premise that the soul is a real substance. Because the soul is a real substance, it bears specific qualities in the way that all substances in the world bear specific qualities. The categorization of the soul as a substance to which qualities adhere is foundational to the Vaiśeṣika idea of the soul as the entity

³⁹¹ Vijayan, “foreword,” (1992) “*Guṇa* and *karma* reside in *dravya*, the first being permanent and the other transient. *Samavāya* is the inseparable relation connecting *guṇa*, *karma* and *viśeṣa* with *dravya*. *Viśeṣa* is nothing but the ultimate individuality residing in eternal substances.”

that bears the vital qualities of life.

Based on their ontological theory of the *padārthas*, the Vaiśeṣika theorists envision the soul, or the *ātman*, as the bearer of the vital powers that provide the essence of life and sustain life in the body. The corporeal body is regarded as an inert compound of the five *padārthas* of earth, water, fire, wind and ether. The body is dependent on the presence of the *ātman* for the physical support of all activities in life. Kaṇāda, in the *Vaiśeṣika Sūtras*, conceptualizes the *ātman* as the bearer of the substances of life, including karma and *adharma*, the source of physical action and the rejuvenator of the body. The soul in the Vaiśeṣika picture is therefore viewed as omnipresent and omnipotent within the body. Because all life processes depend upon the soul, dying results when the animating spirit of the soul begins to leave the body.

The Nature of the Soul As a Substance in the Vaiśeṣika Doctrine

The early Vaiśeṣika texts posit the soul as one of the nine forms of *dravyas*, the primary substances of life. The standard Vaiśeṣika taxonomy of the nine *dravyas* (Kumar 2013, pp. 48-9) defended by Candramati in his treatise³⁹² include earth, water, fire, wind or air, ether, time, direction (Skt: *dik*), soul (Skt.: *ātman*) and mind (Skt.: *manas*). The placement of the soul within the category of nine substances by the Vaiśeṣika theorists is doctrinally significant. As a substance, the soul is conceptualized as a substrate to which the qualities that characterize a living being adhere. In this way, the soul is elevated within the Vaiśeṣika doctrine as the bearer of the vital qualities of life (Ch.: *tuoluobiao* 陀羅驃; *shí*實).

In the early Vaiśeṣika texts (Watson, 2010, pp 144-7, passim) and in Xuanzang's translation of the *Treatise on Ten Padārthas* by Candramati, the soul is described as the “stable

³⁹² Candramati lists nine *dravyas* 九實 under the *padārtha* of substance 實句義: [1262c19]一地二水三火四風五空六時七方八我九意。(1) earth; (2) water; (3) fire; (4) wind/air; (5) space; (6) time; (7) direction (Skt: *dik*); (8) soul (*ātman*) (9) mind (*manas*) – these are the nine substances (*dravyas*).

bearer” (Skt.: *kāṣṭhādhatr*) or the “superior bearer” (Skt.: *adhiṣṭhātṛ*) of the vital qualities of life.³⁹³ Candramati lists the fourteen qualities (Skt. *caturdaśaguṇa*), extracted from the Vaiśeṣika taxonomy of the twenty-four *guṇas* that are borne by the soul. They are number, size (Skt.: *parimāṇa*), “severality,” (Kumar 2013, p. 24), particularity or separateness (Skt. *prthaktva*), conjunction (Skt.: *saṃyoga*), disjunction (Skt.: *vibhāga*), this-ness, awareness (Skt.: *buddhi*), pleasure, pain, desire, anger, physical effort including *sattva* and *śakti* (Skt.: *prayatna*) and the merits (Skt. *karma*) and demerits of actions (Skt.: *adharma*). While a soul may not evince all fourteen qualities at any one time, it may evolve to possess the full range of qualities. Xuanzang agrees with the Vaiśeṣika premise that the fourteen qualities are unique or “invariably concomitant” (Skt. *anvaya*)³⁹⁴ to the *ātman*. He also avers that, from the Vaiśeṣika perspective, the fourteen qualities of life do not actualize without the substrate provided by a substantial soul.

Of the fourteen properties, the three qualities of “life” (Skt.: *sattva*), “sentient awareness” (Skt.: *buddhi*) and “vital potency” or “breath” (Skt.: *śakti*) are regarded as basic for the survival of human life. While not abstracted into one of the fourteen properties that belong to the soul (Kumar, pp. 78-83, *passim*), *sattva* and *śakti* are subsumed under the quality of *prayatna*, or physical effort. According to the Vaiśeṣika taxonomy presented by Candramati and by later commentators such

³⁹³ This characterization of the Vaiśeṣika doctrine is found in Yaśomitra’s commentary on *AKBh* 2.45ab. It is imbedded in a discussion of the relationship between the property of “vital power” (*āyur*) and its “superior bearer.” Yaśomitra reports a Vaiśeṣika pūrvapakṣin’s argument that *āyur*, the property in question, must belong to a stable bearer: “For accordingly, there exists something which attaches to the name “disposition” and it exists precisely in the form of “vital power.” But the Vaibhāṣika Master (Ācārya) errors in that it’s merely consisting in that [vital-power] – so it is said on the part of the author (i.e., Vasubandhu, the *śāstrakāra*)– for that Vaiśeṣika [opponent], this is because of the fact that (1) of the fact that its dispositions of that (i.e., vital power) have a singular nature, (2) because of the fact that there exists nothing else that is invariably connected with it (i.e., vital power/life) and (3) because of the fact that there exists nothing whose characteristic is being the superior bearer (*kāṣṭhādhatr*), etc., of the conditions [of life]. *Yathā hi saṃskāro nāma bhāvāntaramasti, evamāyurapi syāditi, tena tanmatam dūṣayatyācāryaḥ – tasyeti| vistaraḥ – tasya vaiśeṣikasya tadekatvāt saṃskāraikatvāt| pratibandhābhāvācca| pratibandhasya kāṣṭhapratyādhātādilakṣaṇasyābhāvācca |*

³⁹⁴ This is also the word meaning “positive” concomitance between properties X and Y in the logical system of *hetu-vidyā*.

as Vātsyāyana, the quality of *sattva* is the “vital power” (Chi.: *shiyong* 勢用) that the human body exhibits during life. *Śakti* is regarded as the raw power that enables physical actions of the body such as breathing. *Buddhi*, the seventh quality in the taxonomy of the qualities of the soul, is the power that generates the action of thinking. Taken together, the three qualities of *sattva*, *śakti*, and *buddhi* form the essential components of sentient life in the Vaiśeṣika schema. All three essential qualities inhere in the substrate of the soul. Therefore, when the soul is invested in the body, it imbues the body with the three qualities of life.

The Vaiśeṣika taxonomy classifies the *dravyas* of the mind and the soul as separate substances. Mind and soul are yoked together by the sixth *padārtha* of *samavāya*. Candramati states that a substance retains its specific qualities over time through the “inherence relation”³⁹⁵ of *samavāya*. *Samavāya* is defined as the constant and infinite union that exists between a substance and its specific qualities.³⁹⁶ To illustrate the Vaiśeṣika argument that qualities presuppose a substance or substratum in which to inhere, Watson (2014) cites the example of the color red. Red does not just appear “out of the ether.” It requires an underlying substratum in which to inhere. For example, there is an inherence relationship between the red color of the mango and the mango. The mango retains the red hue of its skin because of the inherence relationship of the quality of the color to the substance of the mango. The concept that the qualities of substances adhere is significant in the Vaiśeṣika theory, as it explains how *dravya* are grounded while the *guṇas* may

³⁹⁵ In Candamati’s tenfold taxonomy of *padārthas*, the eighth *padārtha* is “commonness” 俱分 –Ui Hakuju reconstructs Sanskrit as “*sāmānya-viśeṣa*” (1962, p. 118). Candramati’s gloss on commonness runs: “What is the eighth *padārtha* of commonness? It refers to the nature of *dravya*, of *guṇa*, of karma, and its ultimate meaning is inherence (*samavāya*) between things of earthy nature, or between things of a certain color, or between grasped things, etc.” 俱分句義云何？謂實性·德性·業性、及彼一義和合地性·色性·取性等。The idea is that *sāmānya-viśeṣa* indicates the commonality between things collected together.

³⁹⁶ A similar argument for the existence of substrata is found in the Sāṅkhya literature. The Sāṅkhyakārikas use the example of a picture: “Just as a picture does not exist without a substrate, or a shadow without a post and the like, so the *linga* does not subsist supportless, without the non-specific (i.e., subtle body).” This is Dutt’s (1933, p. 64) translation of stanza XL1.

change over time. For example, when the mango ripens and changes its color from green to reddish-orange, it does not lose its essential “mango-ness.”

Within the ontological system of classical Vaiśeṣika, the *mahats* are the ultimate constituents that make up the five sensory *indriyas* and the body. The *mahats* form the smallest detectable units of matter, and come in five forms: earth, wind, water, fire, and ether. Each of the five sensory *indriyas* contains a share of each of the five mahats – for example, the eye is made up of elements of earth, wind, water, fire, and ether.³⁹⁷ So too are the ear and the remaining three sensory *indriyas* of smell, taste and touch.

According to Vaiśeṣika theory, there is an inherence relationship between the substance of the mind and the substance of a soul. The inherence of the mind in the soul endows the soul with consciousness. The inherence of the soul in the mind and the body and the inherence relationships between the soul, the mind and the body are regarded as the preconditions for life. The dissolution of the inherence relationship between the soul and the mind brings about the death of the human. The fact that a corpse—a body from which the soul has departed—lacks consciousness is evidence within the Vaiśeṣika doctrine that the mind inheres in the soul.

The Vaiśeṣika posit that a human being is composed of a soul, a mind and a body. In his exhaustive listing and painstaking analysis of the fourteen qualities of the soul, Xuanzang posits that each of the qualities of the *ātman* is responsible for the distinct physical and psychological properties of the human being. As the bearer of the unique traits of the individual, including karma and *adarma*, the soul makes each person unique. The soul serves to differentiate one individual from another.

³⁹⁷ [0818b02] 同異大有非五根得者即此勝論許五根得如何得大有能有一切物？[但>但]觀境時，即現量得，大有其同異，能同能異一切物。但觀境亦即現得，故是違自現，疑此抄錯應云：佛弟子不許有我故審。

The Soul As an Agent of Action and Restorer of the Body and the Bearer of Karma in the Vaiśeṣika Doctrine

While the Vaiśeṣika theorists inherit the doctrine of the soul from their Sāṅkhya predecessors, the agentic aspects of the *ātman* are expanded in their formulation. The Vaiśeṣika sūtras describe the soul as the constant and unceasing bearer of the faculties and the vital qualities of life 3.2.1).³⁹⁸ In the Vaiśeṣika schema, the soul is the supporter of life and is responsible for specific bodily functions such as maintaining a heartbeat and breathing. Frauwallner (1956, 1978) describes two stages in the development of the Vaiśeṣika doctrine of the soul.³⁹⁹ In the first stage, the Vaiśeṣika theorists accept the Sāṅkhya conceptualization of a small, thumb-sized soul that is seated in the heart (Skt.: *hṛdaya*). In the second stage, the soul is augmented; it expands to inhabit the whole of the body and it increases its role in motivating and sustaining the physical activities required for life. Within the Vaiśeṣika schema, the soul is regarded as the ultimate agentive power in the body.

Xuanzang is sensitive to the expansion of the role of the soul as an active agent in the Vaiśeṣika theories. In his exegesis and translations of the source material of Vaiśeṣika, Xuanzang highlights the use in the Vaiśeṣika sūtras⁴⁰⁰ of the metaphor of the “puppet” (Skt. *dāruyantra*) as an explanation for the soul as the animator of the body.⁴⁰¹ In this metaphor, the soul is portrayed

³⁹⁸ *Ātmendriyārthasannikarṣe jñāsyabhāvobhāvaśca manaso dviliṅgam* || 3.2.1|| The (1) existence or (2) non-existence of the mind in conjunction with the soul (*ātman*) and the *indriyas* are the two inferential signs [of the presence of the soul]. Reference has been made to the helpful edition of Sinha (1911, p. 124), but heavy modification has been made.

³⁹⁹ Frauwallner, *History of Indian Philosophy*, vol. 2, 51; Watson, *The Self's Awareness of Itself*, 60-70, passim.

⁴⁰⁰ Tang Yongtong's (Vol. 3, 271) massive survey of materials for the study of Vaiśeṣika preserved in Chinese crossreferences the *Vaiśeṣika sūtras* with both the *Dāśapadārtha śāstra* and Āryadeva's *Catuhśātaka śāstra*. His findings show that all of these texts share a fundamental agreement on the sequence of the six padarthas, even as they differ in some of the finer details of the nomenclature. The only discrepancies between Āryadeva's and Candramati's texts are due to difference in the translation style of Kumārajīva and Xuanzang.

⁴⁰¹ Watson, “The Self as Dynamic Constant,” 178 writes that “The Vaiśeṣikas had compared the self as instigator of bodily movements to a puppeteer instigating the bodily movements of a puppet below.” He adds: “Such a notion of an agent standing above the sequence of mental and physical actions is precisely what is denied by the Buddhists.” This example of the puppet and puppeteer is derived from Praśāstapāda's commentary on *Vaiśeṣika*

as the puppet master who pulls the strings to move the appendages of the puppet body. The soul is the active entity supplying the intention and determination to execute the physical actions of breathing, walking and talking. The Vaiśeṣika posit that the soul is responsible for both the voluntary activities of the body such as talking and walking and involuntary activities such as the heartbeat and digestion. The body is inert and lifeless without the active involvement of the soul.

Additionally, in the Vaiśeṣika schema, the substantial soul is charged with the responsibility of repairing the organs in the body. In his synoptic study of Vaiśeṣika natural philosophy, Frauwallner (1956, 1973) explicates this argument:

The in-and-out-breathing of the body is like the activity of the bellows which presupposes somebody who activates it. The opening and shutting of eyes resembles the movements of a wooden machine which somebody sets into motion. The healing of injuries, ruptures and wounds reminds one of the repairing done in the cases of damages of a house which somebody sets into motion.⁴⁰²

The Vaiśeṣika theorists maintain that the soul is the agent (Skt. *karṭṛ*; Chi. *neng zuozhe* 能作者) responsible for karmic actions. Within the Vaiśeṣika schema, the last two qualities of karma and *adarma* are said to inhere in the substance of the soul. The soul, therefore, carries the good and bad actions of the human that are accumulated in life. In the Vaiśeṣika picture, the soul becomes the vehicle by which the beneficial or harmful acts of the individual are carried and then transmitted in the cycle of birth.

The Sāṅkhya and Vaiśeṣika Conceptualizations of the *Ātman*

In his *Treatise Conforming to Logic*, the Yogācāra author Guṇamati articulates the

sutra 3.2.4 – see edition of V. P. Dvivedin, *The Praśāstapadabhāṣya with the Nyāyakandali of Śrīdhara* (Benares: Vizianagram Sanskrit Series; 1895), 90

⁴⁰² Frauwallner, *History of Indian Philosophy*, vol. 2, 14.

difference between the Sāṅkhya and Vaiśeṣika doctrines of the soul. Guṇamati states: “In the Vaiśeṣika schema, the *ātman* is an active agent, or a doer of tasks, and an ‘enjoyer or experiencer’ of the *tattvas*.” “The *ātman*,” according to *Sāṅkhyakārikās*, “is not an agent, but an enjoyer of the *tattvas*.”⁴⁰³ The fundamental distinction between the two Brāhmaṇical conceptualizations is that in the Vaiśeṣika paradigm, the *ātman* is an actor in the theater of the body and in the Sāṅkhya tradition, the *ātman* is a passive observer. The Vaiśeṣika soul is more proactive than the observing *ātman* of the Sāṅkhya.

Xuanzang is sensitive to the similarities and differences in the Sāṅkhya and Vaiśeṣika conceptualizations of the soul and its powers. While the idea of the soul or *ātman* as the bearer and locus of both physical and psychological qualities is at the core of both the Sāṅkhya and Vaiśeṣika doctrines, the Vaiśeṣika soul is imbued with the direct power to act. According to the Sāṅkhya doctrine, it is never the *puruṣa*, simpliciter, that performs action, but always the *puruṣa*, manifest through the power of *ahaṅkāra* and operating in conjunction with a physical and a mental faculty, that exerts force and executes physical actions.

The Vaiśeṣika essentially agree with Sāṅkhya that the soul is the subject of sensory experience, or *bhoktr*. However, where the two doctrines disagree is about the motility of the soul. As Adachi points out, even at an early stage in the development of the Vaiśeṣika doctrine, the soul is envisioned as mobile.⁴⁰⁴ Additionally, Xuanzang understands the Vaiśeṣika doctrine to hold that

⁴⁰³ The interlocutor (*pūrvapakṣin*) in Paramārtha’s *vṛtti* to the eighteenth stanza of the *Sāṅkhyakārikās* also sums up the difference between Sāṅkhyā and Vaiśeṣika doctrines of agency in this way: “The Sāṅkhyā says that the psychic person, per se, is not an agent, but the Vaiśeṣika says that people are agents.” 僧佉說人非作者，衛世師說人是作者。

⁴⁰⁴ Adachi, Toshihide, “On the Size and Mobility of the Ātman in the Early Vaiśeṣika,” *Asiatische Studien: Zeitschrift der Schweizerischen Asiengesellschaft*, 48(2) (1994), 653.

the soul is the agent of physical actions such as walking, talking and seeing.⁴⁰⁵ Candramati defines the Vaiśeṣika *ātman* as the “cause of pleasure, pain, desire, effort, good, and bad behavior.” Candramati adds: “the generation and activation of intelligence is the defining characteristic (Skt.: *lakṣaṇa*) of *ātman*.”⁴⁰⁶

Xuanzang points out a common flaw in the rival theories put forward by the Sāṅkhya and Vaiśeṣika thinkers: they all rely upon the notion of a non-physical person who lends life and agentive power to the body. Xuanzang concludes that only the faculties are necessary to explain dying. Therefore, he categorically rejects the doctrine of the person as proffered by both traditions of Brāhmaṇical theory.

The fortified conception of the Vaiśeṣika soul as the bearer of the vital qualities of life, a mobile and active agent in the body, the carrier of the good and bad actions of the individual in life and the restorer of the body and its organs is significant because it reinforces the doctrinal importance of the *ātman* in the Brāhmaṇical canon.

Xuanzang’s Arguments Against the Vaiśeṣika Doctrine of the Soul

The Vaiśeṣika conception of the soul as the bearer of the vital qualities of life and as the agent that activates and restores the body is regarded by Xuanzang as a substantial fortification of the passive *ātman* conceptualized by the Brāhmaṇical predecessors of the Sāṅkhya tradition. Xuanzang is concerned about the broad appeal of the Vaiśeṣika *ātman* across India and Central Asia and by the threatened infiltration of the concept of an invisible and all-powerful soul into

⁴⁰⁵ Kramer brings attention to Sthiramati’s treatment of the Vaiśeṣika doctrine of self as agent – see Sthiramati’s *Pañcaskandhaka Vibhāṣa*, ed. Jowita Kramer, (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2014), 20.

⁴⁰⁶ See *Daśapadārtha śāstra*, T2138:54.1262.c29.

Chinese Buddhism. Xuanzang regards the permeation of an omnipotent *ātman* into mainstream Buddhism as a threat to the original teachings of the Buddha. Xuanzang therefore must contend with the Vaiśeṣika doctrine of the soul to uphold the cardinal Buddhist tenet of no-self and the theory of the *indriyas*.

In his repudiation of the Vaiśeṣika doctrine of the soul, Xuanzang draws upon his deep knowledge of the Vaiśeṣika scriptures, acquired through years of study in India and through his translation of Candramati's *Daśapadārtha śāstra*. Xuanzang's rebuttal is organized around four doctrinal posits regarding the Vaiśeṣika doctrine of the soul: the configuration of the soul as an enduring and immutable substance; the concept of the soul as the composite entity to which the qualities required for life adhere; the idea of the soul as an agent that empowers the body; and the conception of the soul as an invisible force, the existence of which must be inferred from the physical actions of a sentient being. Xuanzang's refutation of the Vaiśeṣika doctrine of the soul supports his campaign to eradicate the invisible and supernatural forces embodied in the Brāhmaṇical *ātman* from Chinese Buddhism. Additionally, Xuanzang's exegesis of the Vaiśeṣika doctrine of the soul lays the theoretical groundwork necessary to situate the theory of the *indriyas*, supported by the Buddha in the *Āgamas*, more securely within the Chinese Buddhist canon.

The Refutation of the Soul as an Enduring Substance

In the foundational Vaiśeṣika theory of the *padārthas*, the soul is defined as the primeval substance, the *dravya*, to which the vital qualities of the living human being, the *guṇas*, adhere *via* the substance of *samavāya*. The *ātman* in this schema is conceptualized as a composite entity consisting of the substrate of the soul, the qualities that adhere to the substrate of the soul and the *indriyas* of the body. Within the overall taxonomy expounded by the Vaiśeṣika, a sentient human being is composed of the real substances of the soul, the mind, the *indriyas* and the inherence

relationship⁴⁰⁷ among the three elements. The Vaiśeṣika soul uses the mind and the *indriyas* to execute the physical activities necessary to sustain life. The soul is conceptualized as the active and independent agent that motivates, activates and restores the *indriyas* of the body. The doctrine of the soul as a substance endowed with agentive power over and above the body and the physical organs is thus enshrined within the Vaiśeṣika sūtras.

In his refutation of the Vaiśeṣika doctrine of the soul, Xuanzang begins by questioning the foundational premise that the soul is a substance or a *dravya*. The Vaiśeṣika taxonomy of the *padārthas* places the soul in the category of intangible substances. In his discussions of the Vaiśeṣika doctrine that unfold in the first folio of the CWSL, Xuanzang contends that like the soul, the intangible forms of the physical elements of earth water, fire, and wind are not *dravyas*. Xuanzang asserts that the tangibility of an element is dependent upon the qualities, or the *guṇas*, borne by the substance. This means that the qualities of solidity, wetness, movement (Chi.: *dong* 動), and warmth determine the tangibility of a substance. Xuanzang states that the tangibility of a substance is dictated by the quality of the substance, rather than by its essence. For example, the firmness of a clod of earth is determined by the quality of wetness, the amount of water in the earth, rather than by the substance of the earth. The quality of wetness, however, does not present to the senses as a palpable substance or a tangible *dravya*.⁴⁰⁸ Within the Vaiśeṣika doctrine, however, the *dravya* parts of the physical element are regarded as perceptible by the senses. Because they are tangible, they are regarded as immutable.

⁴⁰⁷ Bronkhorst draws particular attention to the opposition between the Sāṅkhya and Vaiśeṣika regarding the relation of inherence. Bronkhorst shows how the Vaiśeṣikas criticize the Sāṅkhya for disregarding the significance of this relationship. See Bronkhorst, “The Qualities of Sāṅkhya,” *Vienna Journal of South Asian Studies* (vol. 38, 1994), 310.

⁴⁰⁸ Daoyi’s 道邑 subglosses on Kuiji CWSL-SJ contain the argument that “‘earth as a *padārtha* of substance should not exist independently of the *padārtha* of qualities (*guṇas*), since only the qualities are grasped by the faculty of tactition (*tvagindriyam*) 實句地等應非別德句堅等，以身根所得故 (X814:49.393.b21-22). In Daoyi’s subglosses on Kuiji, this argument is formulated as a formal *anumāna* inference.

Xuanzang highlights the incoherence in the Vaiśeṣika premise that an intangible *dravya* is immutable when a *dravya* can be transformed based upon the *guṇas* it bears. In his refutation of the doctrine of the soul, Xuanzang notes the internal inconsistency in the Vaiśeṣika conceptualization of the soul as an intangible substance that is permanent and enduring. According to Xuanzang, the Vaiśeṣika *ātman* changes based on its qualities. For Xuanzang, the idea of the *ātman* as eternal and unchanging collapses under the weight of an unsustainable premise.

The Refutation of the Soul as an Enduring Entity That Bears the Vital Qualities of Life

In his translation of *The Treatise at the Gate of Logic*, Xuanzang articulates the Vaiśeṣika definition of the *ātman* as a composite entity. He states: “The Vaiśeṣika disputant establishes the thesis, contra the Buddhist opponent, that the *ātman* is a collective of causes and conditions 如勝論師對佛弟子立我以為和合因緣.⁴⁰⁹ The soul, according to this view, is a collection of at least three parts, a *dravya*, the *guṇas*, and the *samavāya*, or the relationship of inherence between the *dravya* and the *guṇas*. The *ātman*, by definition, is a collective entity. Xuanzang attests that the definition of the soul as a composite entity is agreed upon by the Buddhist opponent and the Vaiśeṣika disputant in the debate regarding the nature of the Vaiśeṣika soul.

In his refutation of the Vaiśeṣika doctrine of the soul, Xuanzang debunks the idea that the soul, as a composite entity, can rule as an independent sovereign over the body. In other words, he rejects the Vaiśeṣika premise that the soul, when defined as a composite of the body and the mind, can exercise independent power over and above the body and the mind. Xuanzang highlights the contradiction in the Vaiśeṣika definition of the soul as follows: If the soul is composed of the substances of the body and the mind, the soul cannot simultaneously rule as an omnipotent power

⁴⁰⁹ Kuiji cribs this thesis from Candramati’s *Daśapadārtha śāstra* 如對佛法說我以為和合因緣。有相符非俱不成。 See edition of Hui, *Yinming Dashu*, Vol. 3, 142.

over the substances of the body and the mind. The soul cannot be a substance that operates the substances of which it itself is composed.

In his critique of the Vaiśeṣika doctrine of the soul in the *Great Commentary on the Gate of Logic*, Kuiji builds upon the inherent contradictions in the definition of the soul as a composite entity that Xuanzang highlights. To Kuiji, the premise of the *ātman* as a composite entity is flawed. Kuiji bases his rejoinder on the Vaiśeṣika formulation of the soul as a *dharmin*, or a property-possessor (Skt.: *ubhayatra-asiddha*; *liangju bucheng* 兩句不成).⁴¹⁰ Kuiji does not believe that the *ātman*, as described in the Vaiśeṣika sūtras, is sturdy enough to serve as the substrata to, or the bearer of, the essential qualities of life. His determination regarding the insufficiency of the *ātman* as a *dharmin* is based on the lack of positive evidence of the existence of the soul as an independent substance. Kuiji also objects to the Vaiśeṣika premise that the presence of the *ātman* can be inferred from the physical actions of the human being. Again, he cites a paucity of evidence to validate the soul as a real substance. To Kuiji, the evidence presented in the Vaiśeṣika sūtras of the soul as a composite substance is insufficient to support the Vaiśeṣika picture of a powerful and omnipotent *ātman*.

Additionally, Kuiji points out that the Buddhist opponent and the Vaiśeṣika disputant in the debate about the soul do not agree on the definition of the *ātman* as a *dharmin*. Therefore, the Vaiśeṣika argument for the soul as a composite bearer of life does not meet the criteria of the *hetu-vidyā*, the system of logic used in the Buddhist-Brāhmaṇical debate.

Watson extracts the basic idea underlying the Buddhist critique of the Vaiśeṣika *drava* :

⁴¹⁰ Kuiji, NP-DS, fasc. 2: The [*ātman*] as the inherence of causes and conditions does not exist either. It is because the *dharmin* is not admissible to either party in the debate. Here, the *dharmin* is not exhaustively grasped within the inference, neither is it exhaustively grasped within the causes and conditions. The totality of the inherence of what is grasped becomes the causes and conditions, hence it [the *dharmin* = subject: *ātman*] remains unestablished. If it were otherwise, then it could be established. 和合因緣此亦非有。故法有法兩俱不成。此中不偏取和合。亦不偏取因緣。總取和合之因緣故名不成。不爾便成。自亦許有。此中全分及一分。各有五種四句。

“Rather than postulating an imperceptible substance to which the five properties ‘stick,’ it is more parsimonious, argues the Buddhist, to assume that they stick to each other.”⁴¹¹ Xuanzang rejects the idea that what defines a quality is being dependent upon a substance or a superior bearer. To Xuanzang, there are other explanations for the adherence of entities to substances, including the property of “stickiness” within the entities themselves. Using this concept, Xuanzang calls into question the Vaiśeṣika posit of the composite *dravya* to which the qualities of life necessarily adhere. He then concludes that the Vaiśeṣika theory that the visible qualities of life necessarily belong to an invisible substratum is not satisfactory or sufficient to explain why these qualities appear in an individual living being. Xuanzang claims that the Vaiśeṣika authors fail to make the case for the existence of this substratum of the invisible soul. There is nothing in this bare substratum of the invisible soul, taken by itself, that would enable us to pick it out as something distinct from other things.

Xuanzang concurs with Kuiji that there are insufficient data to support the Vaiśeṣika idea of the soul as the bearer of the physical and non-physical qualities that are essential to life. He calls into question the foundational premises that the Vaiśeṣika use to support their conceptualization of the soul as the substrate to which the qualities of the soul adhere. In the Vaiśeṣika theory, the relationship of the soul to the qualities of life is analogous to a wall that supports a fresco. The wall is the substratum to which the plaster and pigments that constitute the image of the fresco adhere. Xuanzang, however, disputes the concept that the elements that compose the image necessarily adhere to the fresco. He claims that the plaster and pigments have properties that allow them to adhere to one another rather than to the wall. Xuanzang bases his argument on the Buddhist

⁴¹¹ For how this ‘sticking to each other’ was elaborated in terms of their forming a causal complex in which they function as co-operating causes (*sahakāripratyayas*) for each other, see Watson, *The Self’s Awareness of Itself*, 57-58.

Abhidharma notion of *samyukta-hetu*,⁴¹² or the “stickiness” or “bundleability” that is inherent in properties.

The Vaishesika authors refer to the soul qua substratum as the *guṇin*-the possessor of vital qualities. In his CWSL, Xuanzang uses the terms *dharma* and *dharmin* as synonyms for *guṇa* and *guṇin*. By collapsing these terms, Xuanzang argues that the relationship between *guṇas* and the *guṇin*, and between the *dharma*s and the *dharmin*, is not one of ownership. He argues that the qualities of the substance do not belong to the substance. Watson (2014) writes: “By disputing that colours, smells etc. belong to a substance, Buddhism calls into question the very concept of a quality (Skt.: *guṇatva*). The Buddhist define a quality differently – the *dharmin* is not a substrate but the relationships between the properties of a substance.”

In his discussion of the Vaiśeṣika doctrine in the first fascicle of his CWSL, Xuanzang argues that the *dharmin* and *dharma* are not perceptible in and of themselves. The qualities that pertain to a *dharmin*, however, are perceptible. For example, the “mango-ness” of a mango can be determined by looking at the mango and noticing its orange-red color or by touching the mango and by feeling the smoothness of the skin and kidney-like shape. The qualities of the mango, including its color, size, weight and shape, are perceptible. The substrate that holds the qualities of the mango together, however, cannot be perceived. The mango is therefore known by the qualities it bears, rather than by the substance to which the qualities of the mango adhere. In an extensive analysis of earthy substances (Skt.: *pṛthivī-dravya*), such as an earthenware jar, the CWSL concludes that “the substantial earth is not ever visible to the naked eyes” 實地非眼所見.⁴¹³ Here, in the CWSL’s extensive discussions of the six *padārthas* of classical Vaiśeṣika,

⁴¹² For the taxonomy of six kinds of *hetus* within the Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma, see Dhammajoti, *Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma* (Hong Kong: Center for Buddhist Studies, 2007) 189-207.

⁴¹³ T31, no. 1585, p. 3, a05.

Xuanzang contends that the *dharmin* and dharma are beyond the purview of sensory perception. Extending his argument, Xuanzang contends that the Vaiśeṣika theory of the soul as an enduring substance is flawed because the qualities carried by the soul are not permanent

An important point of convergence between the classical Brāhmaṇical theorists of the Sāṅkhya and Vaiśeṣika traditions and the Abhidharma Buddhists is in the definition of the sentient human as composed of both physical and non-physical qualities. Within the Abhidharma doctrine, the non-physical aspects of the human take the form of the sensory and mental *indriyas*. In the Brāhmaṇical philosophical systems, however, the non-physical qualities of the human are borne by the substrate of the soul. Within the Vaiśeṣika schema, the non-physical aspects of the human being are also regarded as impermanent qualities.

In his meticulous sub-glosses on Kuiji's *The Great Commentary on the Gate of Logic*, Zhizhou lists the fourteen qualities that adhere to the substrate of the soul: number, size, particularity, conjunction, disjunction, this-ness, awareness, pleasure, pain, desire, anger, physical effort and the merits and demerits of actions. In this enumeration, Zhizhou's Subglosses on Kuiji's Study Notes on the CWSL note that all fourteen qualities are by nature impermanent.⁴¹⁴ He raises two provocative questions: If the soul is defined as the composite of ephemeral qualities, how can it be permanent and enduring? If the physical actions of the individual are the inferential marks of the existence of the soul, how can the *ātman* be inferred from non-physical qualities? These questions highlight a contradiction in the conceptualization of the Vaiśeṣika soul as enduring, substantial, and omnipotent. Xuanzang concurs with Zhizhou that the Vaiśeṣika doctrine of the soul as a composite and enduring substrate to which the qualities of life adhere is insufficiently supported by the sūtras or by the *hetu-vidyā*.

⁴¹⁴ T43n1833, p. 828, a28-b19.

The Refutation of the Soul as an Agentive Power Over the Body and the Mind

The idea of an agentive power that exists over and above the body and its physical organs is based on the ancient Vaiśeṣika sūtras (5.2.15).⁴¹⁵ Kaṇāda, in considering the example of a lumberjack cutting a piece of wood with an axe, asks the following question: Where does the agentive power that drives the movements of the arm swinging the axe originate? He states that it is obvious that the arm does not will itself into the action of swinging the axe. The body, of its own volition, is not capable of impelling itself into movement. Therefore, according to Kaṇāda, the motivator and activator of the physical action of swinging the axe is located outside the arm. Specifically, it is located within the *ātman*.

Xuanzang examines the question of agentive power from the Buddhist position of no-self. In considering the example of the lumberjack, he asks: If there is no self to swing the axe, where does the agentive power to swing the axe originate? Yaśomitra, Vasubandhu's earliest commentator, and Xuanzang, in collaboration with his first- and second-generation disciples, articulate their responses to the question of the ultimate source of agentive power in their exegeses on the *AKBh*.⁴¹⁶ The Abhidharma doctrine upon which Xuanzang bases his theory of agentive power recognizes the *indriyas* and the axe as sources of instrumental power. The following question remains, however: As both the *indriyas* and the axe need to be empowered to exercise their causal efficacy, without a self in the picture, what serves as the agent? Vasubandhu crystallizes the question as follows: If there is no self, then what performs action? 若我實無，為何造業？ Xuanzang first addresses the question of agentive power in an essay in the ninth chapter

⁴¹⁵ For Skt. text see Basu, B. D., ed., *The Sacred Books of the Hindus* (Genesis Publishing Pvt. Ltd., first printed 1911), 981.

⁴¹⁶ The discussion found in the *Prasastapadabhasya* considers the case of cutting wood with an axe. Where does the agentive power driving the movements of the axe, originally come from? It is an obvious fact the arm cannot simply will itself into swinging an axe. The body, on its own, is not capable of impelling itself into movement.

of his Chinese translation of Vasubandhu's *Refutation of the Pudgala*. He revisits this puzzle again, and in more detail, in his original CWSL.

The Abhidharma doctrine upon which Xuanzang rests his theory locates the source of agentic power in the multiple constituencies and the coordinated activity of the *indriyas*. The *indriyas* execute the actions of sensory perception and the physical activities of breathing, digestion and excretion without the oversight or the empowerment of an *ātman*. Returning to the example of a lumberjack cutting wood, the Abhidharma editors view the action of the arm swinging the axe as originating in the body of the lumberjack. The pile of cut wood that results from the action of the arm swinging the axe to cut a tree is therefore viewed as "the fruit of human action" (Skt.: *puruṣakāra-phalam*; Chi.: *shiyong guo* 士用果).⁴¹⁷ In the words of Vasubandhu's auto-commentary translated by Xuanzang: "We reserve the term 'fruit of human action' for the product of the agent." The agent in this picture is the coordinated activity of the *indriyas* of the body, mind and vision. To execute the action of cutting the wood, the body and mental *indriyas* coordinate the movements required to swing the arms; the visual faculty "sizes up" the tree and then tells the mind where to place the strokes of the axe. The pile of cut wood thus becomes the "fruit of human action." The karma of the pile of wood is created by the coordinated actions of the *indriyas* of the lumberjack and not by an *ātman*.

The concept of the "fruit of human action" is essential to the Abhidharma doctrine of karma and to Xuanzang's refutation of the Vaiśeṣika theory of the soul. In the Abhidharma picture, human action, empowered by the coordinated activity of the *indriyas*, is responsible for creating the pile of wood. The lumberjack wields the axe, not the *ātman*. In the Abhidharma theory, the agentic

⁴¹⁷ In general, the work of human faculties is referred to as "the fruit of human action" (Skt.: *puruṣakāra-phalam*; Chi.: *shiyong-guo* 士用果).

power of producing karma is laid, quite literally, in the hands of the human being. Using the Abhidharma theory of the *indriyas*, Xuanzang refutes the Vaiśeṣika theory of the agentic power of the *ātman*. According to Xuanzang, the presence of an *ātman* that would empower the physical activities of the body or carry the good and bad actions of the individual in life is simply unnecessary.

The Refutation of the Soul as Intangible and Inferable

Within the Vaiśeṣika theory of the *padārthas*, the soul is placed in the category of intangible substances. Because the soul is regarded as intangible, the presence of the soul must, by definition, be inferred. According to Candramati's *Daśapadārtha śāstra*, to infer the existence of a soul, one must first perceive one of the outward signs “engendered by the combination of the two factors” 二和合生, the *indriyas* and the mind. The visible activity of the *indriyas* and the mind are considered to constitute the ultimate causal bases of the presence of the soul. Therefore, within the Vaiśeṣika schema, the visible activity of the body, such as walking, and the visible signs of sentience, such as wincing when experiencing pain, are regarded as evidence of the soul at work within the body.

Ratié and Elschinger observe that like the Sāṅkhya, the “Vaiśeṣika explicitly argue that the self's non-perception is no evidence for the self's non-existence, since this non-perception is due to another cause, namely the self's subtlety” (2013, p. 139). Here Ratié and Elschinger reference the Vaiśeṣika position that the intangible substance of the soul cannot be perceived because it is subtle, in the same way that ether, another intangible substance in the Vaiśeṣika taxonomy, is subtle. Because ether and the soul are regarded as intangible substances within the Vaiśeṣika taxonomy, they are by definition imperceptible and unseen.

In his study of the Vaiśeṣika inference of the soul, Watson (2006) brings attention to the idea of *adr̥ṣṭa*, or the “unseen force.”⁴¹⁸ involved in all manner of bodily activities. *Adr̥ṣṭa* is understood to explain phenomena such as movement and change; it is the force behind occurrences in the physical realm that are not visible. Within the body, the Vaiśeṣika credits the *ātman* as the *adr̥ṣṭa* behind the unseen bodily processes of breathing and digestion. The *Vaiśeṣika sūtras* postulate the invisible *ātman* as the source of power that generates the unseen activities of the “intake and excretion of nutriment into the body, and the *saṃyoga* [quality of conjunction] whose effect (Skt: *kārya*) is the assimilation of food and drink.”⁴¹⁹

Although the *ātman* cannot be perceived directly, the Vaiśeṣika propose that the actions of the *ātman* are made evident in the visible behavioral manifestations of somatic experiences. The somatic qualities that arrive from the coordination of the *ātman*, the mind and *indriyas* of the body include pleasure, pain, desire, anger, effort, potency (Skt.: *śakti*) and non-potency (Skt.: *aśakti*).⁴²⁰ In his explication of the Vaiśeṣika theory of the soul, Candramati posits that the external behavioral responses to sensory stimuli can be regarded as evidence of the activity, and therefore the existence, of the *ātman*. He explains that the presence of the soul carrying the *guṇas* of pain and pleasure is visible in the behavioral responses of an individual to a physical stimulus. For example, the presence of the soul can be inferred when an individual reflexively withdraws a hand after touching a hot stove. In this picture, the *ātman* bearing the *guṇa* of pain registers the

⁴¹⁸ Watson, *The Self's Awareness of Itself*, 65 writes that the development of *adr̥ṣṭa* forced the Vaiśeṣika to expand the size of the soul from a thumb-sized soul, to a soul pervasive throughout the entire body: “Given that *adr̥ṣṭa* as a cosmic force could influence any place in the world, and that all influence, for Vaiśeṣika was through contact, its bearer must be all-pervading. Thus Vaiśeṣika came to give up the restricted size of the soul and brought it in line, in this respect with the soul of the Vedāntins and Sāṅkhyas.

⁴¹⁹ Basu, *Sacred Books of the Hindus*, 183.

⁴²⁰ *Daśapadārtha śāstra*, “What is visible by the measure of valid perception in the combination of the two factors (i.e., *indriya* and *manas*)? That is to say, the objects of pleasure, pain, desire, anger, effort, along with the objects of potency, impotence, inherence, and existence (*bhāva*).” 二和合生現量云何？謂於樂、苦、欲、瞋、勤勇境、及彼有能、無能、俱分、有性境. (T2138:54.1265.a8-9)

experience of pain and directs the hand to withdraw from the stove.

Xuanzang regards the description of the intangibility of the Vaiśeṣika soul as incongruent with the depiction of an omnipotent and powerful soul in possession and control of the vital qualities of life. Additionally, Xuanzang is deeply suspicious of the doctrinal implications of an invisible, powerful soul that directs the activities of the body and the mind. Xuanzang bases his rebuttal of the Vaiśeṣika doctrine of the soul as an intangible substance on the inconsistencies and weaknesses of the theory. Essentially, he regards the conceptualization of an invisible yet omnipotent soul, the existence of which must be inferred, as insufficient to explain the vital functioning of the body. To Xuanzang, the blinking of the eye does not offer sufficient evidence for the existence of the soul. Ultimately, he concludes that the physical activity of the body and the experience of sentience are insufficient to confirm the presence of an omnipotent *ātman*.

The Refutation of the Soul as an Eternal Agent

Watson (2014), in his study of Buddho-Brāhmaṇical contestation in which the Sāṅkhya and Vaiśeṣika doctrines play a seminal role, makes the trenchant observation that “within the rationalistic tradition of Buddhist Brahmanical debate...both parties to the debate generally agreed with one another that there exists a non-physical part to the human” (Watson, 2014, pp. 173). The Buddhist and Brāhmaṇical textual traditions upon which Xuanzang relies maintain that a non-physical side to the human individual exists. However, as Watson rightly points out, “this non-physical part was conceived of very differently: by one side as eternally unchanging and by the other as momentary (and as fourfold even in one moment).”⁴²¹ The Brāhmaṇical theorists

⁴²¹ Watson (2014) elaborates: “So both sides in this debate are dualists, in that for both there is a non-physical part of us that exists beyond the body and senses and is not brought to an end by death. Only the Cārvākas denied that. But the non-physical part was conceived of very differently: by one side as eternally unchanging and by the other as momentary (and as fourfold even in one moment). During life, each moment of consciousness (which is one of the four kinds of mental constituents of a person) is linked to the next moment of consciousness in that it causes

conceptualize the non-physical aspects of the human, such as the soul and the mind, as eternal and unchanging. The Buddhists, however, hold that the human mind and consciousness are momentary and constantly changing.

In his auto-commentary on his *Treasury of Abhidharma*, Vasubandhu presents one of the most famous arguments for the soul as the agent required for the physical and non-physical activities of life proffered by the Vaiśeṣika. The syllogism is as follows:⁴²²

- **Subject Locus:** Cognitions (Skt.: *pakṣa*) are actions that depend upon an enduring agent (Skt.: *sādhya*).
- **Reason (premise²):** because all actions require an enduring agent, including both physical actions and cognitive actions.
- **Example:** ‘[I] know’ (*aham jñāmi*) and ‘[I] go’ (*aham gacchāmi*) are both examples of actions in the relevant sense, such as when we say, ‘I know that jar’ (*aham amuṃ ghaṭaṃ jñāmi*), or ‘Devadatta goes’ (*Devadatto gacchati*). [*pakṣa*] has the target property (*sādhya*].⁴²³

it to arise. The same goes for the other three kinds of mental constituent, and the physical constituent. The way it works at death is similar to the way it works during life: the last moment of consciousness before death gives rise to a new consciousness in the first moment after death. The same goes for the other three kinds of mental constituent. But whereas during life these four mental constituents were always associated with a momentary configuration of the body, at death the four can separate from the bodily constituent and can reproduce themselves sequentially until such a time as they become associated with a new body, a new embryo.”

⁴²² I have referenced Duerlinger's (2003, pp. 279-282) useful exegesis, however, my presentation differs somewhat in presenting Vasubandhu's argument according to the analysis of science of reasons (hetu-vidyā=因明), an approach derived from Chinese commentaries on the Kośa). Schterbatsky (note 49, p. 95-6, says that the adversary here is both Vastiputriya and Sāṅkhya.

⁴²³ Here the logical fallacy resides with the example. The inference is inconclusive because the property expressed by reason (here, “...requiring an agent”) is present in some similar instances and in all dissimilar instances 同品一分轉. For example, a Śābdōtpattivādin against a Śābdabhivṛtyvādin: “Sound is not a product of agentive effort, because it is impermanent.” Lightning is also impermanent, but it is not the product of human effort. Lightning here serves as a positive example or *sapakṣa* that disproves the rule that everything impermanent is the product of agentive effort. In the Vaiśeṣika inference in question here, the *sapakṣa* of “Devadatta’s movement” does not require a substantial, perduring agent. Puguang says: “If one is to posit a person (*puruṣa*), it is not anything singular. It refers to the continuum of Devadatta’s movement. So-called “Devadatta” is a nominal posit.

In this syllogism, the Vaiśeṣika forwards the argument that the volitional activities of thinking and walking require an agent, or the presence of an enduring and stable force, to initiate and direct both actions. The cognitions verbalized in the statements “I am experiencing pleasure” [*aham sukhī*] and “I know that jar” are posited to require the action of an agent. Additionally, the syllogism posits the physical action of walking as requiring the presence of an agent. According to the Vaiśeṣika doctrine, both cognition and physical action presuppose the presence of an enduring agent or a soul.

In his translation of the rejoinder to the Vaiśeṣika syllogism, Xuanzang states that the syllogism does not meet all of the criteria for a valid inference. He notes that the syllogism does not conform to the *hetu-vidyā* for the following reasons:

- (1) The subject-locus is compatible with the reason – cognitions are forms of action requiring an agent.
- (2) The example given is compatible with the reason – the proposition “Devadatta goes” expresses an action requiring an agent.
- (3) There are no counter-examples (Skt. *vipakṣas*) – the flickering of a flame is a movement that does not presuppose an enduring mover, e.g., the flickering flame. Hence, there do exist counter-examples that undermine the principle that all actions require enduring agents.

In his translation of Vasubandhu’s *Refutation of the Pudgala*, Xuanzang attempts to invalidate the Vaiśeṣika inference by showing that the third criterion for valid reasons does not hold in the syllogism. Physical movement does not require an enduring or permanent agent. Movement can be explained in terms of a series of discrete and causally connected events that

This refutes the example (‘For example, Devadatta moves’). Consciousness also works (as a *sapakṣa*), since it is capable of discerning things. The refutation of the *sādhya-dharma* is a refutation of things of a single type.” 若假士夫。體非一物 於天授諸行相續。假立天授名故。此破喻也 如天授能行。識能了亦爾。類破法也。

momentarily arise. The idea of momentariness is central to the Buddhist doctrine of no-self.

The Vaiśeṣika hold fast to the notion that all physical and non-physical actions are initiated and maintained by a stable and enduring *ātman*. Vasubandhu, in his *Refutation of the Pudgala*, returns to the example of Devadatta walking across a room to demonstrate how the requirement of the *atman* as the agent for physical action and non-physical action is unnecessary. To do so, he invokes the Buddhist idea of momentariness, the theory that all things come into existence and then immediately go out of existence, and in doing so create the illusion of a continuously existing thing. For example, when Devadatta walks across the room, she appears to be a single entity, an agent of action, walking across the room. Vasubandhu states that this is an illusion. Using the Buddhist idea of momentariness, Vasubandhu proposes that as Devadatta walks across a room, each one of her movements is linked to another movement in rapid succession like frames in a film. The continuity of the image of Devadatta walking is an optical illusion. Rather than a single and permanent agent of action, Devadatta is composed of multiple moments of movement linked together. Vasubandhu thus regards Devadatta walking across the room as impermanent.

Xuanzang adduces the example of the momentary flickering of a candlewick to dispute the Vaiśeṣika claim that an agent of action is a singular and enduring entity. The flickering glow of a candle appears as a continuous and unitary flame. The flame, however, consists of multiple small units of flame that follow one another in quick succession. Fabao, Xuanzang's collaborator on the translation of Vasubandhu's *Refutation of the Pudgala*, says that the example of the flickering flame disproves the Vaiśeṣika principle that all actions are pre-empted by a lasting agent. In Fabao's words, "a flicker arises in one place, and then a flicker arises in another place, in rapid succession." The moving of the flickering candlewick does not need to be explained in terms of a permanent fire that moves from place to place. The movement of one fire is in fact the successive

and rapid arising of “flickers” in one place and then another. The optical illusion gives rise to the experience of “one flicker moving” and superimposes a sense of unity on the momentary and discrete flickers. Fabao writes: “Ordinary people in the world say that the flickering ‘moves,’ but actually that is because it rapidly arises [from one moment to the next] in different places.”⁴²⁴

For Xuanzang, the metaphor of the flame illustrates how physical and cognitive actions can be visualized as chains of momentary events. Here Xuanzang aligns with the claim made by Vasubandhu that everything is momentary. Xuanzang extends the concept of momentariness to debunk the idea of an enduring and substantial *ātman* working invisibly within the body and pulling to animate the human being. To Xuanzang, the Buddhist conception of momentariness provides a more robust explanation for physical and cognitive action than the account of the *ātman* provided by the Brahmanical scholars of the Vaiśeṣika tradition.

The comprehensive discussions in the CWSL on the Buddhist tenet of no-self that unfurl throughout the entire first fascicle adduce the example of the “whirling firebrand” (Skt. *alāta-cakra*; Chi: *Xuan huolun* 旋火輪) to illustrate the idea of no-self.⁴²⁵ This metaphor of the whirling firebrand is meant to indicate that the continuous image of whirling is an optical illusion. Selfhood is, at root, a chimera, just as the appearance of a circle of fire is an optical illusion generated by the rapid movement of the firebrand from one place to another. Similarly, the sense of a continuous self is an illusion.

⁴²⁴ Fabao writes: “it is the provisional characteristics of the continuum (*saṃtāna*) that arise in one place after the other and that is called ‘going places,’ even though it is momentarily arising-and-ceasing. ‘The causal basis of moving’ does not refer to a substantial *ātman* that goes from one place to the next. Rather it is like a flickering candlewick, or a sound that arises-and-ceases from moment to moment. Since it is born again in a different location people in the world say that it ‘moves.’” 即假相續雖剎那滅。從此至彼異處生時名之為行。行因名者。非謂實我從此至彼。猶如焰。聲雖念念滅。異處生故世說為行 (T1822:41.809.c25-26).

⁴²⁵ Dhammajoti, *Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma*, 356, tracks the example of the optical illusion of a fire-wheel (*alāta-cakra*) resulting from the whirling firebrand to the “Sautrāntikas, represented by Śrīlata.”

The *Pudgalavāda*: The Buddhist Personalists School

In his extensive exegesis of the theories of dying and death put forward by the Sāṅkhya and Vaiśeṣika thinkers, Xuanzang identifies the reliance on the notion of a soul that lends life and agentive power to the body as the common flaw within both Brāhmaṇical doctrines. Xuanzang regards the conceptualization of the powerful *ātman*, who enlivens the body and then deserts it in dying, as based upon internally incoherent and inconsistent premises within the Sāṅkhya and Vaiśeṣika doctrines. Additionally, he identifies problems in the theory of the *ātman* when it is analyzed in terms of the generally accepted principles of Indian logic and philosophy. Xuanzang summarily rejects the doctrine of the *ātman* as proffered by both traditions of Brāhmaṇical philosophy. In his analysis of the Buddhist and Brāhmaṇical theories of dying and death, Xuanzang concludes that the doctrine of the *indriyas*, first attested by the Buddha in the *Āgamas*, provides the most powerful and parsimonious explanatory account of what is lost to the body in dying.

During his engagement with the Brāhmaṇical theories of dying and death, Xuanzang is pressed to defend the Buddhist doctrine of no-self. The challenge presented from the rival Brāhmaṇical theorists and from within mainstream Buddhism lies in the question of the motivating force that generates and sustains life and is therefore lost in dying. Xuanzang takes on the vexing question: If there is no-self, and no *ātman*, then what is the agent of physical action in the body? Dispensing with the opposition to the Buddhist tenet of no-self presented by the Sāṅkhya and Vaiśeṣika theories of the *ātman*, Xuanzang turns to the challenge found within Buddhism itself. Here Xuanzang notes that the Vātsīputrīya and the Saṃmitīya schools of Buddhism, while dismissing the notion of the *ātman*, assert the presence of an entity (Skt.: *pudgala*) that is defined as the part of human being that carries karma and is reincarnated after death. To preserve the doctrine of no-self and uphold his theory of the *indriyas*, Xuanzang must contend with the

doctrines of the Vātsīputrīya and with the Sammitīya Buddhists who believe in a *pudgala* that endures after death.

The Vātsīputrīya and the Sammitīya schools, also known as the *Pudgalavāda*, or the Personalist School, are two of the nearly twenty early Buddhist schools in India. The Sammitīya is considered as a branch of the Vātsīputrīya sect. Sammitīya is translated as “The School of Correct Logic.” Of the two Personalist schools, Xuanzang mentions only the Vātsīputrīya sect in his corpus. He translates the name Vātsīputrīya as the “Followers of the Cow-herder Sect or Path” 犢子道/部. In his *Records of Travel to the Western Regions*, the journals of his travels along the Silk Road, Xuanzang attests to the broad appeal of the *Pudgalavāda* sects. He finds adherents of the *Pudgalavāda* doctrine living in geographical areas spanning from Ghandara in Northwestern Asia to the Empire of the Phnom in Southeast Asia. From his unique vantage point, Xuanzang observes the *Pudgalavāda* sects wielding influence among a large segment of practitioners in the Buddhist world. He regards the reliance of his Buddhist co-religionists on the doctrine of the *pudgala* and the sect’s widespread popularity as a challenge to Chinese Buddhism. In his exegesis of dying and death, Xuanzang therefore must contend with the Personalist doctrine of the *pudgala*.

The doctrine of the *pudgala* as an explanation for karma and rebirth is said to have originated in ancient India around the second century B.C.E., two centuries after the death of the Buddha. Most of the original Indic scriptures of the *Pudgalavāda* have been lost. The literature that depicts the doctrinal positions of the *Pudgalavāda* survives in the form of Chinese translations of their summaries and critiques of their positions from within the opposing Buddhist schools. As these sources are far from neutral, the doctrine of the *Pudgalavāda* is regarded by scholars as largely reconstructed.⁴²⁶

⁴²⁶ For the sources of the Vatsīputrīyas as a monastic tradition, see Chau (1954), priestly (1999), and Skilling (2016).

The Vātsīputrīya state that the *pudgala* is composed of the five *skandhas*, the aggregates, or the factors that constitute the physical and mental existence of the sentient being. The five *skandhas* are material form (Skt.: *rūpa*), feeling and sensation (Skt.: *vedanā*), ideation and perception (Skt.: *sañjñā*), mental activity (Skt.: *saṃskāra*), and consciousness (Skt.: *viññāna*). In his earliest teachings found in the *Āgamas*, the Buddha attests that no-self is to be found either in or outside the five *skandhas*. The Vātsīputrīya are sensitive to the fact that the *pudgala* veers from the orthodox Buddhist doctrine of no-self and toward the Brāhmaṇical teachings of the substantial entity of the *ātman*.

While there is a textual lacuna regarding the origins of the *pudgala*, three doctrines robustly and clearly define the doctrine of the *Pudgalavāda*. The *Pudgalavāda* asserts the following: while there is no *ātman*, the *pudgala* is the part of the individual that is reincarnated after death and reborn through successive lives until enlightenment is attained; the *pudgala* is neither the same as nor different from the *skandhas*; and the *pudgala* is the carrier of karma, the personality traits and the memories of the person. Essentially, the *Pudgalavāda* affirm the reality of an aspect of the self that exists outside the aggregates and transcends death. While the account of the Personalists is clearly at odds with the Buddhist tenet of no-self, the *Pudgalavāda* hold that the doctrine of the *pudgala* provides a plausible account of the way karma is transmitted during reincarnation.

Xuanzang encountered practitioners of the Vātsīputrīya and the Sammitīya schools while studying at the Nālanda University in the Kingdom of Magadha, during his travels and residencies in Northwestern and Central Asia and while residing in his homeland of China. He was acutely aware of how the fundamentally different interpretation of the core Buddhist teaching of no-self set forth by the *Pudgalavāda* was entrenched in India and China. As many of his co-religionists had yet to disavow the teachings of the *pudgala*, Xuanzang's indictment of the *Pudgalavāda*

doctrine is significant in the doctrinal development and the history of Chinese Buddhism. In this regard, Xuanzang's refutation of the *Pudgalavāda* doctrine was an overtly polemical move to reassert the teachings on the *indriyas* and no-self laid down by the Buddha.

The rebuttals to the doctrine of the *Pudgalavāda* are located in Xuanzang's Chinese translation of the *Refutation of the Pudgalavāda* (Skt.: *Pudgalapratīṣedaparakaraṇa*), the ninth chapter (Skt.: *varga*; Chi.: *pin* 品) of Vasubandhu's *Treasury of Abhidharma*. This chapter is included in the earliest Chinese versions of the *Treasury of Abhidharma*, but is not commented upon by Yaśomitra or Sthiramati.⁴²⁷ Refutations of the theories of the Buddhist Personalists are also found in Xuanzang's translation of Vasumitra's *Treatise of the Wheel of the Different Divisions of the Tenets* (Skt. *Samayabhedoparacana-cakra śāstra*; Chi.: *Yibu zonglun lun* 異部宗輪論)⁴²⁸ and in his original work, the Demonstration of Consciousness-Only.

In his exegesis of the Vātsīputrīya doctrine, Xuanzang examines, and then proceeds to dismantle, the *Pudgalavāda* notion of the self as a real entity. Xuanzang uses a transliteration of the original Sanskrit word *buteqieluo* 補特伽羅 to translate *pudgala* – the Sanskrit word for an individual. He draws a distinction between the Brāhmaṇical notion of the *puruṣa* – the psychic person --and the Personalist concept of the *pudgala* – the human individual – by highlighting the differences in the provenance of the two concepts. The *puruṣa* is rooted in the Brāhmaṇical context of the Sāṅkhya doctrine, while the *pudgala* is embraced by a wide swath of Buddhist theorists grounded in the Vātsīputrīya tradition of Abhidharma Buddhism. To Xuanzang, both are

⁴²⁷ Although the critical edition of Sthiramati's AKBh commentary, titled *Tattvārtha* has not yet been published, it is extant in the Derge Tibetan canon. Jowita Kramer reports (personal communication, Jan. 2016) that it is composed of eight chapters, while it does not include the section on the refutation of the person (*pudgalapratīṣedha*). Scholars do not agree upon the *terminus ad quem* of Yaśomitra's *Spūthārtha*, but given that it cites Sthiramati's commentary, it presumably predates the latter.

⁴²⁸ This text is extant in Tibetan translation under title *Gzhung tha dad pa rim par bklag pa'i 'khor lo las sde pa tha dad pa bstan pa bsdus pa* (see Derge, Work #4140, vol. 167, folios 154–156), where it is attributed to Vinītadeva ('*dul pa lha*).

heterodoxies. Xuanzang very deliberately separates the Buddhist and Brāhmanical doctrines in his translation corpus and in his CWSL.

The *Pudgala* According to the Vātsīputrīyas

The Vātsīputrīya posit the presence of real entity, a *pudgala*, that remains constant throughout life and afterwards. In this picture, the *pudgala* bears responsibility for all the good and bad effects of the karma that an individual performs and acquires over the course of a lifetime. The *pudgala* in the Vātsīputrīya schema is conceptualized as the container of karma in the form of an entity that transcends the body and is reincarnated until nirvāṇa is achieved. The conception of an enduring *pudgala* stands in sharp contrast to the Orthodox Buddhist idea of no-self, in which there is no eternal, unchanging or essential self, entity or soul.

The Vātsīputrīya doctrine of the *pudgala* is couched in the teaching of the five aggregates. The Buddha teaches that there is nothing that counts as a self that is included within or outside the category of the five *skandhas*. The Vātsīputrīya equivocate on this core scripture and support both the view of a self as the totality of the five aggregates and the self as something other than the totality of the five aggregates.⁴²⁹ Vasubandhu encapsulates the *Pudgalavādin* doctrine in the following statements: “The person is neither identical with, nor non-identical to, the five

⁴²⁹ In his “Refutation of Pudgala” (Pudgalapratīṣedha), Vasubandhu takes as a hypothetical the *pudgalavādin*’s reductive supervenience position that the pudgala is neither entirely reducible to, nor independent from *rūpa*: “If the idea is that the *pudgala* and its physical support (*āśraya*) are neither different from nor entirely identical to, then this is to state that all dharmas are non-self. So, since that is the case, *pudgala* is not cognized by mental consciousness. The two conditions of its birth (i.e., *rūpa* and mental consciousness) have undergone definitive verdict. But how can you explain this based upon the rest of the scriptures? The scriptures say: that there is no *ātman*, yet you adhere to an *ātman*, what a conceptual mess that is! The scriptures talk about non-self since folks adhere to an *ātman*. But do you bother to explain the scripture if it doesn’t talk about an *ātman*? What is non-*ātman*? Skandhas, *āyatana*s (i.e., *indriyas*), and *dhātus*. These three violate the aforementioned theory of *pudgala* being neither different from nor entirely identical to *rūpa*. 若彼意謂補特伽羅與所依法不一不異故說一切法皆非我；既爾應非意識所識。二緣生識經決判故。又於餘經如何會釋。謂契經說，非我計我，此中具有想心見倒！計我成倒，說於非我。不言於我何煩會釋。非我者何。謂蘊處界，便違前說補特伽羅與色等蘊不一不異 (T29n1558p0154c13-20).

aggregates” and “The self is neither one with, nor different from the material, etc., aggregates.” 我與色等蘊不一不異. The Sarvāstivādin authority Vasumitra (Chi. *Shiyou* 世友), in *The Treatise of the Wheel of the Different Tenets*, translated into Chinese by Xuanzang, writes: “The fundamental tenet of the Vātsīputrīya is that the *pudgala* is neither identical, nor separate from the *skandhas*.” (Skt.: *no tu vaktavyaṃ rūpāṇi vā no vā*.)⁴³⁰ With their ambiguous interpretation of the doctrine of the *skandhas*, the Vātsīputrīya hedge their bets regarding the Buddhist position on the non-existence of an entity of the self that exists outside the five aggregates.

The *Pudgalavāda* holds that the stability of the personality is due to the clustering of the five psychological and physical aggregates listed by the Buddha: corporeality, sensation, perception, impulses, and consciousness. The bundle of states that comprises the person is equated by the Vātsīputrīya with the *pudgala*. In this interpretation of the doctrine of the five aggregates, the *pudgala* is viewed as essentially bundling together the ephemeral states of the personality of the individual at any given moment in time. Within the Vātsīputrīya schema, the five changing states determine the course of the movement and the progress of a person from one moment to the next moment, and ultimately from one reincarnation to the next. In his *Treatise of the Wheel of the Different Tenets*, Vasumitra describes how the Vātsīputrīya devise the doctrine of the *pudgala* to formulate a desirable and accessible explanation for how an individual personality persists, given that the physical and psychological states that make up the individual constantly change. The *pudgala* thus becomes the enduring locus of the personality of the individual within the Vātsīputrīya doctrine.

The posit of the perduring locus of the personality of an individual that is based upon, but not entirely reducible to, the five aggregates is hashed out by the Vātsīputrīya scholars (Priestly,

⁴³⁰ 其犢子部本宗同義調補特伽羅非即蘊離蘊 Yibu zonglun lun.

1997) in their search for a resolution to the doctrinal issue of how and where karma accumulates over time.⁴³¹ The Vātsīputrīya locate karma in their conceptualization of the *pudgala*. In his Chinese translation of Vasubandhu's *Refutation of the Pudgalavāda*, Xuanzang states: "The *pudgala* is what bears the heavy burden" of accumulated karma.⁴³² Vasumitra agrees with Vasubandhu in his description of the *pudgala* as the bearer of karma throughout one life and into the next. For the Vātsīputrīya scholars, the *pudgala* provides a concise explanation for the stability of the personality, the location of accumulated karma in life and the locus of the transmigration of karma into the next life. They justify their unorthodox position on no-self by claiming that the *pudgala* provides an immediate and accessible explanatory account for the Buddhist doctrines of the *skandhas*, karma and reincarnation.

Xuanzang's Rejoinder to the Doctrine of the *Pudgala*

Xuanzang regards the Vātsīputrīya doctrine of the *pudgala* as antithetical to the core teachings of the Buddha. In his attempt to block the infiltration of a reified version of the self, in the form of the *pudgala*, into Chinese Buddhism, Xuanzang turns to the Abhidharma Buddhist

⁴³¹ From the wheel of the revolution of the different sects and tenets (*yibu zonglun lun* 異部宗輪論), translated into Chinese by Xuanzang: "If there is a *pudgala* distinct from the plural dharmas, since those dharmas do not perdure from one life to the next, only based upon the *pudgala* can one actually talk about '[something] transmigrating [from one life to the next. This is because of the fact that even the followers of the non-Buddhist tīrthika paths can cultivate and obtain the five [out of six] supranormal powers (*abhijñāni*).'" 諸法若離補特伽羅。無從前世轉至後世。依補特伽羅可說有移轉。亦有外道能得五通。The implication of the statement that "even the non-Buddhists can obtain five of six spiritual powers," is that the followers of the non-Buddhists paths, are limited in their spiritual attainments by retaining "fluxes" – that is "contaminating residues" that bring them to the rebirth in the three realms. The idea that these followers of non-Buddhist paths have hit a "glass ceiling," blocking their further advancement, is meant to erode the credibility of the personalists' position that maintains that the *pudgala* is a stable foundation for spiritual development from one life to the next. This is taken to be evidence against the idea that the Buddha became enlightened at one specific time in history and within the lifespan of one individual, since he attained the final spiritual capacities required to obtain enlightenment in his final reincarnation as Prince Gautama in India. In other words, there was no "previously-enlightened" form of the Buddha that existed in the past life as a soul or other sentient being. The Buddha was a unique individual, and escaped the cycle of death and rebirth during the span of one life, and his soul is no longer subject to further transmigration. On the basis of the *pudgala* they can say that something "transmigrates."

⁴³² 若唯五取蘊名補特伽羅。何故世尊作如是說？吾今為汝說諸：重擔取捨重擔荷重擔者。T29n1558p0155a26||.

authorities. In his rejoinder, Xuanzang looks to Vasubandhu and Vasumatri, both of whom formulate jeremiads against the “schismatics” (Chi.: *yizhi* 異執) and “aberrant sectarians” (Chi.: *yibu* 異部) who support the doctrine of the *pudgala*. Judging by the length and the tone of his razor-like *Refutation of the Pudgala*, the doctrine of the *Pudgalavāda* is Vasubandhu’s *bête noir*. Additionally, the doctrine of the *pudgala* is singled out for special rebuke by Xuanzang in his translation of Vasumitra’s *Treatise on the Wheel of the Different Tenets*. Both Vasubandhu and Vasumitra affirm Xuanzang’s position that the desideratum for a *pudgala* is borne of a clinging desire for a stable sense of self, a position that is antithetical to Buddhism.

In his rejoinder to the Vātsīputrīyas, Xuanzang targets the *Pudgalavādins* interpretations of the Buddhist scriptures. Essentially, Xuanzang regards the theory of the *pudgala* as founded on erroneous interpretations of the Buddha’s teachings on the *skandhas* and the *indriyas*. These misinterpretations lead the *Pudgalavādins* to an affirmation of the *pudgala* as an entity that exists over and above the *indriyas*. Although couched in the language of Buddhist exegesis, Xuanzang regards the Vātsīputrīyas’ use of the traditional vocabulary of Buddhism and their interpretation of the *Āgamas* as spurious. For example, in his translation of Vasubandhu’s ninth chapter of the *Treasury*, Xuanzang devotes an entire fascicle roll to an analysis of the roots of the word *pudgala* and its definition within the Buddhist context.

In his *Demonstration of Consciousness-Only*, Xuanzang pulls no punches in attacking both the *tīrthika* doctrine espoused by Brāhmaṇical masters and the crypto-Brāhmaṇical teachings expounded by the *Pudgalavādins*. In this work, Xuanzang isolates the false premises and the erroneous interpretations of scripture used by the *Pudgalavādins* to support the doctrine of the *pudgala*. He highlights the misconstructions of Buddhist tenets used by the *Pudgalavādins* to reassure their misguided adherents. Xuanzang accuses the *Pudgalavādins* of using the doctrine of

the *pudgala* to reinforce the desire to cling to a self. He even goes as far as to accuse the followers of the Vātsīputrīya sect of bearing false witness to the teachings of the Buddha in the service of perpetuating the crypto-Brahmanical doctrine of the *ātman*. Ultimately, Xuanzang renounces *Pudgalavada* Buddhism as a bastion of crypto- Brāhmaṇical views that contradict the doctrine of no-self.

Vasubandhu and Vasumitra on Why the *Pudgala* Does Not Exist

To combat the doctrine of the *Pudgalavādins*, Xuanzang is compelled to deal with fundamental misinterpretations of Buddhist teachings endorsed by the Vātsīputrīyas. In his rebuttal, Xuanzang addresses the ambiguity in the *Pudgalavādin* theory regarding the relationship between the *pudgala* and the *skandhas*. Xuanzang also takes on the twin notions of the *pudgala* as the bearer of karma from one life to the next and the *pudgala* as the stable bearer of subjective experiences and memories of the individual.

In his rebuttal of the theories of the *Pudgalavādins*, Xuanzang turns to the teachings of the Abhidharma Buddhists as represented by Vasubandhu and Vasumitra. Xuanzang defends the Abhidharma Buddhist theories positing that karma and the memories of experiences are borne throughout life by the *indriyas*. He upholds the Buddhist teachings that the *indriyas* are the bearers of karma and memories and dismisses the notion of an entity in the form of a *pudgala* that is separate from the *indriyas*. He is adamant that the Abhidharma teachings be upheld and that the crypto-Brāhmaṇical views endorsed by the Vātsīputrīyas be expunged from Chinese Buddhism.

The *Pudgala* and The Aggregates or Five *Skandhas*

Following his Abhidharma Buddhist forbearers, Xuanzang regards the *pudgala*, as postulated by the Vātsīputrīyas and the Sammitiyas, as a distortion of the traditional Buddhist doctrine of the *skandhas*. The Buddha teaches that the self is not in the *skandhas*. In his *Refutation*

of the *Pudgalavādin*, Vasubandhu takes issue with the Vātsīputrīyas' proposition that the *pudgala* is neither different from nor the same as the *skandhas*. The “neither nor” view regarding the relationship between the *pudgala* and the *skandhas* is a target for Vasubandhu's rebuke. Vasubandhu regards the equivocation of the Vātsīputrīya position on the *pudgala* as unsustainable. He regards their defense of the existence of a substantial self as flimsy and unsupported by the Buddhist doctrine.

Vasubandhu begins his attack on the Vātsīputrīya doctrine by asking: Is the *pudgala* one of the *skandhas*, or is it different? He responds with the following statement: If it is the same, then presumably it cannot be a sixth *skandha*, because the Buddha very clearly spoke of only five *skandhas*, and took pains to explain why the line was drawn at five, rather than at six or four *skandhas*.⁴³³ Here Vasubandhu highlights how the Buddha makes a deliberate point to show that none of the five *skandhas* contains an enduring self.

After ruling out the equation of the *pudgala* with one the *skandhas*, Vasubandhu follows with a second question: If the *pudgala* is different from the *skandhas*, then what is it? He notes that the *pudgala* is not classified under any of the standard Buddhist taxonomies, including the comprehensive categories of the *dhātus* or the *indriyas*. Vasubandhu then asks if the *pudgala* has an independent existence from the basic classificatory categories in the Buddhist canon. If the *pudgala* has an independent existence, then the *pudgala* must be a “real existent” and not merely a “nominal construct” or a *façon-de-parler*. Here Vasubandhu holds the Vātsīputrīyas to the principle of “nominalism” and argues that if *pudgala* is a real entity, it must exist in more than in

⁴³³ If the *pudgala* as an entity is something real, then it should be different from the *skandhas*, since it possesses individual severality. Positing a *pudgala* would then be like dividing out another *skandha*. 體若是實應與蘊異。有別性故。如別別蘊。Moreover, something that exists as a real entity must have a cause. Otherwise, it should be an unconditioned thing, and one would end up with the same view as the *tīrthikas* 又有實體必應有因。或應是無為。便同外道見。

name only.

In the example of one grain of rice, Vasubandhu demonstrates two points: one, that a *pudgala* is not a real entity and two, that the *pudgala* exists in name only. He writes: when the Buddha speaks of “one hemp seed; one grain of rice; one bundle in the sūtra, he speaks about ‘rebirth’ upon the basis of worldly custom. Some say that the *pudgala* is like this in the sense that it can be classified (Skt. *samgraha*) as an existing thing. But these same sūtras do not state that the *pudgala* is ‘reborn in a new set of *skandhas*.’”⁴³⁴ In this passage, Vasubandhu recognizes that in the words of the Buddha, the *pudgala* does not refer to any single, specific thing. The Buddha speaks of “one grain of sand” metaphorically, without intending to reference one singular thing. The grain of sand is a collection of miniscule particles, themselves composed of molecules (Skt.: *aṇus*), and those molecules composed of atoms (Skt. *paramāṇus*). In Vasubandhu’s estimation, the *pudgala* cannot be equated to a real entity and is a mere *façon-de-parler*.

In his translation of Vasubandhu’s *Refutation of the Pudgalavādin*, Xuanzang invokes the example of Ananda to illustrate the problem with equating the *pudgala* to a real entity. One of the epithets for Ananda, the famous and revered disciple of the Buddha, is *Jīvin*, or “he who bears life.” The word *jīvin* means *ātman* and is also one of the words used by the Jaina, a doctrine that is not recognized by Buddhism, to describe the soul. In Vasubandhu’s example, the Buddha’s use of the name *Jīvin* is a sign of his admiration and respect for Ananda.⁴³⁵ Vasubandhu is clear in his rejoinder to the Vātsīputrīyas that when the Buddha uses the name *Jīvin*, he is not referring to an

⁴³⁴ Xuanzang, trans. AKBh: “as the worldly folk say: ‘there is one sesame seed, one grain of rice, one bundle, one word.’” So we should grant that the *pudgala* can be classified under this singular mode of existence. Since the sutras abide in the worldly phrases. We do not say that ‘a new aggregate of *skandhas* arises every time in the world.’如世間說一麻一米一聚一言。或補特伽羅應許有為攝。以契經說生世間故。非此言生如蘊新起。T29n1558p0155b19-21.

⁴³⁵ T29n1558p0155c05

entity that is distinct from the three elements that comprise the sentient being called Ananda.⁴³⁶

The three elements that comprise the Ananda are the standard Buddhist categories of the aggregates, the *indriyas* and the sensory realms (Skt. *dhātus*). The word *Jīvin* in this case refers to the nominal unity of Ānanda. Vasubandhu argues that when the Buddha refers to Ānanda as *Jīvin*, he is not reifying Ānanda as an eternal and enduring entity. Instead, the Buddha is using the word *Jīvin* as a façon-de parler. Thus, the word *pudgala* is merely a façon-de parler for the bundle of aggregates, the *indriyas* and the *dhātus* that make up the sentient being. With this example, Vasubandhu uses the words of the Buddha to dismantle the Vātsīputrīyas' conception of the *pudgala* as a real and enduring entity.

The *Pudgala* and the Doctrine of Momentariness

The idea that the personality of an individual is composed of a bundle or an aggregate (Skt. *skandha*) of impermanent states that change from moment to moment is emphasized by the Buddha in his homilies. According to this core Buddhist teaching, the five aggregates that compose an individual are momentary in that they are reborn and perish from one moment to the next. The five *skandhas* that make up the sentient individual are thus understood as discrete and ephemeral momentary states that are linked together to create the impression of a continuously existing person. This concept is enshrined by the Abhidharma Buddhists in the doctrine of momentariness. Von Rospatt (1995, p. 4), in his sweeping study of the sources of the Buddhist doctrine of momentariness, draws attention to Vasubandhu's discussion in the *Refutation of the Pudgalavādin* in which he enlists the concept of momentariness in his rebuttal against the Buddhist Vātsīputrīyas

⁴³⁶ 依蘊處界假施設名者謂我非即離蘊處界亦爾然世說言色是我乃至法亦是我但依蘊等假施，設此我名我實非蘊等 (X53n0844p0586c06-7).

and the Brahmanical schools, most notably the Vaiśeṣikas.⁴³⁷

In the arguments directed against the Vāstīputriyas, Vasubandhu uses the concept of momentariness to chip away at the entrenched notion that the core features of the individual, such as memory, require the presence of a *pudgala*. The Vāstīputriyas contend that the *pudgala* provides the essential function of containing the memories of an individual over a lifetime and into the afterlife. For the Vāstīputriyas, the formulation of the *pudgala* as a container explains how the memories of an individual are retained in the face of constant change.

In his *Refutation of the Pudgalavādin*, Vasubandhu dispels the idea that only a *pudgala* can explain the retention of memories.⁴³⁸ He states that the theory of the *indriyas* provides a valid explanatory account for the perdurance of memories within the individual personality. Vasubandhu posits that “residual traces,” or *vāsanās*, retain the memories of a sentient being from the past into the present. These *vāsanās* are retained in the *ālayavijñāna*, or the “store house consciousness” located within the *indriyas* and based in the aggregates of the body. Vasubandhu thus argues that presence of the *pudgala* is not required to contain stable memories across the lifetime of an individual.

⁴³⁷ Here, the proof of momentariness is formally still directed against the Vāstīputriyas-Sapmatiyas, but, as far as the substance of the discussion is concerned, it is primarily directed against proponents of the Brahmanical schools (notably the Vaiśeṣika).

⁴³⁸ In addressing the case of reifying the *pudgala* as the stable bearer of memory, Vasubandhu argues that there is the unwarranted consequence (*prasaṅga*) of falling into a view of *satkāyadr̥ṣṭi*, namely, that one really exists in a physical body. Vasubandhu writes: “all that has remembered, is remembering, or will remember something is the five upadāna skandhas. Thus, the *pudgala* does not exist. Why do the scriptures seem to state that there exists the corporeal, etc., skandhas in the past? This sūtra that so speaks is revealing that the capability of the *saṃtāna* is to remember all manner of things. If there were a real *pudgala*, then there would be the capability of the corporeal skandha, etc., in the past. And how would that not fall into the view of *satkāyadr̥ṣṭi*.”諸有已憶、正憶當憶、種種宿住。一切唯於五取蘊起。故定無有補特伽羅。若爾何緣此經復說我於過去世有如是色等？此經為顯能憶宿生一相續中有種種事。若見實有補特伽羅於過去生能有色等。如何非墮起身見失。

The Pudgala As the Bearer of Karma

In his *Refutation of the Pudgalavādin*, Vasubandhu levels a devastating assault on the delusion that leads his co-religionists to cling to the *pudgala*. Vasubandhu's skillful gambit consists in the rhetorical question: would you willingly and freely assume the terribly "heavy burden" of someone else's accumulated karma? He sarcastically writes, "I have never seen someone freely elect to carry such a heavy burden!" 重擔自取曾未見故。 According to Xuanzang's Chinese rendering of Vasubandhu's riposte to the Buddhist Personalist: "the one who elects to shoulder such a heavy burden, cannot be subsumed fully under the *skandhas*, since no one else would freely and willingly accept such an onerous burden" 又取重擔，應非蘊攝，重擔自取曾未見故。⁴³⁹ Vasubandhu implies that no rational person in their right mind would willingly elect to shoulder another person's heavy and exhausting burden, if given any viable alternative. The *pudgala* is, at heart, selfish, and would be loath to assume the heavy burdens of others on top of those she already has.

Xuanzang's rebuttal of the pudgala in the CWSL

Throughout the heated discussions with the *pudgalavadin* in the first fascicle of the CWSL, Xuanzang rejects the attribution of both synchronic and diachronic unity to the so-called *pudgala*. In these disputes, Xuanzang stands by his conviction that the *pudgala* is a nominal posit. It is not an enduring or substantial entity. According to Vasubandhu's final analysis of the Vātsīputrīya doctrine of the *pudgala*, delivered at the end of the final chapter to his *Treasury of Abhidharma*, the *pudgala* can be explained in terms of these three elements. It has no separate existence. While Xuanzang agrees with the Vātsīputrīya understanding of no-self as the disavowal of a soul, he disavows the Vātsīputrīya doctrine that the *pudgala* is a real, perduring entity rather than a merely

⁴³⁹ AKBh, fascicle 9 — T1558:29.155.b02. Puguang: "The *ātman* has the capability of bearing it, so it cannot be classified under the *skandhas*." 我是能荷，即非蘊攝 (T1821:41.444.b09).

“nominal” construct.⁴⁴⁰

The first fascicle of the CWSL proceeds to break down the “core” self as postulated by the opponents into its constituent elements. The expressed goal of this portion of Xuanzang’s text is to “analyze away the self.” While holding steadfastly to this belief in the non-substantiality of the self, Xuanzang’s CWSL asserts that there must exist a subject of action over and above the plural constituency of elements (Skt.: *dravya*) formed by the five aggregates (Skt.: *skandhas*) constituting the individual.

A famous part of the opening passage of this section reads: “we come to call the various characteristics of the self the possessor of sentience and life” 我種種相，謂：有情命者等。⁴⁴¹ According to the beginning of the CWSL, the sense of self arises only once the unreal aspect of unity has been superimposed on the multiplicity of dharmas, specifically on the five constituents to which one clings, which intrinsically lack these features.

Later on, the CWSL turns to the question of from where exactly the egocentric notion of a “self” as opposed to “other” arises. The authorial voice or *siddhāntin* of the text observes that if we just concentrate on the evidence of our immediate experience without involving other concepts, all that we find given are momentary physical and mental events.⁴⁴² If there were a real *ātman*,

⁴⁴⁰ AKBh, fascicle 9: “As said in the *Sūtra on the Ultimate Meaning of Emptiness*: ‘There exists karma and the matured effects of karma (vipāka). The agent is imperceptible. It refers to the capability of deserting this set of skandhas and continuing within that set of skandhas. It is merely a nominal posit based upon dharmas. The Buddha has already refuted it (i.e., the self as agent).’ 如勝義空契經中說：有業有異熟，作者不可得，謂能捨此蘊及能續餘蘊。唯除法假。故佛已遮 (T1558:29.155.b25-7).

⁴⁴¹ CWSL, fascicle 1 (T31.1585:31.1.a25).

⁴⁴² The CWSL makes the argument that the *ahampratyaya* should not be based upon *ātmadr̥ṣṭi* 我見, because the *ātmadr̥ṣṭi* is itself a product of the manas 末那. In his comments on this patch of text, Kuiji formulates a reductio ad absurdum that that *ahampratyaya* is not a veridical cognition in two inferences. Kuiji sums up the gist of these two inferences: Kuiji explains: ‘The (1) first inference in this section excludes that the noetic aspect of cognition (i.e., because it is construed through the *manas*), is not capable of generating an immediate apprehension of Self, while the (2) second inference in this section excludes that the cognitive-support [presented in I-cognition (*ahampratyaya*)] is definitely not the Real Self. 此破「能緣不緣我起」；次破「所緣定非實我」。Kuiji, CWSL-SJ, fasc. 1, T1830:43.249.a12. The first inference is: (1) Your view of the Self presenting itself as the

then it would be enduring.⁴⁴³ If there were a real soul, it would present to direct perception: we would be able to see, hear, smell, taste or touch it. The essence of Kuiji's *reductio ad absurdum* argument is that if the soul were real, it would present in immediate awareness (Skt. *pratyakṣa*). Because the soul is never directly perceived, it cannot be real, because anything that is real must have perceivable effects.

In Xuanzang's CWSL, the minds of sentient beings are composed of eight distinct regions of consciousness. The first through fifth regions are the sensory consciousnesses of sight, sound, smell, taste, and tactition; the sixth is mental consciousness, or the realm of the mental *indriya*; the seventh is the sense of self-awareness, or the *manas*; and the eighth region is the *ālayavijvāna*, the subconscious mental repository of memories and other experiences. Within Xuanzang's taxonomy, self-awareness originates in the *manas*, the locus of self-awareness. Among the eight layers of consciousness, the *manas* is negatively tinged, as it gives rise to egotistical desires.

The CWSL goes on to diagnose the source of the mistaken idea of the *pudgala* at a deeper level than that of ordinary perception by the five senses. Xuanzang's text explains the genesis of the self as based on the separation between subjective "interiority" and objective "externality." *Manas* is the locus of the sense of self, according to Xuanzang. He avers that the adhesion to the unchanging individual, in form of the *pudgala*, is the root of the delusion based in *manas*, the

object of cognition (*pakṣa*), does not present a Real Self. Because the cognition that presents itself as the object is itself conditioned (*hetu*) by the previous cognition, just like the cognitions that present the Self and external material things as the object (*drṣtānta*). 汝緣我之見，不緣於實我。宗也有所緣故。因也；如緣我外色等之心喻也。The second in this pair of inferences is: (2) The cognitive-support (*ālambana* 所緣) presented through self-view (= *ātmadṛṣṭi*) (*pakṣa*) is not the Real Self. Because this cognition presenting the Self is itself conditioned (*hetu*), just like the various material and physical elements (*dharmas*) which present the cognitive-support (*drṣtānta*). 我見所緣定非實我。宗也。是所緣故。因也，猶如「所餘色等諸法」 CWSL-SJ, fascicle 1, T1585:31.2.a7.

⁴⁴³ In the seventh āhnikā of his *Nyāyamañjarī*, the 9th-century Kaśmīri Nyāyāyika philosopher Jayanta Bhaṭṭa described the Buddhist position of *svaśamvedana* and elaborated an extensive refutation of the Buddhist counterargument against the Brāhmaical doctrine of *ahampratyaya* – see Watson (2014).

negative part of conscious experience. The separation between interiority and externality is an illusion rooted in the seventh consciousness, or *manas*. Xuanzang explains that this dichotomy results from one of two processes: either the *manas* falsely superimposes the notion of an egocentric and continuing selfhood onto the constantly shifting sixth consciousness, or *manovijñāna*, or the *manas* falsely superimposes the notion of a self onto the relatively stable eighth consciousness, or *ālayavijñāna*. For Yogācāra Buddhism, cognitions that are mediated through the *manas* are distorted, as the *manas* is the locus for the creation of mistaken views of selfhood. Hence, both of these processes that generate an egocentric adhesion to the self are contaminated by illusion and delusion.

Xuanzang says that the *pudgala* is self-awareness and the locus of a stable sense of self, craving and attachment. As the source of self-conceit, it is wedded to arrogance. Eradicating the *manas*, the level of consciousness that is laced with negative attachments, is the focus of the practice for the CWSL. Thus, the CWSL locates the discussion on the notion of the *pudgala* firmly within the context of an investigation into the nature of consciousness and the *manas*.

While the discussion of the *pudgala* in the first fascicle roll of the CWSL takes issue with the construct of the *pudgala* as a “stable” container of karma, the more intricate and scholastically oriented critique of the *pudgala* found in the fourth roll of Xuanzang’s work brackets the *pudgala* into one of four kinds of unwholesome “craving” and “attachment” to the “enduring self.” Here, Xuanzang offers what we might call a “psychoanalytic” reading of the *pudgala* as part of the individual religious practitioner’s subconscious mind.

This latter part of the critique of the *pudgala* is psychoanalytic in the sense that it offers treatment for the unwholesome clinging to the *ātman* in terms of the penultimate “stage of yogic insight” within the five-stage model of the Buddhist path of Yogācāra. The topic of the Yogācāra

model of the Buddhist path (Skt.: *mārga*) in five stages exceeds the limits of this study. It is sufficient to point out that it relates to the “limits” of the *śravakayāna*, the advanced practitioners who fail to achieve the eighth stage in the Bodhisattva path. While the *pudgala* impedes the practice of these Bodhisattvas, they can overcome the spiritual impasse by contemplating the changing and ephemeral nature of the consciousness of “matured” (Skt.: *vipāka*; Chi.: yishou 異熟) mental states.⁴⁴⁴ The particularly “mature” or entrenched sense of adherence to the continuing *pudgala* needs to be overcome and ultimately eradicated. Xuanzang’s argumentation against the Vatsīpurīyas aims to divest his co-religionists of their deluded attachment to the *pudgala*. In short, there is no need to stick by the *pudgala* to preserve the Buddhist teachings on karma and its accumulation over a life-cycle. For Xuanzang, the idea that something comes to an end when biological death occurs does not mean that this something is a soul, or a person, or any individual thing characterized by a singular personality.

There is, in short, no need for a *pudgala* to explain dying. Xuanzang’s CWSL illustrates a practice meant to overcome the attachment to the *pudgala*, a deep-seated illusion based on the *manas*, the seventh consciousness and the locus of negativity in the sentient human.

Section Two: Xuanzang’s Redefinition of Dying in Terms of the Faculties

What is dying? Based on his extensive analyses and translations of the Brāhmaṇical and Buddhist texts, Xuanzang determines that dying is the deterioration of a collection of *indriyas* and not the release of a spiritual entity (in the form of a *puruṣa*, an *ātman*, or a *pudgala*) from the body. In his exhaustive examinations of the Brāhmaṇical and Buddhist canons, ranging from the early

⁴⁴⁴ CWSL 9: “[0024b10] Here, the idea [of *ālayavijñāna*] is divided into three parts: firstly, the view of *ātman* associated with the *pudgala*. Firstly, there is the view of *ātman* associated with the *pudgala*; secondly, there is the view of *ātman* associated with the *dharma*s; and thirdly, there is the wisdom associated with the nature of uniformity.” 此意差別略有三種。一補特伽羅我見相應。二法我見相應。三平等性智相應。

Āgamas to the Brāhmaṇical theories posited by the Sāṅkhya and Vaiśeṣika sects and the doctrines of the Buddhist Personalists, Xuanzang comes to endorse a definition of dying founded on the Abhidharma and Yogācāra theories of the *indriyas*. Xuanzang vigorously denies the need for spiritual entities above and beyond the *indriyas* to explain what is lost in dying. In doing so, he upholds the Buddhist doctrine of no-self. Xuanzang's exegesis of the question of dying is of doctrinal and historical significance in Chinese Buddhism. While recognized as a pilgrim and a translator of the Indic scriptures, Xuanzang has not yet been acknowledged as the philosopher who protected the foundational doctrine of no-self from dilution during the transmission of Buddhism from India to China.

Throughout his exegesis of the scriptures, Xuanzang reconciles Buddhist theories with non-Buddhist theories on the doctrinal matters of life and death. In his press to uphold the doctrine of no-self, Xuanzang is motivated to provide an account of living and dying that does not reify a spiritual entity. To do so, he supports the Abhidharma and Yogācāra theory of the *indriyas* as a biologically-based and parsimonious account of living and dying that does not rely on the postulate of a supernatural entity. For Xuanzang, the theory of the *indriyas* provides a rational account of how the body survives. Importantly, it preserves the core Buddhist tenet of no-self.

To defend the Buddhist doctrine of the *indriyas*, Xuanzang must confront the challenge, leveled by rival theorists, that the *indriyas* are merely substitutes for a soul. Here Xuanzang needs to address two thorny issues regarding the nature and descriptions of the *indriyas* and the soul: one, like the Brāhmaṇical *ātman*, the twenty-two *indriyas* are intangible and invisible; two, like the Brāhmaṇical *ātman*, the *indriyas* are viewed as agents of purposive action and the bearers of life. In his rebuttal, Xuanzang must dispute the claim that the *indriyas* are proxies for perduring entities such as the *puruṣa*, the *ātman*, or the *pudgala*. In the CWSL and in their commentaries on the

Brāhmaṇical and Buddhist Abhidharma texts, Xuanzang and his first- and second-generation disciples elaborate on the important theoretical distinctions between the Brāhmaṇical and Buddhist theories of the *indriyas* and the soul.

The first issue Xuanzang must address is that the *indriyas*, the bearers of life, are invisible. Very much like the descriptions of the *puruṣa*, the *ātman* or the *pudgala* found in the Brāhmaṇical and the Buddhist Personalist literature, the *indriyas* are “hidden within the body” and beyond the direct scrutiny of the senses. Xuanzang must confront the charge that in their intangibility, the *indriyas* too closely resemble the *puruṣa*, the *ātman* or the *pudgala*. Here he must differentiate the imperceptible and invisible *indriyas* from the *equally* imperceptible and invisible soul. As his colleague Kuiji puts it, Xuanzang must defend against the rival critique that the mysterious faculties that operate the body are nothing more than an *ātman* masquerading in Buddhist garb.

The second critical issue in the defense of the theory of the *indriyas* regards the nature of the *indriyas* as the agents of physical activity in the body. Here Xuanzang must uphold the theory that the *indriyas*, in and of themselves, are the sources of vitality and the sustainers of sentient life. To support this theory, Xuanzang must address his rivals’ contention that the *indriyas* resemble the organs of the body too closely. In his rebuttal, Xuanzang must differentiate between the activities of the *indriyas* and the functions of the physical organs in the body. In making this distinction, Xuanzang determines dying to be the deterioration of the vital *indriyas* rather than the weakening and ultimate demise of the physical organs within the body.

The two challenges leveled by the rival thinkers pose a threat to Xuanzang’s position that the process of dying does not involve a soul. In his rebuttal, Xuanzang addresses the question of the intangibility of the *indriyas* and finds that the premise of invisibility is accepted by both the Brāhmaṇical theorists and the Sarvāstivāda Buddhists. While Xuanzang concurs with his rival

theorists regarding the invisibility of the *indriyas*, he rejects the notion that intangibility of the faculties necessarily equates them to the equally intangible soul. He argues that inferring the existence of the *ātman* from the physical activities of the body is not equivalent to inferring the presence of the *indriyas* from observing the physical actions of a sentient being.

Xuanzang then confronts his rivals' critique that the physical activity required to sustain life can be explained by looking at the workings of the organs of the body rather than by drawing inferences about the activities of the *indriyas*. Here Xuanzang is pressed to articulate the causal efficacy of the *indriyas* as separate from the operating functions of the physical organs. Xuanzang makes the case that the organs of the body do not operate without the *indriyas*. In his rebuttal, he explains how the organs of the body work together with the faculties to sustain the physical activities required for survival. In making the distinction between the *indriyas* and the organs, Xuanzang also defines the difference between a living body and a corpse. In his translation corpus and in the CWSL, Xuanzang discusses dying as a sequence involving the loss of the sensory *indriyas* followed by the decay of the physical organs. To Xuanzang, dying begins with the deterioration of the *indriyas* rather than with the departure of the soul from the body.

On the Invisibility of the *Indriyas*

In his effort to uphold the Buddhist principle that dying does not require the presence of the soul, Xuanzang is pressed to address a host of issues regarding the invisibility and intangibility of the *indriyas* and the soul. In rejecting the presence of a soul in his explanation of what sustains the body in life and what is lost to the body in dying, Xuanzang must clarify that he is not replacing the unobservable posit of an *ātman* with the equally unobservable posit of an *indriya*. To defend the theory of the invisibility of the *indriyas*, Xuanzang turns to the classical texts of the

Brāhmaṇical and Buddhist traditions.

According to the doctrine attested by the Buddha in the *Āgamas*, the twenty-two *indriyas* form the set of factors that are necessary and sufficient for the survival of the sentient human being. The *indriyas* are responsible for the overall functioning of the sentient body and are charged with maintaining bodily activities, which range from rudimentary actions like breathing to the higher processes of cognition. However extraordinary and marvelous the outwardly visible actions of the *indriyas* may be, the Abhidharma teaches that the activities of the faculties occur in an invisible theater within the body. While many of the processes that the *indriyas* actualize within the body are visible, the *indriyas* themselves are not.

In his exploration of this topic, Xuanzang finds that the description of the *indriyas* as invisible and insensible is supported by the Brāhmaṇical Sāṅkhya and Vaiśeṣika doctrines. The ancient *Sāṅkhyakārikās* state: “The things that really exist fall under eight types of invisibility” 如是實有物 八種不可見。⁴⁴⁵ The Sāṅkhya sūtras also state that the faculties are “like something hidden just beyond plain view, such as by a thin wall” 覆障故不見. The Brāhmaṇical doctrines

⁴⁴⁵ SK, stanza 7: 最遠及最近; 根壞心不定; 細微及覆障; 伏逼相似聚 T54n2137p1246b08-9.

Some real things in the world are distant and thus invisible. For example, something falls on the opposite bank, and you cannot detect it from this bank. 世間實有物遠故不可見。譬如墮彼岸此則不能知。

It's too close to be visible. For example, when a mote of dust rests on the eyelid and eludes one's perception. 近故不可見。如塵在眼則不能取。

根壞故不見 The sensory faculty has been damaged and thus something is invisible. For example, the deaf and blind are unable to perceive sounds and colors. 猶如聾盲人不能取聲色。

心不定故不見。譬如心異緣不能得此境。

細微故不見。Subtle and minute and thus invisible 如煙熱塵氣散空細不知。

覆障故不見。For example, it's blocked by something from outside it, like a wall so you can't detect it 譬如壁外物隔覆不可知。

It is subdued or dormant and thus invisible 伏逼故不見。譬如日光出星月不復顯。

It is invisible because it resembles something else too closely 相似故不見。如粒豆在豆聚同類難可知。如是實有物，八種不可見。

hold that the *indriyas* are insensible and that the soul, the director or executive operator of the *indriyas*, is intangible and invisible as well.

The Sāṅkhya and Vaiśeṣika Brāhmaṇical theorists agree that the faculties are not located inside the organs of the body or in any other determinable location. Additionally, they concur that the presence of the faculties is known because the work of the faculties is undeniably “seen and heard.” In the first hemistich of the eighth stanza of the *Sāṅkhyakārikās*, Kapila states: “It is because the *indriyas* are subtle that they are not visible. But it is not that the *indriyas* lack visible conditions” 性細故不見 非無緣可見. With the phrase “visible conditions,” Kapila refers to the observable physical effects that occur because of the actions of the invisible *indriyas*. The Vaiśeṣika inherit the premise of the insensibility of the *indriyas* from the Sāṅkhya theorists. In his sūtras, the sage Kanāṇḍa places the *ātman* in the category of intangible substances that cannot be perceived directly. The Vaiśeṣika posit that the *ātman* cannot be seen heard, smelled, tasted or touched. Within the Vaiśeṣika schema, because the *ātman* is invisible, the *indriyas* that are borne by the *ātman* are also invisible.

Long before the ascendance of Xuanzang into the inner circle of Buddhist scholars at the Imperial Court, Vasubandhu examines the paradox inherent in the idea that the sense faculties are by definition insensible. In his *Thirty Verses on Consciousness-Only*, translated into Chinese by Xuanzang, Vasubandhu states: “It is not unseen in the place where it invisible” (Skt.: *na dr̥ste'smin sa dr̥syate*).⁴⁴⁶ In this hemistich, Vasubandhu refers to the perfected nature (Skt. *pariṇiṣpāṇṇa-svabhāva*) that resides in all things. His statement also applies to the intrinsic nature (Skt.: *svābhava*) of the *indriyas*. Vasubandhu concludes that the *indriyas* are unseen, yet are known to exist by the observation of their visible functions.

⁴⁴⁶ Triṃśika, see edition of Leví (1927, p. 3).

Xuanzang finds ample support for the insensibility and the existence of the *indriyas* in the venerated texts of the Sāṅkhya and the Vaiśeṣika and in the teachings of the Abhidharma Buddhists. Ultimately, Xuanzang concludes that the invisible and the intangible nature of the *indriyas* does not preclude their existence within the body. The existence of the *indriyas* is known by inferring from the observable physical actions of the sentient being.

On Inferring the Existence of the *Indriyas*

The Buddhist and the Brāhmaṇical scholars agree that the observable activities of the body provide direct evidence for the work of the *indriyas*. Additionally, the Abhidharma Buddhists and the Sāṅkhya and Vaiśeṣika theorists converge in their recognition of inference as the epistemological instrument to be used to prove the existence of the *indriyas*. To support his theory of the *indriyas*, however, Xuanzang must address two additional issues related to the inference of the faculties. The first matter regards how the sensory *indriyas* are inferred as separate and distinct from the sensory organs in the body. The second issue relates to how the *indriyas*, unlike the physical or sensory faculties, are inferred when they do not have a physical locus in the body.

When Xuanzang postulates that a plural constituency of *indriyas* is essential to life, he must address the nagging question of how the presence of the *indriyas* is known. Because the *indriyas* are intangible, they evade sensory detection. To illustrate this point, the *Mahāvibhāṣā* adduces the example of the creature that retreats into its burrow to avoid a predator. The example of a warm-blooded creature eluding detection in a burrow is meant to illustrate the elusive nature of the true *indriya*. Like nocturnal animals that only come out to forage under the cover of darkness, the *indriyas* remain hidden from plain view. This metaphor highlights the point that although the *indriyas* cannot be detected, they remain active within the recesses of the body.

Xuanzang is aware of the paradox inherent in the fact that the sensory *indriyas* cannot sense themselves. According to Xuanzang, the loci that correspond to the sensory *indriya* cannot be detected via ordinary sensory perception. Additionally, Xuanzang observes that while the sense faculties are not equivalent to the dusty and defiled organs of the material body, the *indriyas* need a locus, or a home, within the body. Each *indriya* requires an *āsraya*, or a place of shelter or refuge, in the way that a mouse avoiding a predator requires the safety of a burrow. In his exegesis, Xuanzang turns to the Abhidharma teachings to address the question of how the sensory *indriyas* can be inferred as separate from the organs that provide them with an *āsraya*. He also addresses the question of how the non-physical *indriyas*, such as *kāyēndriyam*, or vitality, are known through the instrument of inference.

In the codified teachings of the Abhidharma, the faculty of vision is described as both a physical and an intangible *indriya*. While separate from the organs of the visual apparatus, the *indriya* of vision can be directly associated with the organ of the eye. The Abhidharma scholars point out that we do not see our faculty of vision when, for example, we look out a window and see a person. They also state that we do not touch the *indriya* of vision when we poke a finger into an eye-socket and feel an eyeball. The Abhidharma scholars hold that we infer the presence of the faculty of vision when we see things. Essentially, we infer the existence of the sensory *indriya* of vision when we look out a window and see a person and are cognizant of the innate capacity to do so. The *indriya* of vision thus is inferred from the subjective experience of seeing.

Vasubandhu, in his *Refutation of the Pudgalavāda*, offers a definition of the inference of the sensory faculties. He states that the existence of the sensory faculties can be extrapolated from the brute fact that humans have eyesight, or possess the capacity to see things.⁴⁴⁷ Vasubandhu

⁴⁴⁷ Vasubandhu develops this inference in a number of places, but most prominently in his “Refutation of Personhood” (Skt.: *Pudgalaviniścaya*; *Po wo pin* 破我品), appended to his AKBh as a “ninth” varga or chapter to his Treasury.

acknowledges that while the *indriya* of vision may be invisible, the effects of the *indriya* of vision are not invisible. In his translation of the definition of inference presented by Vasubandhu, Xuanzang interpolates additional and helpful explanations from the otherwise terse Sanskrit text.

Xuanzang writes:

Some say that the five ordinary sense faculties are obtained through inference. They set up an inference as follows: “although there exist a multitude of conditions, the fruit would not exist if there were not the specific condition. The fruit⁴⁴⁸ comes to be where the conditions are not found wanting— for example, the sprout (i.e., the fruit) is born from the seed.

或比量得如五色根。言五色根比量得者。如世現見。雖有眾緣，由闕別緣，果便非有，不闕便有；如種生芽。⁴⁴⁹

So, when seen in this way, even when there is the vivid object displayed to the mind when there is the condition of the attention (*manaskāra*), that vivid object does not arise in the blind and deaf, but arises in those who are neither blind nor deaf. As such, it definitely arises as a specific condition in cognition, depending upon whether the condition is absent or present.

From this fact it is verified that the true soul (*ātman*) does not exist as a separate entity. The soul, independent of the five aggregates, does not exist at all, judging by either of the two measures of valid knowledge – perception and inference.⁴⁵⁰

This final chapter is found in the Chinese trans. of the AKBh by Paramārtha (trans. 562) and Xuanzang (trans. 632), but neither of Vasubandhu's earliest Sanskrit commentators, namely, Sthiramati and Yaśomitra, offer any commentary upon it.

⁴⁴⁸ 眼等是別緣。五識是果。由能發識。比知有根。如是名為色根比量。

⁴⁴⁹ Translation of this passage based upon Xuanzang's Chinese. The corresponding Skt. text reads (Pradhan, *Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya*, 461: *Anumānam ca tadyathā pañcānām indriyāṇām / tatra etad anumānam – sati kāraṇe kāraṇāntarasyābhāve kāryasyābhāve dṛṣṭo bhāvo ca punarbhavas tadyathā āṅkulasya/*.

⁴⁵⁰ Reference has been made to Stcherbatsky's English translation — see his “Soul Theory of the Buddhists” 11-12 and de la vallee pouissin's French translation translation of this passage (*L'Abhidharmakośa de Vasubandhu*, vol. 5, 231-2), but major modifications have been made.

如是亦見，雖有現境、作意等緣，而諸盲聾、不盲聾等識不起，起⁴⁵¹定知別緣。有關不關。⁴⁵²此別緣者，即眼等根。如是名為色根比量。於離蘊我，二量都無。

由此證知，無真我體。⁴⁵³

In his validation of the use of inference as proof of the existence of the five sense *indriyas*, Vasubandhu relies upon the idea that the effects of the sensory faculties are tangible and palpable. To Vasubandhu, the noticeable effect of the *indriya* of vision, for example, is in the fact that we see things. At the same time, Vasubandhu notes that we do not perceive the actual visual faculty when we look out a window and see a person. Instead, when we look out a window and see a person, we infer the presence of the visual faculty.

In his argument on the inference of the five sense faculties, Vasubandhu concludes that while the five sensory faculties are the subjects of valid inference, the *ātman* is not a subject of valid inference. Vasubandhu thus differentiates the rationale for the inference of the sensory faculties from the inference of the *ātman*. He emphasizes that while the physical activities of the body provide direct and valid evidence for the existence of the sensory *indriyas*, the activities of the sensory faculties cannot be used to infer the presence of an *ātman*.

Xuanzang heartily endorses Vasubandhu's argument supporting perception and inference as evidence for the existence of the sensory *indriyas*. In his CWSL, Xuanzang appeals to the straightforward observation that while we can see the eyeball of another person, we cannot see our own eyeball when we look out a window at the other person.⁴⁵⁴ When we look out a window and

⁴⁵¹ Song, Yuan, and Ming editions all delete second character 起.

⁴⁵² Skt. text from Pradhan, ed., *Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya*, 461: *Saty eva cābhāsaprāpte viṣaye manaskāre ca kāraṇe viṣayavigrahaṇasyābhāvo dṛṣṭaḥ punaśca bhāvo'ndhabadirādīnāmanandhābadhirādīnām ca/*

⁴⁵³ Skt., *ibid.*, 461: *Atras tatra api karāṇāntarasyābhāvo bhāvaś ca niścīyate/ yacca tatkāraṇāntaram tadindriyamityetanunmānam| na caivamātmāno'stīti nāsyātmā/*

⁴⁵⁴ The key passage in CWSL 2 runs: “there is a doctrine which holds that one is merely capable of presenting the basis [in the organ], because of the fact that the faculty of another is not something experienced by oneself. As

see another person, we see the material organs of the other person; we see their eyes. We do not, however, detect the “subtle” sense faculties of the person, as the visual *indriyas* are not visible. By extension, we do not hear the faculty of audition of another person because the *indriya* of audition is inaudible. Similarly, others’ faculties of smell, taste and touch are undetectable by the sensory *indriyas*. In the CWSL, Xuanzang makes the further claim that if we could perceive the sensory faculties of another person, we would be able to detect them even after the death of the person.

The idea that the existence of the sensory faculties can be inferred from the observable physical effects of sensory perception clearly applies in the case of the physical *indriyas*. The inferential linkages between looking out a window and seeing a person and the actions of the visual *indriyas* are quite clear to the Brāhmaṇical and Buddhist philosophers. The rationale for retaining the distinction between the *indriya* and the organ, however, is as follows: While a sense organ is directly observable, the presence of the sensory *indriya* is inferred by a “constant conjunction” (Skt.: *sambandha*) with a specific sensory-organ. The eyeball and the ear, for example, are directly involved in the activities of seeing and hearing, as well as with other activities requiring sensory perception, such as walking and talking. Building upon the theories set forth by previous Abhidharma authorities, Xuanzang develops the view that the *indriyas* include but are not limited to the physical organs. In this respect, Xuanzang follows the Abhidharma doctrine that holds that a physical faculty, for example the faculty of vision, is, in a qualified and restricted sense,

for the five sense organs which appear so similar within the bodies of oneself and of others, why do you say that each of these sense organs presents in a distinct way to the consciousness of oneself and others? Thus you should know that when someone is reborn into another transmigratory locus or *gāti*, or when someone has achieved *nirvāṇa* [with remainder], the corpse left behind still continues to be visible?” 有義唯能變似依處，他根於己非所用故。似自他身五根現者。說自他識各自變義？故生他地，或般涅槃。彼餘尸骸，猶見相續 (T1585:31.11.a14). In this difficult passage, CWSL adduces the example of the sage achieving “*nirvāṇa* with remainder” (Skt.: *sōpādhiśeṣa-nirvāṇa*; Chi.: *you-yu niepan* 有餘涅槃), wherein the corpse and its decaying faculties are left behind, while the sage realizes emancipation without a body. The idea is that in both this case, and the case of achieving reincarnation in a higher realm (*dhātu*), what is discarded are the physical organs, while the sentient being's new incarnation contains a new set of faculties.

detectable to the human eye. The connection between the organ of the eye and the visual *indriya* can be confirmed, yet the *indriya* of vision is not solely composed of an eyeball.

In his analysis of the epistemological instrument of inference, Xuanzang must address the special case of the non-physical faculties. How is the presence of the faculty of *kāyēndriyam*, or vitality, a faculty that does not provide direct and observable sensory data and is not in constant conjunction with an organ, to be inferred? According to the glosses found in the *Mahāvibhāṣa*, the faculty of proprioception – *kāyēndriyam* – is fundamentally insensible. The faculty of *kāyēndriyam* is not associated with a physical sensory activity; it is not conjoined with a specific organ; and it cannot be directly linked to an observable behavior in the same way that the visual *indriya* can be associated with looking out a window and seeing a person. Xuanzang and his disciples, however, aver that the beating of the heart is an invariable sign of the presence of vitality in the body. *Kāyēndriyam* is defined as the *indriya* responsible for maintaining rudimentary and vital life processes such as cardio-pulmonary functioning. Xuanzang therefore extends the principle of inference to confirm the existence of the non-physical faculties. While the non-physical faculties, such as *kāyēndriyam*, may not have a specific locus in the body associated with its functioning, signs in the body, such as a pulse, are deemed sufficient to confirm their existence. Xuanzang therefore extends the epistemological instrument of inference to the non-physical *indriyas* as well. That *kāyēndriyam* exists can be validated by the brute fact that humans breathe. To Xuanzang, the existence of *kāyēndriyam* is inferred from an observation of the beating of the human heart.

The theory regarding the invisibility of the *indriyas* is thus enshrined within the Buddhist and Brāhmaṇical canons. While the reasoning and the overarching explanatory accounts for death differ broadly, the Buddhist and Brāhmaṇical scriptures converge in the confirmation of the *indriyas* as essential to survival. Hence, both doctrines regard the destruction of the *indriyas* as

fatal to sentient life. Xuanzang develops constructive explanations of the nature of dying as the deprivation of the *indriyas* in his extensive corpus of Abhidharma translations. Dying, according to Xuanzang, involves the body's deprivation of at least three *indriyas*. Here Xuanzang supports the explanation offered by Vasubandhu in his auto-commentary that a fatal blow to the operation of the three *indriyas* is equivalent to a fatal blow to a living sentient being. While the number of the *indriyas* involved in the loss of life may exceed three, it is granted that the sensory *indriyas*, along with the organs of the body, perish when organism dies. In his analysis of the role of the *indriyas* in the sustenance of life and in the loss of functioning that occurs in dying, Xuanzang comes to understand that the presence of an entity, over and above the *indriyas*, in the form of a *puruṣa*, an *atman* or a *pudgala* is not required to explain what sustains the body in life or what is lost in dying.

On the Collective Action of the *Indriyas*

According to the Abhidharma teachings, the *indriyas* work in collaboration with other *indriyas* to enable the physical activities of the body required to sustain sentient life. The Abhidharma doctrines also hold that the *indriyas* are analytically distinct from the corporeal body. The *indriyas* are conceptualized as independent from, and not reducible to, the organs of the body. Unlike in the Sāṅkhya schema, where the *puruṣa* plays the role of the director of the physical actions of the body, or in the Vaiśeṣika paradigm, where the *ātman* executes the functions required for living, in the Abhidharma doctrine, it is the collective action of the faculties that sustains life. While in the Brāhmaṇical theories, a perduring entity directs or executes the activities of the body, in the Abhidharma doctrine nothing above or beyond the *indriyas* directs or conducts the tasks of living. The *indriyas* do not require an overseer or taskmaster. The Mahāvibhāṣa editors note that the Brāhmaṇical doctrines posit an enduring entity, such as an *puruṣa* or an *ātman*, who sits on the

throne of the body: “whatever the servant does, gets credited to the king.” 如臣所作，得王作名。⁴⁵⁵ In the equalitarian theory of the Abhidharma Buddhists, however, no single entity, not even another *indriya*, plays the role of a king. The *indriyas* work in collective action to conduct the activities required for life

The Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma doctrine makes it very clear that no *indriya* works alone. In the Abhidharma schema, no *indriya* is the sole actor responsible for accomplishing an activity in the body, regardless of the specificity of the task. This means that no single faculty is solely held accountable if and when something in the body goes wrong. To explicate the shared responsibility of the functioning of the *indriyas*, Xuanzang adduces the metaphor of a jailbreak in his translation of the *Mahāvibhāṣā*. In this metaphor, a prisoner is presided over by a warden 獄正 and guarded by a turnkey 守門獄卒.⁴⁵⁶ The prisoner represents the body, and the warden and the guard represent the *indriyas*. The warden and the turnkey share equal responsibility for overseeing the prisoner. If the prisoner escapes, neither the warden nor the turnkey bears sole responsibility for the jailbreak. One of them failed to discharge his duty, but neither can be held solely liable for the mishap because they work together to house and guard the prisoner. In his translation of texts of the *Mahāvibhāṣā*, Xuanzang states that no faculty can be singled out for failing to execute the task to which it is assigned. Using the metaphor of the jailbreak, Xuanzang illustrates how the ordinary actions of living, such as walking and talking, require the efforts of more than one *indriya*. Therefore, the responsibility for failing to take a step, or for failing to utter a word, is shared by

⁴⁵⁵ T27n1545p0334a03.

⁴⁵⁶ This metaphor shows up in the original context of excluding *saṃjñā* or perception from the list of twenty-two faculties, because of the fact that “it does not attain the status of the dominant thing in sensation (*vedanā*).” With regard to sensations of pain, pleasure, etc., the factor of *saṃjñā* does not evince a dominant role. If the domain of pleasure is the prison, then *saṃjñā* is unqualified to serve as warden. It could serve as a turnkey subordinate to another dominant factor. However, for the reason that bearing indispensable dominant power is the very definition of *indriyam*, perception is excluded from the list. [T27, no. 1545, p0736, c01].

more than one faculty. Because the Abhidharma doctrine holds that the *indriyas* work in collective action, when an action is not executed, no single faculty is blamed for a malfunction in the body.

The theory of the collective action of the *indriyas* eliminates the role of the supernatural entity as the director and executor of the functions required for living. The Buddhist Abhidharma literature transmitted by Xuanzang upholds the view that faculties alone constitute the necessary and sufficient factors required to sustain life. No self or other entity is required, as only the *indriyas* are needed to sustain the vital sources of life throughout the body. Xuanzang provides the theoretical rationale for eliminating the role of the *puruṣa*, the *atman* or the *puṭgala* in the theater of the body. As he develops his defense of the Buddhist doctrine of the faculties and the theory of the collective action of the *indriyas*, Xuanzang fortifies his definition of dying as the destruction of more than one faculty.

On the Distinction Between the *Indriyas* and the Body in Dying

In his exegesis of dying and death, Xuanzang must address the issue of what, quite literally, differentiates being dead from being alive. The Brāhmaṇical Vaiśeṣika and Sāṅkhya scholars, like the Buddhist Abhidharma theorists, agree that the possessing a body is not equivalent to having a sentient life. By enlisting the philosophical law of contra-positives, the Brāhmaṇical and the Buddhist theorists explain that because having a body is not equivalent to being alive, the loss of a body is not equivalent to being dead. The Vaiśeṣika, Sāṅkhya and the Buddhist theories converge in holding the assumption that the condition of the body alone is not sufficient to make the distinction between a living being and a dying being. Xuanzang contends that it is the condition of the *indriyas* that determines the difference between living and dying.

Xuanzang concurs with his Brāhmaṇical and Buddhist forbears that dying is not simply the

loss of the corporeal body. For Xuanzang, dying entails the loss of the sensory *indriyas* that work in collective action within the body to support and sustain sentient life. Because the sensory *indriyas* are analytically separate from the body, the condition of the *indriyas* and the condition of the body are both implicated in the process of dying. To support his doctrine that the *indriyas* determine the difference between living and dying, Xuanzang must make a clear conceptual distinction between the enlivening activities of the *indriyas* and the grounding provided by the material viscera, the blood and guts, of the corporeal body.

To substantiate his claim that dying results from the loss of *indriyas* rather than from the deterioration of the material body, Xuanzang must differentiate the activities of the *indriyas* from the functions of the bodily organs. To do so, he contests two concepts about the relationship between the *indriyas* and the body that are put forth by his rival theorists: that the *indriyas* are more similar to the organs than different from them, and that the *indriyas* depend upon a corporeal body to support them and are therefore not wholly separate from the body. To fend off these challenges, Xuanzang must first make the case that the faculties are separate and distinct from the organs in the body. He then must prove that the *āśraya*, the loci of the *indriyas* in the body, provide secure bases for the *indriyas* but are not vital to their functioning. Xuanzang concludes that the sensory *indriyas*, along with the corporeal body in its entirety, are implicated in dying. In his examination of the differences between the material body and the *indriyas*, Xuanzang turns to the ancient Brāhmaṇical sūtras and to the *Mahāvibhāṣā* texts.

The distinction between the *indriyas* and the body centers on the thorny and much-disputed issue of the relationship between the *indriyas* and their physical location within the body. The positions held by the Brāhmaṇical Sāṅkhya and Vaiśeṣika theorists and Buddhist Personalists are that the *indriyas* are borne by the *puruṣa*, the *ātman* or the *pudgala*, respectively.

The questions of where the *indriyas* are located and borne are addressed by Xuanzang in his translation of the denouement to the final fascicle of the *Mahāvibhāṣā* (200). Here Xuanzang adduces a sūtra that articulates the variety and the range of the rival non-Buddhist views on the question of the bearer of the *indriyas*. The sūtra is in the form of a tetralemma:

There are followers of outside paths (*tīrthikas*) who postulate that the (1) bearer of life is identical to the body, (2) [while others postulate] that it is different from the body. (3) [Others postulate] that the bearer of life not simply the body, or that (4) it is no different from the body. 如契經說：有外道執命者即身，命者異身，命者非即身，命者非異身。

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Ultimately, the “the house of critical editors” (Chi.: *pingjia* 評家) of the *Mahāvibhāṣā* rules out each corner of the tetralemma.⁴⁵⁸ The editors conclude that life is neither identical to nor entirely independent from the state of having a body.

On *Sattva*, the *Indriyas* and the Body

Xuanzang must address the question of what carries the essence of life, if it is not a *puruṣa*, an *ātman*, or a *pudgala*. In his effort to eliminate supernatural entities from Buddhism, Xuanzang argues that the essential and vital qualities of life are carried within the *indriyas* of the body. Xuanzang endorses the Abhidharma Buddhist doctrine wherein the faculties bear the essence of life and the survival of the body requires the presence of multiple faculties working in collective action. Within the Abhidharma schema, the *indriyas* are entrusted with carrying *sattva*, the essence of life, unlike in the Brāhmaṇical doctrines, in which *sattva* is carried by a substantial entity or soul.

⁴⁵⁷ *Mahāvibhāṣā*, fascicle 200, T1545:27.1002.c29-a1.

⁴⁵⁸ The crux of the dilemma is also found in AKBh 9, within the initial part of Vasubandhu’s discussion on the *pudgala*.

The Abhidharma Buddhist doctrines teach that to be alive means to evince *sattva*. The Buddhist interpretation of the Sanskrit word *sattva* resembles the constructions of the term held by the Sāṅkhya and the Vaiśeṣika Brāhmaṇical schools and by the tradition of Jainism. The Indic scriptures describe *sattva* as the vital quality that distinguishes sentient forms of life from insensate objects. Within the Brāhmaṇical and the Jain traditions, the relationship between *sattva* and sentience is linear. To have *sattva* means to have sentience, or to have life. Additionally, there is a one-to-one correspondence between having *sattva* and possessing a soul. Therefore, to have *sattva* is to have sentience, life and a soul.

The Buddhist Abhidharma doctrine endorsed by Xuanzang does not equate the presence of *sattva* with the presence of sentience or life (Skt.: *jīva*)⁴⁵⁹ in the same way that it is conceptualized by the Buddhists or the Jains. In the Abhidharma schema, *sattva* is equated with the vitality of life but is not equated to life itself. Instead, the life-giving force of *sattva* is carried within the *indriyas* that work in collaboration with other *indriyas* within the body to sustain sentience. In the Abhidharma doctrine upheld by Xuanzang, the life-sustaining quality of *sattva* is carried by multiple *indriyas* and not by the soul.

Xuanzang upholds the Buddhist doctrine, attested in the ancient *Āgamas*, that entrusts the faculty of *jīvitēndriyam* with the responsibility of bearing the qualities of vitality necessary to sustain life. While the faculty of *jīvitēndriyam* bears *sattva*, it does not sustain life on its own. In the Abhidharma doctrine, no single faculty bears the burden of sustaining life, not even the faculty of vitality. At least two other faculties are present with *jīvitēndriyam* to sustain the physical and cognitive activities that are required to sustain sentient life.

Xuanzang concurs with the Sarvāstivādin authors of the *Mahāvibhāṣā* regarding the

⁴⁵⁹ *Jīva* is the term used to indicate the soul in the *Tattvārtha sūtras*, the earliest scriptures of Jainism.

definition of *sattva* and the description of how it is borne in the body by the *indriyas*. Additionally, Xuanzang endorses the Abhidharma doctrine that the faculties, including the non-physical *indriya* of *jīvitēndriyam*, are separate and distinct from the body. Unlike a sensory *indriya* with an associated sense organ, *jīvitēndriyam* does not have a direct association with an organ in the body. Because it is an *indriya*, however, *jīvitēndriyam* has a locus in the body and yet operates independently from the body. While the vitality of life belongs to the *indriyas* and is independent from the organs of the body, it is located and protected by the *āsraya* in the material body.

The *Mahāvibhāṣā* editors conclude that life cannot be defined by the possession of a body. The doctrinal implications of this stance are significant. In making a clear distinction between sentience and the materiality of the body, the *Mahāvibhāṣā* Buddhists direct the religious practitioner toward adopting a detached attitude to the body. The Buddhists acknowledge that the subjective experiences of both pleasure and pain come with the possession of the body and the sensory faculties. The *Mahāvibhāṣā* discussions illuminate how the possession of a physical body presents obstacles to enlightenment.⁴⁶⁰ This doctrine is rooted in a deeply ingrained understanding of how the perception of belonging to a body in the present is linked to the perception of belonging to a body in the past. The CWSL is unequivocal in asserting that clinging to a body is an affliction of the mind. It is an unwholesome grasping of something that is changing and impermanent in nature.⁴⁶¹

⁴⁶⁰ VsG of YoBhu hyperbolically says that “among the sixty-two views leading to rebirth in a bad transmigratory destiny, *sakayadrsti* is the root and source of all of these views held by follows of wayward paths.”又諸外道薩迦耶見以為根本。有六十二諸惡見趣。

⁴⁶¹ *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism* (accessed January 23, 2018): “Also one of the five views 五見 which in turn comprise one component of the six afflictions 六煩惱. (Tib.: *jig lta*, *jig tshogs la lta ba*).” CWSL, T 1585.31.22a4.

On the *Indriyas* as Composed of More Than One *Dravya*

In their examinations of the visual faculty, the Buddhist and the Brāhmaṇical scholars conclude that the eyeball exhibits qualities associated with all five of the massive physical elements of the world, or *dravyas*. The eyeball contains material aspects that are warm like fire, solid like the earth, fluid like water and gaseous like the wind. It also contains empty space, and therefore the element of ether (Skt. *ākāśa*). The Brāhmaṇical and the Buddhist scholars concur that the *indriyas* are composed of the *dravyas*. The only point of contention regards the inclusion of the fifth element of *ākāśa*, or ether. While the Buddhists dispute the presence of *ākāśa*, in every other way the two traditions are in lock step in declaring that the *indriyas* are composed of *dravyas*.

In his analysis of the distinction between the *indriyas* and the material body, Xuanzang closely examines the Brāhmaṇical theories that posit the soul as a substance, or a *dravya*, to which the mental and physical *indriyas* adhere. Xuanzang articulates a scathing denunciation of the doctrine of the soul as a material substance in his public disputes with the Plain-Spoken Brahmin. In the text of this debate, Xuanzang indicts the Vaiśeṣika doctrine for postulating the existence of a substantial soul that is said to exist over and above the sum of its parts. He concludes that the conceptualization of an *ātman* that is composed of the very qualities that it said to direct and execute is invalid. Xuanzang argues that if the soul is composed of the substances of the body and the mind, it cannot simultaneously rule as an omnipotent power over the substances of the body and the mind. Xuanzang therefore illuminates the internal inconsistencies in the Vaiśeṣika description of the soul as a material substance to which the *indriyas* adhere.

In addition, Xuanzang disputes the Vaiśeṣika posit that the *indriyas* carried by the soul are unitary, permanent and enduring. In the Vaiśeṣika taxonomy, the first *padārtha*, the category of the *dravyas*, includes the nine types of substances that form the building blocks of life. In the

Vaiśeṣika tradition, the first five *dravyas*—the real substances of earth, wind, water, fire and ether—form the five *indriyas* of vision, hearing, taste, smell, and touch. While each of the five *indriyas* is composed of admixtures of the five elements, each *indriya* is composed of a primary *dravya*. For example, fire is the predominant *dravya* in the *indriya* of vision, and the faculty of hearing is largely composed of ether. In the Vaiśeṣika doctrine, a composite substance is also viewed as a single substance. While a mango is composed of multiple *dravyas*, the entirety of the mango is viewed as a single *dravya*, or a single substance. Therefore, the Vaiśeṣika view a composite *indriya* as one *dravya*. The interpretation forms the basis of the Vaiśeṣika doctrine that the *ātman*, while composed of multiple substances, forms a single entity.

Xuanzang and the Abhidharma commentators Sthiramari and Yaśomitra concur with the Brāhmaṇical theorists in conceptualizing the *dravyas* as the fundamental material elements of the world. They also agree that the *indriyas* are composed of multiple *dravyas*. Where the Abhidharma and the Brāhmaṇical theorists diverge, however, is in the idea that a composite of *dravyas* is equivalent to one *dravya*. To illuminate this point in the CWSL, Xuanzang invokes the analogy of one soldier in an army. The Vaiśeṣika view the soldier as a *dravya* and the army as a *dravya*. To Xuanzang, the soldier would be equated to a *dravya*, but the entirety of the army composed of multiple soldiers would not. The Buddhists firmly contend that one *indriya* cannot be equated to one *dravya*. Instead, the Buddhists posit that each *indriya* is composed of nine *dravyas* and that no composite *indriya* is a single material substance.

The Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma scholars, like Vasubandhu in his *Treasury* and in his later Yogācāra discussions, delve into the definition of the *dravyas* and into the relationship of the *dravyas* to the *indriyas*. In his translations of the work of the Brāhmaṇical and the Buddhist theorists, Xuanzang is sensitive to the subtlety inherent in the differences between the Vaiśeṣika

and Abhidharma interpretations of *dravyas*. In his translation, he attempts to draw clear distinctions between the Vaiśeṣika interpretation of the *dravyas* as composite materials that are construed as singular substances from the Buddhist conception of the *dravyas* as composed of multiple materials that are not singular substances. Xuanzang attempts to avoid confusion by using different Chinese characters to translate the Vaiśeṣika and the Buddhist doctrines of the *dravyas*. For the Vaiśeṣika context, Xuanzang uses the Chinese character *shi* 實, or “real things,” to translate *dravya*.⁴⁶² Where the word appears in the Buddhist Abhidharma context, Xuanzang uses the Chinese character *shi* 事, or “constituent things.”

Within his translations of the Buddhist works, Xuanzang consistently translates *dravya* as “constituent things” to capture the Buddhist sense of the *dravyas* as composed of multiple entities. In this translation choice, Xuanzang realigns the theories of the *indriyas* away from the Vaiśeṣika doctrine of the *indriyas* as enduring material entities and toward the Buddhist theories of multiplicity, momentariness and impermanence. In his choice of words, Xuanzang defends against the importation of enduring substances such the *ātman* into Chinese Buddhism.

On the Nine *Dravyas*

In the auto-commentary on the twenty-second stanza of the second chapter of his *Treasury of Abhidharma*, Vasubandhu characterizes the *indriyas* as composed of admixtures of nine *dravyas*. The *dravyas* that compose the *indriyas*, as enumerated by Vasubandhu, are the atoms (Skt.: *paranamu*) of the four elements of earth, water, wind, and fire; the molecules (Skt.: *aṇus*) of the

⁴⁶² In contrast to the treatises of Abhidharma Buddhism, Sāṅkhya taxonomy includes space/ether within their periodic table of the physical elements. This idea is also found in the earlier treatise of Harivarman, translated by Kumārajīva during the fifth-century C.E., the *Tattvasiddhi śāstra* (Chi.: *Cheng shi lun* 成實論). Fascicle two of the *Tattvasiddhi* brackets the issue of the status of the fifth element within the context of Buddho-Brāhmaṇical contestations: “Granted that the non-Buddhists speak about five great elements, by eliding one of them (i.e., space/ether) we therefore speak of four.” 以外道人說有五大。為捨此故說四大 (T1646:32.261.a21-2).

four elements of colors, smells, tastes, and tactile sensations; and the *dravya* of proprioception, or *kāyêndriyam*. In this taxonomy, the ninth element of *kāyêndriyam* is responsible for endowing the inert material elements of the *indriyas* with the capability of movement.

As described by Vasubandhu, the *dravya* of *kāyêndriyam* has the capacity to create sound or vibration (*Skt.*: *śabda*). With the vibrations created by the *śabda*, the inert atoms and molecules that comprise each *indriya* begin to move. Within the body, *śabda* lends motility by creating reverberations or sounds around the joints and the organs. The vibrations or sounds of *śabda* initiate the involuntary movements of the heart and the voluntary motion of the limbs. *Sabda* is conducted through the body by the “element of wind” (*Skt.* *vāyur*; *Chi.*: *feng* 風). Because *śabda* is carried by the *dravya* of *kāyêndriyam*, it is thought to stimulate the life-giving activity of the breath (*Skt.*: *prāṇa*; *Chi.*:) of life.

The interaction between sound and wind in animating the body beguiles both the Brāhmaṇical and the Buddhist theorists. The commentaries penned by the first- and second-generation disciples of Xuanzang preserve a voluminous record of exegetical disputes regarding the relationship between the sound carried by air and the motility of the body.⁴⁶³ Essentially, the Sāṃkhya, the Vaiśeṣika and the Buddhists Vaiśeṣika agree on two points: that sound is carried by air or by wind, and that sound and wind are responsible for sustaining the vital activities of life by initiating and sustaining movement. Without sound and wind there would be no breath, heartbeat or capacity to stand upright and move. Puguang clearly states that the ninefold constituency of faculties that constitute a living human body requires the wind element to operate the joints and to

⁴⁶³ Both parties to the Buddhist Sāṃkhya debate agree that sound must be carried along by air – lit., “wind (*Skt.*: *vāyur*; *Chi.*: *feng* 風),” Hence, it is generally accepted that space is basic medium of audition for both Buddhism and Sāṃkhya. However, unlike Sāṃkhya, the Vaiśeṣika doctrine maintains that space/ether (*ākāśa*) [variously translated] forms the basic medium of sound. Without space, the faculty of audition is occluded and cannot pick up any audible sounds. For example, sounds are muffled underwater because of the preponderance of the water atoms which distorts the transmission of sound in some places and disrupts it altogether in others.

replenish and restore the organs.

In his *Treasury of Abhidharma*, Vasubandhu appeals to the power of the wind element in *kāyēndriyam* to argue that the addition of the ninth *dravya* makes the difference between insensate matter and sensate life. To Vasubandhu, a “dead clod of earth has eight *dravyas*,” and a piece of living flesh has nine. In the words of Shentai 神泰 (fl. third quarter of the seventh century CE), one of the collaborators with Xuanzang on both Abhidharma and Yogācāra translation projects, “eight dravyas are coexistent in the mountains and rivers.”⁴⁶⁴ Shentai rightly points out the significance of the differential between nine and eight *dravyas*, based upon Vasubandhu’s *Treasury of Abhidharma*, as the difference between inert matter and living, breathing flesh. Vasubandhu claims that the added ingredient of *kāyēndriyam* makes a big difference – literally, the difference between a living human and a cadaver. The addition of the ninth *dravya* is of doctrinal significance as the Buddhists posit that the *kāyēndriyam* endows the inert elements of the material world with *sattva*, or sentience.

On the Element of the Wind

The doctrines of the Sāṅkhya, the Vaiśeṣika and the Abhidharma Buddhists share the idea that the element of wind plays a vital role in sustaining life. Whether it is termed *prāṇa*, the “vital breath,” or the “great wind element” (Skt.: *vāyurdhātu*; Chi.: *fengjie* 風界), the Brāhmaṇical and the Buddhist theorists agree that wind is required for survival. The Buddhists, however, part ways with the Sāṅkhya and Vaiśeṣika Brāhmaṇs, who posit the necessary presence of an invisible entity charged with directing the process of taking in and expelling wind through the oral and nasal orifices of the body. In contrast, Xuanzang contends that invisible entities are not required to

⁴⁶⁴ Shentai, Xuanzang’s translation collaborator, writes: “within this karmic realm, without the sound, there is no faculty, even when there are the eight *dravyas* within the mountain, within the rivers, and so on....” 此在欲界無聲無根生山河地等八事 (X836:53.33.b07).

sustain the process of circulating life-giving wind throughout the body.

At first blush, the Sāṅkhya theory of *prāṇa* (Chi.: *ponafeng* 婆那風), or the vital breath, appears akin to the Buddhist concept of the “great wind element.” In both doctrines, *prāṇa* and *vāyur* are omnipresent throughout the body. The Brāhmaṇs and the Buddhists agree that *prāṇa* and *vāyur* initiate and sustain the vital movements of the organs, such as the beating of the heart and the peristalsis of the intestines; they concur that *prāṇa* and *vāyur* activate the limbs and joints to promote locomotion; and they agree that *prāṇa* and *vāyur* sustain all of the body’s functions through the essential and life-giving activity of breathing. Gauḍapada and Paramārtha adduce the analogy: “*prāṇa* is like a bird in a cage, lending motion to all.”⁴⁶⁵ Gauḍapada states: “it is called *prāṇa* because of breathing.”⁴⁶⁶

The Sāṅkhya list five different types of wind that stimulate and replenish the body. These are *prāṇa*, *apāna*, *samāna*, *udāna* and *vyāna*. Although all of the five forms of wind are necessary to sustain life, the dissipation of *prāṇa* is seen to hasten the dissolution and eventual demise of the body. All eleven faculties in the taxonomy of the *indriyas* enumerated in the *Sāṅkhyakārikās*, the five sensory faculties, the five physical faculties and the mental faculty, require the continuous circulation of wind to sustain their activities within the body.⁴⁶⁷

⁴⁶⁵ See Gauḍapada’s commentary on *Sāṅkhyakārikās*, verse 29. For Skt. text see Dutt, ed., *Sāṅkhyakārikās*, Paramārtha’s *vṛtti* reads: “*Prāṇa* lends motion to all thirteen *indriyas*” 以波那風動故，十三根皆動 (T2137:54.1252.c13-14). English translation from Dutt, trans., *Sāṅkhyakārikās*, 43.

⁴⁶⁶ Gauḍapada, commentary on *Sāṅkhyakārikās* (Dutt, ed., *Sāṅkhyakārikās*, 31): *Prāṇāt prāṇa ity ucyate*!.

⁴⁶⁷ Paramārtha’s *vṛtti* on *Sāṅkhyakārikās*, verse 29 (T54.2137.1252.c15-22), offers the following explanation on the characteristics of the five types of wind: “When *apāna* is predominant, it induces weakness and feebleness in the human being. 阿波那風者，見可畏事即縮避之，是風若多，令人怯弱。

When *samāna* is predominant one believes “I overpower another, and she does not match me,” and “I can do this.” 優陀那風者，我欲上山，我勝他不如。

Samāna causes one to gain in self confidence and to believe that “I am powerful and that I am rich, etc.” 我能作此，是風若多，令人自高，謂我勝我富等，是優陀那事。

Vyāna causes a human being to separate herself from others, without a place to rest. With the ever-so-gradual decrease of this find, part by part of the body seem dead, and when this wind has finally extinguished, the human being

Additionally, the Sāṅkhyakārikās posit the active *ahankāra*, the chief executive operator of the *ātman*, as the agent charged with supplying the “impulse” (Skt.: *preraṇa*) required to stimulate the circulation of the five winds. As the “possessor of the power of wind” (Skt.: *vāyurbalin*), the *ahankāra* is endowed with the responsibility of circulating the wind throughout each region of the body.⁴⁶⁸ Therefore, within the Sāṅkhya doctrine, the ultimate force for impelling and circulating the life-giving force of the wind throughout the body is the *ahankāra*, operating under the direction of the *ātman*.

The Buddhist Abhidharma literature, upon which Xuanzang bases his position, endorses the Sāṅkhya and Vaiśeṣika view that wind is a vital factor in the body. Vasubandhu states: “without the element of wind, and sound carried by wind, there is merely the eight-fold insensate constituent.” In his auto-commentary on this statement, Vasubandhu states that airborne sound is a necessary condition for life because sound and wind initiate and sustain the voluntary and involuntary physical actions of the body. In fascicle ninety of his *Mahāvibhāṣa*, Xuanzang endorses Vasubandhu’s contention that movement does not occur in an airless vacuum. They agree

has died. 婆那風者，遍滿於身，亦極離身，是風若多，令人離他不得安樂。是風若稍稍離，分分如死，離盡便卒。

Udāna resides in the cavity of the heart and is capable of supporting cardiac function. When this wind predominates it induces in the human to become stingy and to covet and seek after wealth. These five winds support the activity of the thirteen faculties.” 婆摩那風者，住在心處，能攝持是其事。是風若多，令人慳惜覓財覓伴，是五風事，並十三根所作。

⁴⁶⁸ In its exegesis upon the second line of the 29th stanza of *Sāṅkhyakārikās*, the *Yuktidīpikā* says that the mode of activity of the same causal efficacy (*sāmānyakaraṇavṛttiḥ*), mentioned in the stanza, that motivates all the five winds is ultimately supplied by the *niṣkriya* part of *ahankāra*, and ultimately, by *ātman*. The *Yuktidīpikā* ultimately derives an explanation about the power source driving the wind based on the *tvagindriyam*, that is, the faculty of tactition, along with the five faculties of physical action (*karmēndriyaṇi*), and the faculty of intelligence, that supply the components of the apparatus to drive the wind throughout the body in the five different forms of vital wind necessary. This power source in the *ātman* is individual; non-delimitable within the body, and it is non-pershable, nor ever wavering (*avikampyam*). This functioning of the faculty of intelligence is the role of the *ātman*, the rest of the components of the apparatus to move the wind throughout the body falls to the crude material body – that is the external body and not the subtle body. See *Yuktidīpikā*, commentary on *Sāṅkhyakārikās*, verse 29. For pertinent Skt. passage see edition of Shiv Kumar and D.N. Bhargava, *Yuktidīpikā, a commentary on Īśvarakṛṣṇa's Sāṅkhyakārikā* (2 vols., Delhi 1990-1992), 37.

that wind, or *vāyur*, is required to spark motion, and that without air circulating within the joints, the body remains inert. Puguang appeals to the ultimate verdict of the *Mahāvibhāṣa* in concluding that “without wind, there is no movement.”⁴⁶⁹ The Buddhists therefore concur that wind is involved in all manner of movement throughout the body and is therefore a necessary condition for life.⁴⁷⁰

While the Buddhists concur with the Brāhmaṇical theorists about the life-giving qualities of wind, they diverge from the classical Sāṅkhya thinkers on two important points: the source of the winds and the role of the *ātman* in circulating wind throughout the body. First, within the Buddhist treatises familiar to Xuanzang, the winds are thought to originate outside the body. Because the winds come from the dusty material realm, they are regarded as potential pathogens (Salguero, 2016). When brought into the body from the outside, the winds can stimulate unwholesome or defiled states in the body and in the mind. The fifth-century Buddhist-layman Juqu Jingsheng 沮渠京聲, in *The Essentials of the Secret Antidote to Meditation-Sickness* 治禪病祕要, writes that the winds are the sources of mental disturbance. He contends that the suffusion

⁴⁶⁹ Puguang, *Notes on the Kośa*: “We conform to the doctrine of the house of editors of the *Mahāvibhāṣa*, which holds that there exist four kinds of great elements never separate from sound (*śabda*). So, on the basis of the four kinds of great elements never being separate from sound, how does one get to say that in all cases, the four kinds of great elements are necessarily never independent from sound. If one is saying that the [different] kinds of great elements are pervaded by sound’s emission, then that reverts to what was already refuted by the house of editors of the *Mahāvibhāṣa*.”准婆沙評家義。有四大種不離聲。有四大種離聲。何得說言一切四大種必不離聲？若言大種皆遍發聲。還同婆沙評家所破。Puguang essentially agrees with Shentai in “Master Shentai’s main idea that sound is omnipresent in the actions of the body” 泰法師意說聲既恒成 (T1821:41.71.a24). Puguang rejects the opinion of one “Master Nian, who seems to be saying that sound is not omnipresent, which is incorrect” 若言非恒成就聲，此即非 (T1821:41.71.a28-9).

⁴⁷⁰ *Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya*, fasc. 30, in Xuanzang’s translation (T1558:29.158.c10-13) reads that: “pleasure and desire give rise to initial moment of thought and subsequent mental application. The initial moment and thought give rise to effort (*prayatna*). Effort stimulates the wind. Wind stimulates bodily action.”樂欲生尋伺。尋伺生勤勇。勤勇生風。風起身業。 *Vaiśeṣika sūtra* 2.1.47 reads: “Space (*ākāśa*) is substantial and impermanent, in the way that wind is [already] spoken of.” *Dravyatva-nityatve vayunā vyākhyāte*/ see edition of Jambuvījaya, *Vaiśeṣika sūtras* (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1961), 29.

of the body with the winds of *āpana* induces restlessness, even mania, in an afflicted individual.⁴⁷¹

Second, instead of the *ātman* directing the *ahankāra* behind the scenes to circulate wind throughout the body, Xuanzang proposes that the guidance of wind is provided by three *indriyas* working in collaboration. They are the *indriyas* of the mind, *kāyēndriyam*, and aversion. Abiding by his first methodological tenet regarding the nature of faculties, Xuanzang maintains that no executive operator is necessary to conduct and guide wind throughout the body. The *indriyas* working together are sufficient in and of themselves to support the vital activities required to sustain life.

With the propositions that the winds originate outside of the body and are pathogenic rather than benign and that the winds are guided within the body by the *indriyas*, rather than by a soul, Xuanzang firmly differentiates the Buddhist doctrine of wind from the Brāhmaṇical doctrine codified in the *Sāṅkhyakārikās*. Again, Xuanzang defends the Buddhist position that, rather than an *ahankāra* guiding the wind at the behest of an invisible or supernatural *ātman*, the *indriyas* working in collaborative action are responsible for circulating the vital quality of wind throughout the body. Additionally, with the example of the wind, the Abhidharma Buddhists highlight how the vital activities of the body are accomplished through the collective action of more than one *indriya* rather than by the singular activity of a substantial and enduring entity.

On the Collective Efficacy of the *Indriyas*

In his *Treasury of Abhidharma*, Vasubandhu discriminates between the Brāhmaṇical

⁴⁷¹ [0333b05] This Liu-Song Dynasty translation identifies *apāna* with the “root cause of the bad influences from outside, that motivate the heart-mind inside by reverberation of sound. This induces the four-hundred-and-fourty veins to adapt to the heart-mind’s rapid pace and to act in a disorganized manner.” 「若有行者行阿練若修心十二，於阿那般那因外惡聲觸內心根，四百四脈持心急故一時動亂。Chengguan 澄觀 enlivens this picture of *apāna* entering the body by writing that “The *apāna* winds motivate the heart-mind to sing, dance, or go through any number of myriad alterations.” 風動心故或歌或舞作種種變” (T1736:36.334.b15).

notion of the *dravyas* as singular substances and the Buddhist conception of the *dravyas* as composed of composite and multiple materials. In making this important distinction, Vasubandhu highlights the Buddhist proposition of the collective efficacy of the *indriyas*. Here he attempts to decouple the Brāhmaṇical notion of an *ātman*, a single entity composed of the material *dravyas* that works alone to operate the body, from the Buddhist concept of the *indriyas*, multiple entities made of composite materials that work collectively to operate the body. To illustrate the difference between a singular substance and the collective power of the *indriyas*, Vasubandhu adduces the metaphor of the ant hill. In the *Treasury of Abhidharma*, Vasubandhu states that an ant hill is not a simply a thing, or a substance. An ant hill is the product, or the aggregate, of the collective power of the colony of ants.

Throughout the auto-commentary to the *Treasury of Abhidharma*, Vasubandhu rebukes his Brāhmaṇical opponents for attempting to use the word *dravya* as a mass noun, rather than as a plural count noun. Vasubandhu insists on using the word *dravya* a plural count noun to reflect the multiplicity inherent in both the material composition and the collective power of the *indriyas*. Vasubandhu stipulates that the Buddhist use of the term *dravya* does not carry the substantialist connotations of the *dravyas* conceptualized in the Vaiśeṣika taxonomy of the *padārthas*. The substance of Vasubandhu's polemic is that anyone who seeks to equate the *indriyas* with a single substance, or a single action, is simply looking in the wrong doctrinal place. Vasubandhu upholds the Buddhist premise that the *dravyas*, while ontologically elemental, are ultimately collective in both nature and function. Therefore, the word *dravya*, in the Buddhist context, refers to the collective power of the *indriyas* rather than to the power of a single substantial entity. The *indriyas* are *dravyas* not because they are substantial things, but because they have collective power.

On the Material Aggregates of the *Indriyas* and the *Skandhas*

In his auto-commentary to the twenty-second stanza of the second chapter of his *Treasury of Abhidharma*, Vasubandhu describes the material constitution of the faculty. He makes it clear that an *indriya* is a “material aggregate” (Skt.: *rūpasamghāta*; Chi.: *se-ju* 色聚).⁴⁷² A material aggregate is a collection of various material particles and is “subtle in all respects” (Skt.: *sarvasūkṣmo hi rūpasamghātaḥ*) (AKBh 2.22).⁴⁷³ In this schema, the word *rūpa*, or material, refers to simple matter, or the primitive ontological building blocks of life. The word *samghāta*, or aggregate, refers the collection of molecules that comprises the *indriyas*.

This principle of multiplicity in the constitution of the *indriyas* is addressed by Kuiji’s prolific disciple Huizhao 慧沼 (648–714). In his exegesis of the multiple material aggregates of life, Huizhao concludes that sentient life is composed of two-hundred fifty-two particles (Skt.: *paramāṇu*). In his rationale, Huizhao states that two-hundred fifty-two *paramanu* form one visible particle or (Skt.: *aṇu*). Huizhao offers the mathematical derivation of $6 * 6 * 7$ to derive an *aṇu*, the smallest magnitude of matter that is visibly detectable.⁴⁷⁴ Each *aṇu* is a septad that consists of one molecule in the center, flanked by additional molecules on each of the six sides. Using Huizhao and other authoritative Abhidharma sources on the doctrine of the material aggregate, Xuanzang concludes that the corporeal body and the *indriyas* are aggregates of materials and not

⁴⁷² Xuanzang’s translation of AKBh 2.22 reads (T1558:29.18.b22-25): “the material aggregate is called an ‘aggregate’ in that it is subtle in all aspects. This is to show that nothing is more subtle than this. Where there is a material aggregate in the *kāmadhātu*, there may be no *indriyas* and no sound. The eightfold constituency (of earth, water, wind, and fire and their material derivatives or *upadāna-rūpas*) arise simultaneously and without any more, or any less constituents. Why is this constituency eightfold? This refers to the four kinds of massive elements (of earth, water, wind, and fire), along with their material derivatives (*upadāna-rūpas*) of color, smell, taste, and tangibility. There are no *indriyas* without wind, even where there are aggregates of atomic particles.” 色聚極細立微聚名。為顯更無細於此者。此在欲界無聲無根。八事俱生隨一不減。云何八事。謂四大種及四所造色香味觸。無聲有根諸極微聚。

⁴⁷³ Pradhan, ed., *Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya*, 52.

⁴⁷⁴ See Dhammajoti, *Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma*, 260-272, *passim*, for more in-depth discussion on the composition of the septadic *aṇu*.

singular substances.

Xuanzang concludes that aggregate materials obtain their power through collective action. To demonstrate the collective power of the aggregate materials, in his *Mahāvibhāṣa* Xuanzang cites the example of the power of a hand curled into a fist.⁴⁷⁵ In this example, the fist is composed of skin, bones, and ligaments. The individual elements of the fist, such as the large bone in the thumb, do not have the power to smash the clay pot. The collective power of the skin, bones, and ligaments that make up the fist, however, can break the pot. The power of the fist is simply defined as the constituent power of its parts. Xuanzang extends this metaphor to demonstrate the collective power of the *indriyas*. In his theory, no *indriya* evinces independent causal efficacy over and above the other *indriyas*; instead, the agentive power of the *indriyas* is obtained through collective action.

On the *Indriyas* and the *Skandhas*

In his auto-commentary on the twenty-second verse of the second chapter of his *Treasury of Abhidharma*, Vasubandhu avers that the *indriyas* are explicable in terms of the five aggregates or *skandhas* attested by the Buddha. The five *skandhas* include the physical aggregate of the corporeal body (Skt.: *rūpaskandha*) and the four non-physical, or psychological, aggregates of hedonic experience (Skt.: *vedanā*), perception (Skt.: *saṃjñā*), psychological impulses (Skt.: *saṃskāras*) and consciousness (Skt.: *viññāna*).⁴⁷⁶ In the *Treasury of Abhidharma*, Vasubandhu reconfigures the Abhidharma taxonomy by placing each of the twenty-two *indriyas* into one of the five categories of the Buddhist *skandhas*.

⁴⁷⁵ This analogy is introduced in *Mahāvibhāṣa*, fascicle 93, and attributed to the Dārṣṭāntikas (T1545:27.796.b08-9): “They [i.e., the Dārṣṭāntikas 譬喻者] liken it [sentient life (*sattva*)] to the combination of five fingers provisionally designated as ‘a fist.’ Apart from these [fingers] there is no fist.” 如五指合名之為拳。離即非拳故非實有。

⁴⁷⁶ CWSL 4 (T1585:31.20.a03) avers: “the five faculties including vision, etc., are all classified under the internal loci – the physical aggregate (*rūpaskandha*)” 眼等五根皆是色蘊內處所攝。

In his taxonomy, Vasubandhu groups the five sensory *indriyas*, the two female and male reproductive *indriyas* and the *indriya* of vitality under the aggregate of the *rūpaskandha* of the corporeal body. He places the five hedonic *indriyas* under the second *skandha* of *vedana*; the five cultivatable *indriyas* under the *skandha* of *saṃjñā*; and the three *indriyas* of gnosis under the two *skandhas* of *saṃskāras* and *vijñāna*. By classifying the *indriyas* within the *skandhas*, Vasubandhu binds the Buddhist doctrine of the five aggregates to the Abhidharma theory of *indriyas*. Additionally, he succeeds in reducing the baroque enumeration of the twenty-two *indriyas* to a streamlined and parsimonious taxonomy of five categories.

In his exegesis of the theory of the *indriyas*, Xuanzang returns to the teachings in which the historical Śākyamuni Buddha describes the living, breathing human as composed of five aggregates, or a “bundle of five parts” (Skt.: *pañcaskandha*; Chi.: *wuyun* 五蘊). Xuanzang adheres to the reconfiguration of the taxonomy of the *indriyas* into the five *skandhas* constructed by Vasubandhu. He regards Vasubandhu’s taxonomy as doctrinally important in that it brings the original teachings of the Buddha into congruence with the theory of the *indriyas*, and offers a simplified and approachable explanation of the *indriyas* to Buddhist practitioners. Xuanzang is sensitive to the importance of the sūtras of the *skandhas*, as they are specific to Buddhism and not recognized within the Brāhmaṇical traditions of Sāṅkhya and Vaiśeṣika.⁴⁷⁷ By endorsing the taxonomy of the *skandhas* constructed by Vasubandhu, Xuanzang reorients the theory of the *indriyas* toward the original teachings of the Buddha.

In his CWSL, Xuanzang revisits the intricate classification of the twenty-two *indriyas* into

⁴⁷⁷ See Kramer, ed., *Pañcaskandhaka vibhāṣa*, “Introduction,” xix: “Sāṅkhya only regard *rūpaskandha* as *ātmīya* (“mine”), and all the other four *skandhas* as *ātman*. He [Sthiramati] thus claims that for the Sāṅkhyas the self is not only identical to *vijñāna* but also consists of the factors accompanying the mind.”

the eighteen sensory spheres (Skt.: *dhātus*)⁴⁷⁸ configured by Vasubandhu in the *Treasury of Abhidharma*. Vasubandhu organizes the eight physical faculties: the five sensory faculties, the faculty of vitality, and the two bi-modally gendered faculties of reproduction⁴⁷⁹ into the sphere of the five senses. He places the remaining fourteen psychological faculties, including the *indriya* of the mind, in the sphere of mental activity. In his effort to simplify the ponderous classification of the faculties proffered by the Abhidharma theorists, Xuanzang makes two modifications to the taxonomy. First, he subsumes the male and female reproductive *indriyas* and the *indriya* of *jīvitēndriyam* under the *indriya* of *kāyēndriyam*. He then groups the psychological faculties: the five hedonic *indriyas*, the five cultivatable *indriyas* and the three *indriyas* of gnosis under the *indriya* of the mind, or *manēndriyam*. Xuanzang thereby reduces Vasubandhu's taxonomy of eight physical and fourteen psychological faculties to six core faculties (Skt.: *ṣaṣṭāṇi rūpēndriyāṇi*). The six *indriyas* in the taxonomy of Xuanzang thus include the five physical senses of sight, hearing, taste, smell, *kāyēndriyam*, and the mental faculty of *manēndriyam*.

Xuanzang then proceeds to reconcile the Buddhist doctrine of five *skandhas* with the

⁴⁷⁸ This determination is delivered by way of a denouement to chapter one of the *Treasury of Abhidharma* (T1821:41.55.c02-3) on the topic of the *dhātus*: “The aforementioned twenty-two faculties are factors that are, in part, categorized under (*saṃgraha*) the twelve internal sense spheres (*dhātu*) among the eighteen spheres, and in part, categorized under the sphere of dharmas (*dharmadhātu*, i.e., the sphere of the mental objects). This is because one part of the twenty-two *indriyas*, namely the latter three (faculties of *gnosis*), and the eleven faculties including *jīvitēndriyam* are categorized under the *dharmadhātu*.” 如是所說二十二根。十八界中，內十二界，法一分攝。法一分者。命等十一，後三一分。法界攝故。內十二者。眼等五根，如自名攝。

The mental faculty in its full extension is exhaustively classified under the seven *dhātus*. The other three *dhātus* partially classify the mind (*manas*) and mental consciousness (*manovijñāna*). The bimodally-gendered faculties of female and male procreative faculties are categorized as one part of *kāyēndriyam*. This will be explained in detail in the next chapter. For now, we conform to the doctrine that regards the rest of the physical sensory spheres including five sensory spheres as partially categorized under the five sensory realms. These are *dhātus* and not *indriyas*.” 意根通是七心界攝。後三一分意意識攝。女根男根即是身界一分所攝。如後當辯。義准。所餘色等五界，法界一分，皆體非根。This passage is repeated, verbatim, by Saṅghabhadra in both his *Nyāyanusāra śāstra* and his *Clarification of Tenets* (XZL). There survives a Tibetan translation of the latter that contains part of this passage at D 4091: vol. 141, folio/line 109b.7-8.

⁴⁷⁹ This gloss appears first in AKBh 3 七有色者。眼耳鼻舌身女男根。色蘊攝故 (T1558:29.15a18); Saṅghabhadra simply repeats this gloss in Ny 9 at T29n1562p0380b17.

configuration of the six *indriyas*. To align his enumeration of the *indriyas* with the Buddhist teachings of the five *skandhas*, he makes two revisions. He clusters the five physical senses under the aggregate of the *rupaskandha*, and then distributes the functions of the *indriya* of *manêndriyam* across the four psychological aggregates of hedonic experience, perception, psychological impulses, and consciousness. In distributing the complex functions of the mental faculty within each of the four psychological aggregates, Xuanzang highlights a central tenet of Abhidharma Buddhism: that all sentient creatures have a mental faculty. Within this schema, all human and non-human animals bear the faculties of vitality, or *jīvitêndriyam*, and proprioception, or *kāyêndriyam*.

On the Six *Indriyas* in the Ultimate Sense

By consolidating the six *indriyas* into the five *skandhas*, Xuanzang preserves the original teachings of the Buddha and simplifies the Abhidharma schema. With this deft exegetical maneuver, Xuanzang arrives at the six core faculties, the “*indriyas* in the ultimate sense” (Chi.: *sheng-yi gen* 勝義根) that comprise the essential elements of life. Xuanzang defines the six “ultimately real” (Chi.: *sheng-yi you* 勝義有) faculties as omnipresent within the sentient being in that they are not limited to specific physical functions, organs, or locations within the body. He concludes that the taxonomy of the six ultimately real *indriyas* contains all of the elements necessary and sufficient to sustain sentient life.

In deriving the six real *indriyas*, Xuanzang succeeds in paring down the unwieldy taxonomy of twenty-two *indriyas*; anchoring the theory of the *indriyas* within the authentic teachings of the Buddha Śākyamuṇi⁴⁸⁰; identifying the core (Chi.: *genti* 根體) or primary *indriyas*

⁴⁸⁰ For example, the *Mahāvibhāṣa* editors already detail the condensed set of “fourteen core faculties,” attributed to the Sarvāstivādin master Dharmatrāta. Dharmatrāta arrives at this figure of fourteen by subsuming the eight “provisional faculties” under the previous fourteen. The eight provisional faculties in this scheme are the five cultivatable faculties, and the three faculties of higher gnosis, which Dharmatrāta subsumes under the faculty of

from the list of twenty-two; and neutralizing the doctrinal tension inherent in the Sarvāstivāda definition of the *indriyas* as indistinct from their loci in the body. By stipulating that the sensory *indriyas* and the psychological *indriyas* are separate, Xuanzang lays the groundwork for his theory that dying is the result of the loss of the *indriyas* rather than simply the deterioration of the material organs of the body.

The derivation of the six ultimate faculties is a theoretical advancement that is unique and original to Xuanzang. The desideratum to simplify the lengthy taxonomy of the twenty-two faculties, however, has a long history within the Brāhmaṇical and Buddhist traditions. Xuanzang stands on the shoulders of Vasubandhu, Saṅgabhadra and numerous other Sarvāstivāda thinkers in creating this exegetical innovation. For example, attempts to pare down the unwieldy taxonomy are evident in the early discussions by the Sarvāstivādin scholars of ancient Kaśmir and Gandhāra. These opinions are recorded in Xuanzang Chinese translation of the *Mahāvibhāṣa*.

In his effort to simplify the complicated list of twenty-two *indriyas*, Xuanzang is sensitive to the efforts made by the early Sarvāstivāda scholars to prioritize and categorize the primary faculties that are essential to sentient life. For Xuanzang, the distinction between the primary *indriyas* and the subordinate *indriyas* relies on distinguishing the “core faculties” from the “nominal” items in the list of twenty-two *indriyas*.⁴⁸¹ In determining what constitutes a “faculty in

the mind. The fourteen core faculties for Dharmatrāta are the five sensory faculties (1-5), the mind (6), vitality (7), procreation (8-9), and the five hedonic faculties (10-14).

⁴⁸¹ In *Nyāyanusāra śāstra*, fascicle 9 (T1562:29.380.b01), Saṅgabhadra makes the determination to arrive at a baseline number of seventeen *indriyas* forming the “core group of faculties” for two reasons: (1) since the two gendered faculties (7-8) can be reduced to *kāyendriyam* and (2) since the three uncontaminated faculties of *gnosis* can be subsumed under the rubric of the “nine faculties” – namely, “mind, pleasure, joy, aversion and the five hedonic faculties including faith (11-15)” 意樂喜捨信等五根. This passage is also attested in Saṅgabhadra’s *Clarification of Tenets* (XZL), but only in Xuanzang’s Chinese version (T1563:29.796.c14-16), not in the Tibetan translation.

the ultimate sense,”⁴⁸² Xuanzang, in his *Mahāvibhāṣa*, lays out three diverging opinions given by the Sarvāstivāda scholars Ghosavarman (Chi.: *Lüshafamo* 婁沙筏摩), Saṅghavasū (Chi.: *Sengqiefasu* 僧伽筏蘇), and Ghosā (Chi.: Miaoyin 妙音).

Saṅghavarman proclaims that *manêndriyam* is the only true faculty. He accords this hallowed status to *manêndriyam* because the actions of *manêndriyam* are internal and pervasive in the body. Because *manêndriyam* is required for sensory perception (Skt.: *ālambana*) and for cognition,⁴⁸³ it is of ultimate importance in all aspects of sentient life. Saṅghavasū holds that there are six faculties in the ultimate sense of the word, the five ordinary senses and vitality (Skt.: *jīvitêndriyam*). He argues that these six *indriyas* form the root and source of sentience (Skt.: *sattvamūlam*) in the living being.⁴⁸⁴ Ghosā largely agrees with Saṅghavasū’s reasoning but includes the bimodally gendered faculties to make a list of eight ultimately real faculties. The implications of Saṅghavasū’s and Ghosā’s view is that the mind is not an independent faculty and the functions of sentience are performed by the five senses and vitality.

As discussed above, Xuanzang ultimately pares the list of the *indriyas* in the ultimate sense down to six items, the five senses together with the mental faculty. In pronouncing the six faculties as the “*indriyas* in the ultimate sense,” Xuanzang underscores the idea that the five sensory *indriyas* of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and *kāyêndriyam*, together with the *indriya* of the mind, provide the bases for all sentient life. Xuanzang follows the teaching of Vasubandhu in letter and

⁴⁸² Sarvāstivāda denotes these basic faculties as the “faculties in their ultimate sense” 勝義根. Buddhavarman renders this terminology as *shi yigen* 實義根 in his translation of *Vibhāṣa*.

⁴⁸³ *Mahāvibhāṣa*, fasc. 142 (T1545:27.732.a04-5): “Bhadānta Ghosavarman is of the opinion that only these six *indriyas* are internal, pervasive, and present to the percept (*ālambana*).” 尊者婁沙筏摩作如是說：唯意一種是勝義根，是內、是遍、有所緣故。

⁴⁸⁴ *Mahāvibhāṣa*, fascicle 142 (T1545:27.732.a26-27): “Bhadānta Saṅghavasū is of the opinion that only these six faculties are the faculties in the ultimate sense — namely, vision, audition, olfaction, gustation, tactition, and mind, since these are the root of sentient life” 尊者僧伽筏蘇作如是說：唯命等六是勝義根，所謂眼、耳、鼻、舌、身、命，有情本故。

in spirit by positing that the five ordinary senses, along with the mental faculty, constitute the “houses” (Skt.: *āyatana*; Chi.: *chu* 處) of sentient life.⁴⁸⁵ For Xuanzang, the metaphor of the “six houses” encapsulates his theory of the *indriyas* and his definition of sentient life. In his metaphor of the “six houses,” or “*chu*,” Xuanzang illustrates how the six faculties form the foundation, or the home base, for the nurturance and sustenance of the body. Xuanzang uses the word *chu* to describe how the six *indriyas* sustain and restore sentient life. He eschews the use of *chu* to refer to a literal place or a physical locus within which an *indriya* resides in the material body.

By availing himself of the metaphor of the “six houses,” however, Xuanzang risks muddying an important technical distinction between the Abhidharma and the Yogācāra Buddhist teachings. In the Abhidharma doctrine, the word *indriya* simultaneously refers to an *indriya* and to the locus of the *indriya* within the body. There is no distinction between an *indriya* and the locus of the *indriya*. Within the Yogācāra doctrine, however, the word *indriya* refers specifically to the pervasive, invisible, and omnipresent aspects of the *indriya*, and does not include the locus of the *indriya* within the material body. Therefore, within the Yogācāra schema, there is a distinct dichotomy between the ultimately pure *indriya* and its impure locus.

The Sarvāstivāda editors of the *Mahāvibhāṣā* vigorously endorse the position that there is no distinction between the *indriyas* and their loci in the body. They take great pains to debunk the heterodox position held by the Abhidharma Vibhāgyavādins that the six core faculties are separate and distinct from their loci in the material body. Xuanzang, therefore, must reconcile the positions of the Sarvāstivāda and the Abhidharma Vibhāgyavādin theorists. In his exegesis of the doctrine of the *indriya* and its locus, Xuanzang employs the metaphor of an animal and its burrow. Here he

⁴⁸⁵ The Chinese character *chu* 處, means “locus.” As noted above, it is Xuanzang's Chinese translation for various Skt. terms, including “standing” (*sthāna*) and “house” (*āyatana*).

illustrates a confusion in the Abhidharma doctrine that defines the *indriya* and the locus as indistinct. He notes that an animal and its burrow are not one and the same. The burrow is the home of the animal and is distinctly different from the animal itself. By extension, the “dusty houses” that “house” the *indriyas* are not the *indriyas* themselves, and therefore should not be misconstrued as such.

In enlisting the Yogācāra distinction between *indriyas* and their loci, Xuanzang invites controversy, as his position appears to uphold the unorthodox position held by the Abhidharma Vibhāṅjavādins, a view that is dismissed, tout court, by the Sarvāstivādin editors of the *Mahāvibhāṣa*. To support his position that there is an analytical distinction between the *indriya* and the locus, Xuanzang turns to Vasubandhu’s doctrine regarding pure matter (Skt.: *rūpapasāda*) and impure matter (Skt.: *audārika*) found in the *Treasury of Abhidharma* and in *Treatise on the Five Aggregates* (Skt.: *Pañcaskāndhaka śāstram*).

On Pure Matter and Impure Matter

In the context of a discussion regarding the intangibility of the *indriyas*, found in the ninth chapter of his *Treasury of Abhidharma*, Vasubandhu addresses the subjects of pure matter (Skt.: *rūpapasāda*) and impure matter (Skt.: *audārika-rūpa*; Chi.: *cuse* 麤色) as they relate to the *indriyas* and to the organs of the body. Vasubandhu posits that both pure matter and impure matter are real. He discriminates, however, between pure matter that is “pellucid” and transparent, and impure matter that is crude and substantial. Pure matter is invisible and not perceptible to the senses, whereas impure matter can be seen and touched.

In making this distinction, Vasubandhu posits that the *indriyas* are invisible because they are composed of the pellucid and transparent material of pure matter, whereas the organs of the body are visible because they are composed of the crude and substantial material of impure matter.

Because the *indriyas* are composed of pure matter, they are “non-indicative”⁴⁸⁶ (Skt.: *avijñapti*; Chi.: *wubiao* 無表) in that they do not communicate to the senses and cannot be detected by an untrained eye.⁴⁸⁷ Without specific training, a sentient being does not have the ability to detect the “non-indicative” *indriyas* of another sentient being. For example, the ordinary, untrained sentient being cannot see the visual *indriya* of another sentient being.⁴⁸⁸ The organ of the eyeball, however, because it is composed of crude constituent matter, is visible to another sentient being. Detecting the organs of the body does not require anything other than the five ordinary senses. In making this distinction, Vasubandhu illustrates how pure matter can only be perceived by the mental faculty of a sentient being who is skilled in meditation.⁴⁸⁹

Kuiji, in his comprehensive exegesis of Xuanzang’s *Treatise Investigating the Five Aggregates*, posits that the “pure faculties are known to exist via inference” 比量知有清淨色根. According to Kuiji, the fleshy abode of the pure *indriya* is palpable, but the pure *indriya* that issues forth from the fleshy abode does not communicate its presence in a palpable way.⁴⁹⁰ Kuiji thus avers that while the material organs are directly perceptible, the existence of the pure *indriyas* must be inferred. Xuanzang concurs with Kuiji’s interpretation of Vasubandhu’s conceptualization of the *indriyas* as composed of pure matter and develops the idea that because the *indriyas* are

⁴⁸⁶ Sanderson (1994) translates *avijñapti* as “non-communicator.”

⁴⁸⁷ Sanderson (1994): “the *avijñapti* is perceptible only to the mind and not to the senses.”

⁴⁸⁸ Puguang writes in his *Study Notes on the Kośa*: “*Avijñapti-rūpa* is not a [simple] material aggregate of atomic practices.” 非極微聚，即無表色 (T1821:41.70.b12). Puguang says that the non-indicative material is not a collection of ordinary atomic particles. Rather it consists in a collection of pure material particles.

⁴⁸⁹ See Eric Greene, “Seeing *Avijñapti-rūpa*: Buddhist Doctrine and Meditative Experience in India and China,” Chuang Kuo-pin (Ed.), *Buddhist Meditation Traditions: Dialogue and Comparison* (Jinshan, Taiwan: Dharma Drum Press, 2016), 108.

⁴⁹⁰ Kuiji records the view of the Mahāsaṅghikas in his *Study Notes to the Treatise on the Wheel of the Different Tenets* (異部宗輪論述記): “the five physical faculties all exist as balls of flesh; they are not differentiated in terms of pure matter. Hence, because they are not pure matter, they do not directly reach the object” 五色根皆肉團為體；無別淨色，非淨色故，根不得境 (X844:53.580.13-14). What does reach the object for the Mahāsaṅghikas, if not the faculty? Kuiji replies: “Hence, it is consciousness that is capable (of reaching the object) and not the faculty” 故識能了非根有能 (X844:53.580.c17).

invisible, their existence must be inferred from the visible activities conducted by a sentient being.

In his exegesis of the composition of the *indriyas*, Xuanzang concludes that the six “ultimately real” *indriyas* are composed of pure matter. He concurs with Vasubandhu’s description of the *indriyas* as composed of pellucid material that is constitutionally different from the inert matter of the body and the organs. Within this schema, the *indriyas*, because they are constituted of pure matter, can transform and develop. Like the lotus blossoms emerging from the murky water and mud of a pond, the ultimately real *indriyas* flower into purity and enlightenment from the impure material of the corporeal body. In his conceptualization, Xuanzang posits that the six pure *indriyas* are not confined to an immutable and defiled state in the corporeal body. He thereby lays the groundwork for the doctrinal idea that the seeds for spiritual transformation lie within the pure *indriyas*.

Xuanzang uses the macabre case of the self-immolating monk who has completed the path of insight and meditation to demonstrate the difference between the spiritual aspects of the pure *indriyas* and the mortal body.⁴⁹¹ When the *ārhat* self-immolates, death comes about when the *indriyas* are relinquished by the *ārhat* and final nirvāṇa is reached. Nirvāṇa entails the cessation of the *indriyas*. The ashes of the *ārhat*’s body then return to the dusty material world.

On Why the *Indriyas* Are Not Organs

The theory of the ultimately pure nature of the *indriyas* finds its full expression in the

⁴⁹¹ The *Source Mirror* of Yongming Yanshou (T2016:48.704, a14-21) adduces this example of the body of the *ārhat* whose “five pure sensory faculties,” are not burnt up by the funeral pyre. Yanshou says that not only does this example illustrate the differences between the crude, ordinary sensory *indriyas*, and the pure, refined sensory *indriyas* of the sages, but also demonstrates the power of the sage’s *pratiSāṅkhya nirodha*. The 18th-century literatus Wu Shixu agrees with Yanshou that the *ārhat*’s five sensory *indriyas* are not burnt up, but says that this has nothing to do with his/her powers of *pratisāṅkhya nirodha*. Wu Shixu (D8885:28.136.a10) stipulates: “what the eye illuminates to see is not the part that is visibly burnt up by the fire. It is known that this [unburnt part] is the measure of the mind; it is not burnt up in the fire.”眼照是見。火不燒見。心量其法是知。火不燒知。

extensive Yogācāra texts translated by Xuanzang. The distinction between pure and impure matter undergirds the Yogācāra definitions of the *indriyas* and the organs of the body as separate and distinct. In his exegesis of the *indriyas* and the impact of karma in dying, Xuanzang comes to wholeheartedly endorse the Yogācāra distinction between the *indriyas* and the corporeal body.

The Abhidharma Buddhists and the Brāhmanical Sāṅkhya and Vaiśeṣika theorists concur in the ancient definition of the sense faculty as including the sensory organ and “the faculty in its ultimate sense” 勝義根. For example, the Sanskrit word *cakṣur* and the Chinese equivalent, *yan*, both mean the sense organ of the eye. The Abhidharma scholars take the organ of the eye, the *cakṣur* or the *yan*, as metonymical for the faculty of vision. In the Sarvāstivādin schema, the organs that contribute to the operative action of the *indriyas* are, by definition, one and the same. Xuanzang does not rest comfortably with the direct equation of the *indriyas* to their corresponding organs. He therefore takes issue with the Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma teachings that abjure the ontological distinction between the two.

In his exhaustive examination of the Brāhmanical and Buddhist definitions of *indriya*, Xuanzang concludes that there are two separate and distinct senses of the word. He is sensitive to, and respectfully acknowledges, the duality in the Sanskrit definition of *indriya*. The ancient sense of the word simultaneously encompasses the *indriya* and the corresponding organ of the *indriya*. Xuanzang notes that two senses of the word *indriya* are embedded in the Chinese equivalent of the word, *gen* 根 (Japanese: *kon*). In his methodological commitment, however, Xuanzang restricts the word *indriya* to the “faculty in its proper sense” (Chi: *zhengyi gen* 正義根, exclusive of the corresponding physical organs).⁴⁹² Kuiji concurs with Xuanzang that “the pellucid faculty

⁴⁹² Yokoyama Kōitsu 横山紘一, Yuishiki De Yomu Hannya Shingyō – Kū No Jissen 唯識でよむ般若心経--空の実践 (*Reading the Heart Sūtra According To Consciousness-Only: Emptiness In Practice) (TOKYO: Daihō Rinkaku 大法輪閣, 2009), 228-31, *passim* refers to the former as the “biological organ” and the latter term, which

does not experience the dust of the physical organ.”⁴⁹³ Throughout his catechistic CWSL, Xuanzang holds that the word *indriya* refers only and precisely to the faculty. By defending the distinction between the ultimately real and “pure” *indriyas* and the “organs of ephemeral dust,” Xuanzang resuscitates the Vibhāṣyavādin stance and rejects the Sarvāstivāda elision of the two senses of the *indriya*.

Xuanzang concludes that the Yogācāra definition of the pure *indriya*, as separate from the organ, is more theoretically rigorous. In his exegesis of dying, he stubbornly adheres to the analytical distinction between “the faculty in its ultimate sense” (Chi.: *shengyi gen* 勝義根) and the defiled physical organ. He concludes that the inert material organs lack the causal efficacy to accomplish the physical actions required to sustain sentient life. Instead of the inert “blood and guts” of the human viscera, the faculties, constituted in pure or pellucid matter (Chi.: *jing-se gen* 淨色根), initiate and sustain the activities of sentient life.⁴⁹⁴

The analytical distinction between the pure matter of the *indriyas* and the impure matter of the organs thus determines what bears life and what ultimately is lost in dying. This theoretical distinction between the faculties and the organs is the crucial ontological factor in Xuanzang’s

shows up in Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma as “the proper faculty” (Japanese: *shōkon* 正根) — that is, what Vasubandhu describes as the faculty constituted in “subtle matter” (*rūpaprāsāda*).

⁴⁹³ In his *Study Notes on the CWSL* (T1830:43.289.c09-11), Kuiji orients his explanation on the pellucid physical faculty within his discussion on the third (3) type of objects confirmed to exist by logical reasoning (*yukti* 證成道理). This class of objects is separate from those forms of objects (1) immediately perceived (*pratyakṣa*) and those objects (2) “commonly experienced by ordinary folk” 世共 across the world.

⁴⁹⁴ In his Commentary on the *Śata śāstra*, the Sui-Dynasty exegete Jizang (T1827:42.245.c6-c10) presents two interpretations of what the “heart-mind” refers to according to the Sāṅkhya taxonomy. The first is that the “heart-mind” is located within the human heart, and is fundamentally a physical thing constituted in five kinds of material elements. The second is that the “heart-mind” is not limited to the “fleshy” heart, and thus includes a mental aspect not limited to just the physical elements. Jizang’s gloss on the five *karmēndriyāṇi* reads: “the five faculties of action are base, hence composed out of the five massive elements. There are two explanations of the mental faculty of balance – the first takes it to be composed out of the fleshy heart, made up of the five massive elements. The other takes it to not be constituted out of the derivatives of the material elements. In examining Kāpila’s treatises, it appears that the mind stands for the capability to discriminate things in mental consciousness.” 五業根劣故具五大而成。心平等根有二釋。若是肉心具五大所成。心識之心非大所造。撿迦毘羅論。是心識之心以能分別故也。

argument that dying results from the deterioration of the faculties rather than from the destruction of the organs.⁴⁹⁵ Additionally, the distinction of the pure *indriyas* from the impure organs lays the conceptual foundation for the Yogācāra theory of the modifiability of the *indriyas* through karma. The Yogācāra theorists posit that because the *indriyas* are not bound by the material confines of organs of the body, they can be transformed through karma.

On the *Indriyas* and Conspecific Seeds

The Yogācāra theorists base the concepts of the power, capability and mutability of the *indriyas* on the theory of the seeds (Skt. *bījas*). In this theory, the *indriyas* are composed of seeds made of transparent or pellucid matter. In the CWSL, Xuanzang uses the word “seed” (Skt.: *bija* or *ankula*) to refer to the inherent potency (Skt.: *śakti*; Chi.: *shiyong* 勢用) and capabilities (Skt.: *samārthya* 功能)⁴⁹⁶ of the *indriyas*. Xuanzang attributes the origin of the theory of the seeds and the *indriyas* to the “Sautrānikas” scholars. While the status of the Sautrānikas as a separate school or textual tradition is contested, it is generally agreed that the Sautrānikas provide the primary source material upon which the theory of seeds is based.⁴⁹⁷ Xuanzang heavily draws upon this “proto-Mahāyāna” source material in developing his Yogācāra theory of the *indriyas* and sentient life. Xuanzang uses the theory of seeds to illustrate how the specific powers and capacities of a sentient being either emerge or remain fallow through the action of karma. To Xuanzang, the theory of seeds provides an explanatory account of how the variegated and changing bundles of “specific qualities and capacities” (Skt.: *samārthyaviśeṣa*; Chi.: *gongneng chabie* 功能差別) that

⁴⁹⁵ The reason that this study opt for the translation of “physical faculty” instead of “organ” for the key term in discussion here – *rūpēndriyam* (Chi.: 有色根) – is that Sarvāstivāda taxonomies include their correlative – namely, the *arūpēndriyāṇi* – lit., “immaterial faculties” (Skt.: **arūpēndriyam*; Chi.: *wu-se gen* 無色根).

⁴⁹⁶ Hirakawa’s (1973, part two, p. 93) Chi. to Skt. index of the AKBh gives a variety of Skt. terms for which the Chi. word *gongneng* serves as equivalent, including, but not limited to *samārthya*, *śakti*, *kāritra*, and *prayatna*.

⁴⁹⁷ See Park (2006) dissertation and (2014) book-length study on the Sautrāntika theory of seeds.

characterize and sustain the sentient being are expressed throughout life.

Xuanzang looks to the Yogācāra teachings of Vasubandhu in his later career (Gold, 2014) and to the corpus of Asaṅga, in formulating his explanation of the power and capabilities of the *indriyas* in terms of seeds. While drawing upon these sources, Xuanzang contributes to the Abhidharma doctrine with his theory of “contaminated” (Chi.: *youlou zhongz* 有漏種子; Skt.: *sāsravabīja*) and “uncontaminated” seeds (Chi.: *wulou zhongzi* 無漏種子; *anāsravabījas*). Specifically, he expands upon the Yogācāra theory of seeds to illustrate how the *indriyas* can be either improved or degraded.

In his interpretation of the Yogācāra schema, Xuanzang posits that each *indriya* is composed of a mixture of uncontaminated and contaminated seeds. The expression of the seeds depends upon how a sentient being cultivates the specific type of seed in an *indriya*. For example, with the practice of wholesome behaviors, the uncontaminated seeds of the *indriya* of the mind are expressed in the form of wisdom, knowledge and an overall improvement in standing in the moral universe. However, if the contaminated seeds in the *indriya* of aversion are cultivated with immoral actions, they are expressed in the form of moral and physical degradation.

In his theory of seeds, Xuanzang makes the important doctrinal point that the innate or inherited *dhatu* and karmic disposition of a sentient creature are modifiable through either the cultivation of the uncontaminated seeds through wholesome practices or the elimination of the expression of contaminated seeds through the diminishment of unskillful behaviors. Within this framework, all sentient beings can improve their moral status through karmic action.

In his CWSL, Xuanzang makes an analytical distinction between the faculty as an entity (Chi.: *genti* 根體) and the physical standing (Chi.: *gen suoyi chu* 根所依處) of an *indriya*. The text postulates that the faculty and the ultimate physical expression of the *indriya* are determined

by “conspecific seeds 共相種.”⁴⁹⁸ As the gloss in the CWSL indicates, and as corroborated by Yaśomitra, conspecific seeds (Skt.: *āṅkulas*) stand for capabilities that are specific to a species and expressed in conspecific traits. The term “conspecific seeds” coined by Xuanzang is notable because it appears for the first time in the Chinese translation corpuses of Paramārtha and Xuanzang. Although it first appears in Paramārtha’s Yogācāra translations, the term is widely used by Xuanzang.⁴⁹⁹

With his innovation of the term “conspecific seeds,” Xuanzang illuminates how the traits expressed by a species are modifiable through the cultivation of uncontaminated seeds and the recession of contaminated seeds. For Xuanzang, the theory of the seeds provides support for his doctrinal belief that biology is not destiny. Xuanzang avers that the quality of life, as well as the quality of dying, can be improved through spiritual practice.

⁴⁹⁸ I have not located a Sanskrit equivalent for this term “conspecific seeds.” In the Tibetan parallel (D 76-49) to the passage in Paramārtha’s (T31, no., 1593, p. 117, c09-15) and Xuanzang’s Chinese translations of **Mahāyānasamgrāha-śāstra* (MsG) (at T31, no. 1595, p. 178c, 28) that identify the “seed” (Chi.: *zhongzi*; Tib.: *sa pon*) with “conspecific characteristics” (Chi.: *gongxiang*), the Tib. simply has *thun mong* (lit., “common property,” “commonality” – see Derge (hereafter, D), *sems tsam* (mind-only) section, work number 4048: vol. 134, folio/line 12a.5 for MsG passage; for corresponding commentary in **Mahāyānasamgrahôpanibandhana // Theg pa chen po bsdus pa’i bshad sbyar*, attributed to Asvabhāva, see D 4051: vol. 134, folio/line 218a.6. Neither the MsG nor its two extensive commentaries by Asvabhāva and Vasubandhu, titled **Mahāyānasamgrāha-śāstra-bhāṣya* (MsGBh) are extant in their original Skt., although there are Tib. and Chi. versions of these texts. While the Chi. versions of these texts contain mention of the “seeds of conspecific character” 共相種, the Tib. versions of these texts do not contain explicit mention of this compound term – namely, “seeds of conspecificity.” In the Tib. texts of the *śāstra* itself and in Asvabhāva’s and Vasubandhu’s and commentaries, the “common characteristics” are identified with the “seeds of the common sensory world or *bhājanaloka* (Tib.: *snod kyi ’jig rten gyi sa bon*). But nowhere in the Tibetan versions of these texts are the two compounded together as one nominal or compound term (Skt.: *samāsa*). Given these facts, my conjecture is that *gongxiang zhong* appears to be a coinage of the Chinese translators – Paramārtha and Xuanzang.

⁴⁹⁹ Yaśomitra gives two terms in his gloss on the word *bīja* – “capability” (*samārthya*) and “potency” (*śakti*) see *Sphūṭārthā Abhidharmakośa-Vyākhyā*, ed. Shastri (Varanasi: Bauddha Bharati Series, 1970), 173. This gloss appears in the context of Yaśomitra’s exegesis on AK(Bh) 2.22 – for original passage in the verses of Vasubandhu’s *Abhidharmakośa* and auto-commentary (AKBh), ed. Pradhan, *Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya*, 52-3. This is parallel to the discussion of *bīja* in fascicle 5 of the CWSL which takes up the mention of “seed” in various earlier works to indicate both “potency” (*śakti*) and “capability” (*samārthya*) – see T31, no. 1585, pp. 19-20.

On the *Ālayavijñāna* or Storehouse Consciousness

Within the conceptual scheme articulated by Xuanzang in the CWSL, the *ālayavijñāna*, or the “storehouse consciousness,” serves as the bearer of the uncontaminated and contaminated seeds, or *bija*. The *ālayavijñāna* refers to the container within which the seeds of karma, or the thoughts and actions of the sentient being, are stored. Schmithausen (1986) attributes the origin of the doctrine of the *ālayavijñāna*, as the “basic constituent of the living being,” to the early Yogācāra sources, more specifically to the corpus of Asaṅga.⁵⁰⁰ Schmithausen writes: “*ālayavijñāna* is nothing but a hypostasis of the seeds.”⁵⁰¹ Here Schmithausen describes the concept, first articulated by Asaṅga, of the *ālayavijñāna* as the underlying repository of seeds that potentiate the consciousness of the sentient being. Xuanzang faithfully adheres to this meaning throughout his work on the doctrine of *ālayavijñāna*.

In the CWSL, Xuanzang postulates the *ālayavijñāna* as the container of the seeds from which the biological and physical aspects and the psychological and moral dimensions of sentient life emerge. For Xuanzang, the “variegated capacities” (Skt.: *samārthyaviśeṣa*; Chi.: *gongneng chabie* 功能差別)⁵⁰² that are necessary for the sustenance of the biological and psychological life of the organism grow from the seeds stored in the *ālayavijñāna*. In his conceptualization, the *ālayavijñāna* is identified with the *indriya* of vitality, or the *jīvitēndriyam*. Xuanzang posits that the “proximate seeds” (Chi.: *qin-zhong* 親種), or the seeds that potentiate the capabilities directly required for the survival of the sentient being, are located within the *indriya* of vitality.⁵⁰³

⁵⁰⁰ See chapter three of Schmithausen’s (1986) groundbreaking work, titled, “Development of *ālayavijñāna* to the basic constituent of a living being,” *Ālayavijñāna: On the Origin and the Early Development of a Central Concept of Yogācāra Philosophy* (Tōkyō: International Institute for Buddhist Studies, 1987), 34-65.

⁵⁰¹ Ibid., 34.

⁵⁰² Skt. reconstruction from Hirakawa, *Index to AKBh (Chi.-Skt.)*, Vol. 1, 63.

⁵⁰³ CWSL, fascicle 7: “The faculty of vitality is solely based within the seeds proximate to the root consciousness.” 命根但依本識親種 (T1585:31.41.a13).

Xuanzang avers in the second fascicle of the CWSL that *ālayavijñāna* is “indeterminate” (Skt.: *avyākṛta*) in that it can potentiate seeds of a wholesome or an unwholesome nature. Therefore, for Xuanzang, the doctrine of *ālayavijñāna* imbues the doctrine of karma with an important psychological dimension. Within this schema, both contaminated and uncontaminated seeds reside in the *ālayavijñāna* until they are cultivated or eliminated. Thus, according to Xuanzang, karma is carried in the storehouse consciousness, as it is cultivated or eliminated through the intentions and actions of the sentient being throughout life. This idea is of doctrinal importance within Buddhism as it lays the theoretical rationale for the range of spiritual practices intended to cultivate good karma through meritorious action and eliminate harmful karma through the observance of wholesome practices.

As the bearer of the seeds that potentiate the physical and psychological dimensions of sentient life, the *ālayavijñāna* can be considered as equivalent to the “subconscious” (Skt.: *asamviditāka*). In this conceptualization, the *ālayavijñāna* operates out of the awareness of the sentient being. Xuanzang avers that the *ālayavijñāna* continuously supports the vitality of the body and consciousness throughout life. He also posits that the *ālayavijñāna* maintains sentience in the state of dying, or “the state of becoming deceased” (Skt.: *cyutyāvasthā* or *maraṇāvasthā*). The presence of the storehouse consciousness explains why a sentient being maintains faint traces of consciousness at the end of life. As the organs of the body and the sensory *indriya* deteriorate in dying, *ālayavijñāna* maintains the baseline cardio-pulmonary functions, as well as states of consciousness, however vegetative. Therefore, the loss of the *indriya* of vitality, in which the *ālayavijñāna* is predominantly present, is equivalent to the loss of sentient life.

In his exegesis of dying, Xuanzang enlists the doctrine of *ālayavijñāna* to articulate how karma and the faculties determine the hedonic quality, ritual purity, and timing of dying. In

providing an explanatory account of the involvement of both physical and psychological suffering in dying, Xuanzang offers doctrinal guidelines for alleviating the physical and psychic pain of dying. He then turns to examine the Yogācāra authors to understand how improving the *indriyas*, through practice and training, can alleviate the pain of dying. In addressing the question of what dying is, Xuanzang comes to understand that a good death requires a good life.

Chapter Three: Xuanzang on the Karmic Quality of Dying: The Good, the Bad, and the Karmically Neutral

What is dying well? During his comprehensive investigation of the theory of the *indriyas*, Xuanzang concludes that dying involves much more than the formulaic loss of the faculties, or the deterioration of the base material organs of the body. During his crossing of the deserts of Central Asia, Xuanzang witnessed the deaths of others, had near-death experiences of his own, and became acutely sensitive to the physical and psychological suffering involved in dying. Throughout his life, Xuanzang looked to the Indic texts for guidance from the Buddha and others in coming to terms with his existential fear of dying. In the work of the Yogācāra authorities, Vasubandhu and Asaṅga, he locates a theoretical foundation for an understanding of dying in terms of the deterioration of the *indriyas*. In the work of Asaṅga, Xuanzang finds descriptions of a five-stage program of yogic training and ritual observances that are intended to enhance the physical and spiritual fitness of the sentient being and thereby improve the possibility of dying well. Following Asaṅga's definition in the Basis for Yoga Practitioners, this study takes the "good" death to be the death for which one has "well prepared" (Chi.: *tiaoshun* 調順). By contrast, the "bad" death (Chi.: *bushan si* 不善死) is one for which the deceased cannot be said to have been prepared.⁵⁰⁴

With his examination of the scriptures, Xuanzang concludes that a complex interaction between the *indriyas* and karma influences the ritual purity, hedonic tone, and timing of dying. Xuanzang ultimately comes to understand that the number, the type, and the condition of the *indriyas* that are borne by a sentient being at the end of life determine the quality of dying. Because karma, or the actions that a sentient being undertakes in life, is implicated in the condition of the

⁵⁰⁴ Jonathan Parry adopts this definition of "good" versus "bad" deaths in his study, "Sacrificial Death and the Necrophagous Ascetic," in *Death and the Regeneration of Life*, Maurice Bloch and Jonathan Parry, eds. (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press), 76.

faculties, the quality of dying is necessarily informed by karma. In his examination of the Yogācāra texts, Xuanzang finds doctrinal support for practices that are intended to improve the quality of dying through the cultivation of the *indriyas* of faith, perseverance, concentration, mindfulness, and wisdom. Xuanzang devotes a substantial portion of his philosophical writings to exploring the practices and rituals by which the condition of the *indriyas* are improved. This explication takes Xuanzang into an exploration of how karma and merit (Skt.: *punya*), the “spiritual capital”⁵⁰⁵ that is accumulated through generous actions and deeds, are involved in dying.

According to the Buddhist law of karma, every thought, deed, or action generates a force of energy in the form of a reaction. For example, a meritorious gesture that brings happiness to another person returns in the form of positive energy, or good karma. A deleterious action that harms a sentient creature exerts a force that comes back in the form of negative energy, or bad karma. Merit is produced through activities, such as sponsoring rituals and religious works (Skt.: *dāna*), donating food to monks and nuns, and meditating and maintaining wholesome thoughts. Demerits (Skt.: *pāpa*; Chi.: *zui* 罪) are incurred through negative and harmful actions, the primary example of which is the killing of sentient creatures. The mechanism of merits and demerits operates under the Buddhist law of karma whereby merits produce good karma and demerits incur bad karma. The system of merits and demerits is akin to a spiritual balance sheet, in which good deeds are assets and bad deeds are liabilities. In this system, the maintenance of a positive balance of meritorious actions and deeds contributes to the growth toward enlightenment of a sentient being and to an improvement in the quality of dying.

Xuanzang defines merit as the spiritual “resources” (Chi.: *cai* 財) that are accumulated by a sentient being during life. Xuanzang employs the character *cai* to conceptualize merit as a

⁵⁰⁵ Keown, *Buddhist Ethics* (London: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2005), 7.

resource that can be amassed through meritorious actions or depleted by deleterious or harmful activities. In his exegesis of dying, however, Xuanzang concludes that the theory of merit does not provide a full explanatory account of the karmic standing of a sentient being approaching death, or of the type of dying experienced. Through his examination of the Buddhist and Brāhmaṇical literature, Xuanzang concludes that karma, rather than merit, plays the primary role in determining the quality and the timing of the end of life. Because dying is determined by the *indriyas*, and karma influences the conditions of the *indriyas*, karma, according to Xuanzang, is the mediating force in determining the quality of the end of life. Therefore, by improving the *indriyas* through cultivation, a sentient being can assuage the suffering attendant with dying.

Enlisting Yogācāra theory, Xuanzang postulates that the *indriyas* can be cultivated by nurturing the uncontaminated seeds located within the *indriyas* with the nutrients of meritorious practices and actions. The *indriyas* can also be improved by depriving the contaminated seeds of the fertilizer of deleterious and unwholesome activities. Xuanzang avers that karma, the actions that a sentient being does or does not perform to cultivate the *indriyas* during a lifetime, directly influences the condition and the quality of the *indriyas* at the end of life. Because karma, and to some extent merit, are implicated in the manifestation of the seeds that are expressed in the quality of the *indriyas* at the end of life, karma and merit are involved in all expressions and types of dying. With the Yogācāra theory of the *indriyas*, Xuanzang upholds the core Buddhist tenet that karma is involved in all ways of dying.

Xuanzang looks to the Abhidharma textbooks of Vasubandhu and Saṅghabhadra and to the later Yogācāra works of Asaṅga for authoritative analyses of the impact and scope of karma upon dying. While Vasubandhu, Saṅghabhadra, and Asaṅga have different doctrinal and sectarian agendas, the three scholars concur that two factors are implicated in dying: the genetically-

determined life expectancy of an organism's species and karma. Xuanzang also examines the role of karma in dying due to “inescapable imbalances” (Skt.: *viṣamaparivāha*; Chi.: *bu-ping bu-heng* 不平不橫), or random and accidental events. In his analysis of dying from inescapable imbalances, Xuanzang finds the principle of “just deserts,” the notion that retribution for prior actions is served at the end of life, to be enshrined within the doctrine of karma.

Xuanzang concludes that the timing and the hedonic tone of dying can be improved in two ways: by undergoing courses of yogic training designed to improve the five skillful *indriyas* of faith, perseverance, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom, and by observing rituals that accumulate spiritual merit. In his analyses of the Yogācāra texts, specifically the work *The Basis for Yoga Practitioners* by Asaṅga, and the Mahayana sūtras, Xuanzang distills a pragmatic set of guidelines, grounded in the original teachings of the Buddha, to aid the sentient being searching for relief from existential anxiety and to improve the quality of dying.

With his exegesis and translations of the Abhidharma and Yogācāra texts, Xuanzang follows through on his intention to bring the teachings and the rituals of the Buddha, in their unalloyed form, into Chinese Buddhism and philosophy. His commitment to a faithful transmission of the original teachings, as represented in the Indic scriptures, is demonstrated by his scrupulous adherence to the *sūtras*. With his meticulous analyses and translations of the Abhidharma and Yogācāra teachings of Vasubandhu and Asaṅga, Xuanzang endeavors to eliminate the core discrepancies within the Abhidharma and the Yogācāra Buddhist doctrines, while making the pragmatic and egalitarian practice of Yogācāra available to the Tang Chinese.

This chapter follows the sequence, order, and logic employed by Xuanzang in his examination of the discussions of merit, karma, and the quality of dying found in the *Mahāvibhāṣa*, and in the corpora of Vasubandhu, Saṅghabhadra, and Asaṅga. It is divided into four sections: the

first section describes Xuanzang's exegesis of the Abhidharma and Yogācāra discourses on the role of merit in the timing and the quality of dying: the second section examines Xuanzang's analysis of the five stages of yoga, articulated by Asaṅga, and the practices of merit and meditation found in the Medicine Buddha Sūtra (Skt. *Bhaiṣajyaguru-sūtra*; Chi. *Yaoshi jing* 藥師經); the third section describes Xuanzang's taxonomy of the three moral grades of dying: dying skillfully, dying unskillfully, and dying in neither a skillful nor an unskillful way; and the fourth section describes Xuanzang's explanation of how the fear of death can be overcome through the observance of specific yogic practices and rituals.

Section One: On the Roles of Merit and Karma in the Quality of Dying

In his exegesis on the nature of merit, karma and the quality of dying, Xuanzang looks to the *Mahāvibhāṣa* and to the commentaries on the Abhidharma texts by Vasubandhu and Saṅghabhadra. The Abhidharma authorities in the *Mahāvibhāṣa* make it clear that specific types of dying are caused by a “poverty of merit” (Skt.: *punyakṣepa*; Chi.: *fujin* 福盡).⁵⁰⁶ Vasubandhu, in the *Treasury of Abhidharma*, and Saṅghabhadra, in his commentaries on the Abhidharma texts, diverge in their positions regarding the role of karma and merit in different types of dying. Saṅghabhadra, for example, posits that dying from the terminus of a normal human lifespan, or from an accident or random event, does not always involve merits, demerits, or the moral failings of a sentient being. In contrast, Vasubandhu, and ultimately Xuanzang, conclude that merit and karma are involved, to a greater or lesser degree, in the dying of all sentient beings.

For a detailed account of the role of merit in determining the quality of dying, Xuanzang

⁵⁰⁶ Xuanzang's Chinese also means “utter exhaustion of merit.” Xuanzang's rendering of *punyakṣepa* as “poverty of merit” captures the monetary metaphor embedded in the system of merits and demerits.

turns to the Yogācāra authorities, and specifically to the work of Asaṅga. Here he finds that Asaṅga concurs with Vasubandhu in the supposition that merit is pervasively involved in all types of dying. In his examination of the Abhidharma texts, Xuanzang concludes that merit plays an important, yet circumscribed, role in determining the moral purity, the hedonic tone and the timing of dying. With his analysis and translation of Asaṅga's *Basis for Yoga Practitioners*, however, Xuanzang comes to appreciate and then to articulate the omnipresent role assumed by karma in defining the quality and timing of dying of all sentient beings.

Xuanzang buttresses his explanation of the comprehensive role played by karma in dying by enlisting the principle of “the scale of karma” (Skt.: *tulāprānta*; Chi.: *cheng* 秤; Tib.: *sang*),⁵⁰⁷ introduced by Asaṅga in the *Basis for Yoga Practitioners*. Here, Asaṅga presents a paradigm in which karmic merits and karmic demerits form a spiritual balance sheet of credits and debits. In this system, karmic merits are accumulated over a lifetime, and then used as down payments toward a benign death, a mild afterlife and a heavenly rebirth. In his study of Buddhist ethics, Keown (2005) describes the double-entry accounting of Buddhist merits and demerits in terms of a system of “spiritual capitalism.”⁵⁰⁸ The coin of the realm in “spiritual capitalism” is the benevolent donation, or the *dāna*. Asaṅga affirms that the practice of making donations to the sangha, attested by the Buddha, creates the “spiritual capital” necessary to obtain a good death and afterlife.

Across his translation corpus, Xuanzang emphasizes the point that the good and bad karma accumulated over a lifetime ineluctably determines the quality of dying of a sentient being. Xuanzang views the type of death granted to a sentient being as the “just deserts” for a life lived

⁵⁰⁷ See edition of Bhattachārya, *Yogācārabhūmi*, 19.

⁵⁰⁸ Keown, *Buddhist Ethics*, 7.

in either a meritorious or a non-meritorious way. In his exhaustive examination of the role of karma in dying, Xuanzang comes to wholeheartedly endorse the central Buddhist tenet that karma plays a dominant role in determining the timing and the quality of dying.

The *Mahāvibhāṣā* on the Four Ways of Dying in the *Prajñapti Śāstra*

In his translation and exegesis of the *Prajñapti śāstra*, *The Treatise on the Correct Postulates*, located in the one-hundredth folio of the *Mahāvibhāṣā*, Xuanzang examines the role that the presence or absence of merit plays in the type of dying experienced by a sentient being. Surviving only in the *Mahāvibhāṣā* and in *Treasury of the Abhidharma*, the *Prajñapti śāstra* is one of the six fundamental texts in the Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma tradition of Buddhism. The *Prajñapti śāstra* is revered as the touchstone source for discussions on the effects of merit and vitality in dying in Buddhism.

The ancient *Prajñapti śāstra* contains a *catuṣkoṭi* (Chi: *si ju* 四句), a four-part logical argument, that articulates the permutations of dying in terms of two variables: vitality and merit. Buddhist scholars, including the *Mahāvibhāṣā* editors Vasubandhu, Saṅghabhadra, and ultimately Xuanzang, excerpt the *catuṣkoṭi* from the *Prajñapti śāstra* in their exegeses of the implications of merit and vitality in dying. In this ancient treatise, types of dying are categorized according to the natural lifespan of a sentient being, as demonstrated by the presence of vitality, and to the karmic standing of a sentient being, as evidenced by the merits and demerits accumulated by the end of life. The enumeration of the four categories of dying, presented in the *catuṣkoṭi* in the *Prajñapti śāstra*, is posited as an exhaustive classification of all possible types of death experienced by sentient beings.

In his translation of the *catuṣkoṭi* in the *Prajñapti śāstra*, found in the *Mahāvibhāṣā*,

Xuanzang classifies the four types of dying in the following tetralemma:⁵⁰⁹

- (1) Dying due to the exhaustion of vitality and not to a privation of merit. This type of death occurs when a sentient being belongs to a species endowed with longstanding merit and a short life. *Upapādukas*, who reside in the *rūpadhātu*, serve as examples of beings who perish shortly after birth, yet bear significant merit. The abundance of merit held by an *upapādukas* is manifested in the achievement of a rebirth into the deva heavens of the *rūpadhātu*.
- (2) Dying due to a poverty of merit (Skt.: *punyakṣepa*). This type of death occurs because of the specific moral failings of a sentient being. For example, after slaying several members of a caravan in a robbery, a thief is killed by his accomplices to obtain the ill-gotten treasure. The death of the thief is attributed to the poverty of his spiritual resources resulting from the demerits he has amassed by killing sentient beings.
- (3) Dying due to privations of merit and vitality. This somewhat rare type of dying occurs when the specific moral failings of a sentient being coincide with the natural depletion of vitality at the end of life. For example, after many years of oppressing his subjects, an ancient and tyrannical king has a heart attack while whipping his servant with a cane. The

⁵⁰⁹ The full passage is found in *Mahāvibhāṣa*, fascicle 20: “Moreover, the *Prajñapti śāstra* says that, in the first place, there are those who die due to the utter exhaustion of vitality, and not due to merit. These are the deaths of beings belong to a specific species with short life, but longstanding merit. Those beings, in the next life, will not die because of the exhaustion/poverty of merit, but because the exhaustion of vital power (*āyur*). 復次 施設論說：有四種死：一、壽盡故死非財盡故。如有一類有短壽業及多財業。彼於後時，壽盡故死非財盡故。

In the second place, there are those beings who die because of the exhaustion of merit and not because of the exhaustion of vital power. For instance, there are those beings with little merit but abundant vital power. They die because of the exhaustion of merit and not because of the exhaustion of vital power 二、財盡故死非壽盡故。如有一類有少財業及長壽業，彼於後時財盡故死非壽盡故。

In the third place there are those dying due to the exhaustion of both merit and vital power. For instance, there are those beings with little longevity and little merit. They die due to both the exhaustion of vital power and the exhaustion of merit. 三、壽盡故死及財盡故。如有一類有短壽業及少財業。彼於後時壽盡故死及財盡故。

In the fourth place there is dying neither to the exhaustion of vital power, nor to the exhaustion of merit. For example, there is a type of sentient beings with longstanding vitality and much merit. When they die, although both merit and vitality are not exhausted, in meeting with inescapable imbalances they meet their demise.” 四、非壽盡故死，亦非財盡故。如有一類有長壽業及多財業。彼於後時，雖財與壽，二俱未盡，而遇惡緣非時而死 (T.1545:27/103.b03-16).

king's type of dying is attributed to the poverty of his spiritual resources and to the privation of vitality due to his advanced age.

- (4) Dying due neither to privations of merit nor to privations of vitality. This type of dying is caused by a random event or an accident. For example, after being bitten by a snake in a remote desert region, a young camel driver dies before he can receive treatment to save his life. The death of the camel driver falls into the category of a random event and is not determined by either the status of his merit or the loss of his natural vitality.

The four ways of dying enumerated in the *Mahāvibhāṣa* translation of the *Prajñapti śāstra* by Xuanzang illuminate how merit and vitality impact the timing of the death of a sentient being. In this taxonomy, some ways of dying result from a poverty of spiritual merit due to an overabundance of demerits, and other types of dying are due to the natural depletion of the vitality of a sentient being. Vasumitra, in his commentary on the *Prajñapti śāstra*, adds that the timing of dying can be influenced by bad karma that is accumulated in prior incarnations.⁵¹⁰ Often the accretion of bad karma is due to demerits collected through the killing of sentient life in a previous incarnation. Here, Vasumitra makes the important point that the length of the life varies according to the merits or the demerits amassed in the prior lives of a sentient being.

In their final verdict, the *Mahāvibhāṣa* editors determine that merit plays a role in some, but not all, ways of dying. Merit is implicated in types of dying that involve an extreme poverty

⁵¹⁰ *Mahāvibhāṣa*, fasc. 20: “Vasumitra says that the length of the a human's lifespan is not the matured result (lit., ‘the spiritual fruit’) of killing animals in a past life. Since the eight faculties shared by humans and *devas* (i.e., life, aversion, mind, and five ordinary senses (for this identification, see T27n1545p0762b25), hence these transmigratory destinities [of the human and *deva*] are skillful conditions of the matured result of good karma (since they are more desirable than any of the other destinies). But the karma created in a past life by someone else [when reborn into these destinities] can produce the effect that impacts the karma that unravels the full lifespan of the individual. For as a sutra says, since their karma of the skillful path can be enjoyed and undertaken by the human being at age ten, the sons or daughters they beget will gain additional lifespan of twenty years.” 尊者世友說曰。人中壽量短者。非殺業異熟果。以人天趣命等八根是異熟者。唯是善業異熟果故。然造業者皆在人中先造能引人壽量業。次後復造害生命業。此業與前作損害事。前業應受二十年壽。由後損害但受十年。故人壽短促非彼異熟果。如契經說。十歲時人由能受行善業道故。所生男女壽二十歲 (T1545:27.103.a13-20).

of merit, or when the exhaustion of merit co-occurs with a loss of vitality. To continue his investigation of the interaction between vitality and merit in the timing of dying, Xuanzang turns to an exegesis and translation of the *Prajñapti śāstra* by Vasubandhu located in the *Treasury of the Abhidharma*.

Vasubandhu on the Four Ways of Dying in the *Prajñapti Śāstra*

In chapter two of the *Treasury of Abhidharma*, titled “Discriminating the Faculties,” Vasubandhu examines the role of spiritual merit in the timing and the quality of dying. Saṅghabhadra contributes detailed exegesis to this account of the role of spiritual merit in dying in his *Treatise Conforming to the Correct Logic of Abhidharma*. In his translations of these two texts, Xuanzang returns to the two central questions addressed in the *Prajñapti śāstra*: What do ways of dying have to do with the exhaustion of merit? What do ways of dying have to do with the exhaustion of the natural lifespan? Xuanzang’s translation of Saṅghabhadra’s presentation of the question posed by the *Prajñapti śāstra* reads:

We now examine whether one dies from the exhaustion of vital power (Skt.: āyur), or due to other reasons. Do sentient beings die from the exhaustion of vital power, or to the exhaustion of merit? Or due to other reasons?

今復應思。諸有死者。為壽盡故。為有餘因。諸有死者，為壽盡故？為有餘因？⁵¹¹

In his translation of the *Treasury of Abhidharma*, Xuanzang cites the original *catuṣkoṭi*, located in the *Prajñāpti śāstra*, verbatim, and weaves Vasubandhu’s exegesis regarding the

⁵¹¹ *Nyāyanusāra śāstra*, fascicle 13, T1562:29.404.c26. Vasubandhu’s presentation (according to Xuanzang’s Chi.) poses the question with two parallel five character phrases: 為壽盡故死？為更有餘因？(T1558:29.26.b26). Corresponding Skt. text reads: *Atha kimāyuhkṣayādeva maraṇaṃ bhavati? Āhosvid anyathā api?* (Shastri, *Sphuṭārtha*, vol. 1, 270; Pradhan, *Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya*, 74. Tib. (D 4090: vol. 140, folio/line 79a.6.): *Yang ci tshe zad pa kho nas 'chi bar 'gyur ram/'on te gzhan du yang yin zhe na?*

connection between merit and vitality into the text. In his analysis of the ways of four ways of dying, Vasubandhu provides the philosophical rationale to support the idea that merit and vitality are connected. Xuanzang, in his exegesis and translation of the *Prajñāpti śāstra* text by Vasubandhu, determines that because merit and vitality are intertwined, the moral status of the sentient being is an important variable in determining the quality and the timing of dying.

While the *Mahāvibhāṣa* editors lay out the *catuṣkoṭi* in terms of merit and vitality, Vasubandhu uses the two variables of *jīvitāsaṃskāras* and *āyuhṣaṃskāras* in his taxonomy of the four types of dying. With his choice of *jīvitāsaṃskāras* and *āyuhṣaṃskāras*, Vasubandhu shifts the *Mahāvibhāṣa* taxonomy of dying away from a moral or spiritual frame, into a naturalistic and biologically-based paradigm. Xuanzang is acutely aware of the exegetical move made by Vasubandhu toward providing a rigorous classification of the types of dying that is based on the biological and developmental aspects of sentient life. In his Chinese version of the text by Vasubandhu, Xuanzang translates *jīvitāsaṃskāra* as the “force of vitality” (Chi.: *ming xing* 命行), the innate life force that determines the natural life expectancy of a sentient being. He translates *āyuhṣaṃskāra* as the “vital power” (Chi.: *shou xing* 壽行), the biological life force that revitalizes the *indriyas* during the lifetime of a sentient being.

In his precise translations of the two aspects of vitality that are involved in dying, Xuanzang emphasizes the formulations of *jīvitāsaṃskāras* as innate and static and of the *āyuhṣaṃskāras* as developmental and dynamic. Xuanzang’s translation choices diverge markedly from those employed by Paramārtha in the earlier Chinese version of the *catuṣkoṭi*.⁵¹² Paramārtha captures the concept of vitality using the Chinese character *ming* 命, and does not make a translation distinction

⁵¹² As Yuanyu 元瑜, the author of the only extant Chinese commentary on the *Nyāyanusāra śāstra*, points out, Xuanzang’s deviations from Paramārtha actually pertain to the original import of the *Prajñāpti śāstra* see Yuanyu’s commentary on *Nyāyanusāra śāstra* (X0843:53.543c08).

between *jīvitāsaṃskāras* and *āyuhṣaṃskāras*.⁵¹³ Xuanzang, however, with his use of *ming xing* and *shou xing*, disambiguates the concept of vitality. While the difference may appear to be splitting hairs, Xuanzang, as the translator, exegete, and agenda-driven promoter of the doctrine of Vasubandhu, makes an important point. While both *jīvitāsaṃskāras* and *āyuhṣaṃskāras* are located within the *indriya* of vitality, they are involved in determining the time and quality of dying in very specific and different ways. Xuanzang posits that while some aspects of dying are deeply rooted in genetics and past karma and cannot be changed, other aspects of dying can be altered by improving karma through the reduction of non-meritorious actions and the adoption of meritorious practices.

In his analysis of the *Prajñapti śāstra*, Vasubandhu makes a distinction between dying from the loss of *jīvitāsaṃskāras*, the vital force that determines the life expectancy of a sentient being, and dying from the loss of *āyuhṣaṃskāras*, the vital power that rejuvenates and restores the *indriyas*.⁵¹⁴ Xuanzang identifies *jīvitāsaṃskāras* as the conspecific or genetically endowed determinate of dying, and *āyuhṣaṃskāras* as the ontogenetic or developmental factor that is implicated in dying. Together, *jīvitāsaṃskāras* and *āyuhṣaṃskāras* dictate the timing and quality of dying.

Within the schema of Vasubandhu, because it is biologically determined through the genetic and prior karmic endowment of the sentient being, *jīvitāsaṃskāras* is immutable. *Jīvitāsaṃskāras* cannot be “discarded” (Chi.: *she* 捨) or otherwise modified by the activities performed by a sentient being during a lifetime. Simply put, the natural life expectancy of a sentient

⁵¹³ Paramārtha’s rendering of verse AK 2.45ab states: “*āyur* is identical to *jīvitā*” 壽即命 (T1559:29.184c07). Later on, in the autocommentary to this verse (AKBh 2.45ab), Paramārtha combines the characters *shou* and *ming* together to render the Sanskrit word *āyur* (T1559:29.185.a10). These translation decisions serve to demonstrate that Paramārtha is not sensitive to the analytical distinction between *āyur* and *jīvitā*.

⁵¹⁴ Translation from Cox, *Disputed Dharmas*, esp., 297.

creature cannot be altered through karmic activity. *Āyuhṣaṃskāras*, however, the vital power that infuses the *indriyas* with vitality throughout life, is mutable and can be developed and enhanced by the actions or karma performed by a sentient being.

By enhancing the store of *āyuhṣaṃskāras*, a sentient being can extend life and improve the quality of dying. Merit, because it is viewed within the Buddhist doctrine as a means by which the *indriyas* are cultivated, is therefore a mechanism by which the repository of *āyuhṣaṃskāras* can be increased. While practices that alter merit are part of the mechanism, Vasubandhu ultimately concludes that modifying the quality of the *indriyas* has the greater impact in the timing and quality of dying. Concurring with Vasubandhu, Xuanzang posits that practices that change the conditions of the *indriyas* also modify *āyuhṣaṃskāras*, and thereby alter the quality and timing of dying.

Saṅghabhadra notes that *āyuhṣaṃskāras*, because it is malleable, can be discarded or retained by a sentient being.⁵¹⁵ In this description, the agency of a sentient being is involved in the determination of whether to engage, or not engage, in practices that build the stores of *āyuhṣaṃskāras*. According to the Agamas, the Buddha chooses to discard, rather than to retain, his reserves of one hundred fifteen years of *āyuhṣaṃskāras*. By electing to live within the life expectancy determined by *jīvitāsaṃskāras*, the Buddha highlights his status as an ordinary human. In emphasizing his humanity in this manner, the Buddha teaches his disciples to refrain from clinging to aspects of the material world. By accumulating and then discarding *āyuhṣaṃskāras*, the Buddha demonstrates that all humans possess the agency to determine how they live and die.

In his formulation of the *catuṣkoṭi* of the four ways of dying in the *Prajñāpti śāstra*, Vasubandhu lays out how *jīvitāsaṃskāras* and *āyuhṣaṃskāras* contribute, in different ways, to the determination of the lifespan of a sentient being. In his translation of Vasubandhu's commentary

⁵¹⁵ Cox, Disputed Dharmas, 297.

to the *Prajñāpti śāstra* taxonomy, Xuanzang writes:

The *Prajñāpti śāstra*⁵¹⁶ says: Dying from the exhaustion of *āyuhṣaṃskāras* is different from dying from the exhaustion of merit (Skt.: *punya*). All the forms of dying are included in the tetralemma as follows:⁵¹⁷

施設論 言 有壽盡故死，非福盡故死，廣作四句。

(1) The first is [dying] due to the exhaustion of the natural lifespan of the sentient being (i.e., *jīvitāsaṃskāras*).

第一句者，感壽異熟業力盡故。⁵¹⁸

In the first lemma of the *catuṣkoṭi*, Xuanzang describes dying that results from the termination of the natural lifespan of a specific class of sentient being. This type of dying occurs when the genetically determined life force of *jīvitāsaṃskāras* is depleted. Kuiji cites the example of a human being who dies at one hundred one years of age. While the lifespan of this sentient being is long, it is within the range of the natural life expectancy of humans living in the continent of Jambudvīpa.

⁵¹⁶ The *Prajñāpti śāstra* belongs to the six fundamental Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma texts and is the only of these works that was not translated by Xuanzang 玄奘 and his team in the seventh century. See cf. Willemen, Dessein, and Cox, *Sarvāstivāda Scholasticism*, 189, fn. 145. It belongs to the six-fold group of fundamental Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma texts called “the Abhidharma texts that are like six feet” (Skt.: *ṣaṭpādābhidharma*; Chi.: Liufen apitan 六分阿毘曇, e.g. according to Kumārajīva (鳩摩羅什) at T1509:25.70a14). See Lamotte, *La Traité de la grande vertu de sagesse* (English translation by Migme Chodron), 881. The *Prajñāptiśāstra* is the only of the fundamental Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma texts that was translated into Tibetan. See Willemen, Dessein, and Cox, *Sarvāstivāda Scholasticism*, 211, fn. 4. It shows some resemblance to the cosmological sūtra of the Dīrghāgama (T1, no. 30) and the **Lokasthānābhidharma śāstra* 立世阿毘曇論 (Taishō No. 1644), as the title is reconstructed by Radich (*Digital Dictionary of Buddhism*, accessed May 3 2018) which itself also shows all the characteristics of a sūtra.

⁵¹⁷ Tib.: *Tshe zad bar 'chi bar 'gyur la bsod nmas zad bas ma yin pa yang yod ces bya ba mu bzhi gsungs te*. D 4090: vol. 140, folio/line 79a.6-79a.7

⁵¹⁸ Skt.: *Prathamā koṭiḥ – āyurvipākasya karmaṇaḥ paryādānāt*. Pradhan, *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, 75. Tib.: *mu dang po ni tshe rnam par smin pa can gyi las yongs su gtugs pa las so*. D 4090: vol. 140, folio/line 79a.7

- (2) The second is [dying] due to the deprivation of the vitality [necessary to maintain the survival of the sentient being], being the effect of the power of karma (i.e., āyuhṣaṃskāras). 第二句者，感富樂果業力盡故。⁵¹⁹

In the second lemma, Xuanzang describes dying that results from the deprivation of the vital power of āyuhṣaṃskāras. Dying in this category does not involve jīvitāsaṃskāras, the genetically pre-programmed life force that determines the natural life expectancy of a sentient being. The second type of dying occurs when a sentient being is suddenly deprived of the vital power that sustains and replenishes the vital organs of the body and the indriyas. For example, a young camel driver dies of dehydration after being stranded in a desolate desert region during a windstorm. The deprivation of āyuhṣaṃskāras, due to the dehydration of his bodily organs, is the cause of death. His natural life expectancy, or jīvitāsaṃskāras, is not involved in his unfortunately premature death. Xuanzang unravels the meaning of the third lemma in his translation of Vasubandhu's auto-commentary in the Treasury of Abhidharma:

- (3) The third is [dying] due to the co-occurring deprivation of jīvitāsaṃskāras and āyuhṣaṃskāras.

第三句者，能感二種業俱盡故。⁵²⁰

In the third lemma, Xuanzang depicts a type of dying that is brought about by the simultaneous and fatal deprivation of jīvitāsaṃskāras and āyuhṣaṃskāras. This third category describes dying that occurs when the loss of vital power and the natural life expectancy of a sentient being converge.⁵²¹ For example, a ninety-year-old caravansary

⁵¹⁹ Corresponding Skt. text reads: *dvitīyā – bhogavipākasya*. Pradhan, *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, 76. Tib.: *gnyis pa ni– longs spyod rnam par smin pa can gyi las yongs su gtugs pa las so*, D 4090: vol. 140, folio/line 79a.7.

⁵²⁰ Skt.: *Ṭṛtīyā – ubhayoḥ*. Pradhan, *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, 76. Tib.: *Gsum pa ni gnyi g'o*. D 4090: vol. 140, folio/line 79a.7.

⁵²¹ Puguang's *Study Notes on the Treasury* (T1821:41.102.b2-11) provide some useful points of clarification on the third lemma in Vasubandhu's presentation found in his auto-commentary on AKBh 3.45ab (T1821:41.102.b02): Puguang poses the question: Does one die at the time of the exhaustion of vital power, since merit is also exhausted? Or is it indicated that one dies at the time that both are exhausted? Puguang responds: "We resolve and cast aside this difficulty by expressing the idea as follows: the space where vital power is yet unexhausted yet merit is exhausted permits of the experience of suffering, and permits of being still alive. In the space where vital power is exhausted, yet merit is unexhausted, there is no further living allowed. By this reasoning, we know that at the time that both are exhausted, merit no longer is capable of furnishing the capacities necessary for

owner dies when he breaks his hip while attempting to mount his camel. He is not able to recover from the broken hip because he lacks reserves of āyuhṣaṃskāras due to his advanced age. Here, the injury to his body, and his natural life expectancy are involved in his unfortunate, yet timely, death.

(4) The fourth type [of dying] is due to an extraneous “imbalance” that one cannot avoid (i.e., inescapable imbalance).

第四句者，不能避脫枉橫緣故。⁵²²

In his translation of the fourth lemma of Vasubandhu’s *catuṣkoṭi*, Xuanzang describes a type of dying that is brought about by “inescapable imbalances” (Skt.: *visanamapari√hr*; Chi.: *bu-ping bu-heng* 不平不橫), or by accidents or random events. This is dying due to the deprivation of neither *jītivāsaṃskāras* nor *āyuhṣaṃskāras*. That is, this type of dying is due neither to the loss of vital power nor to the termination of the natural life expectancy of the sentient being. For example, *Yajñādattā*, at the age of twenty-seven, stumbles into a bullpen while intoxicated, and is gored by a bull. He is unable to access medical care and dies from a loss of blood. Here, *Yajñādattā*’s death is due neither to reaching the end of his genetically allotted average lifespan of sixty to one hundred years nor to a moral failing. While *Yajñādattā* has placed himself in harm’s way by over-indulging in alcoholic drink, there is no causal link between his alcohol intake and his death. Because he is unable to access medical care in time to address his loss of blood, *Yajñādattā* very quickly drains his reserves of vital power and dies.

Vasubandhu avers that *Yajñādattā*, because of his reckless behavior, bears some responsibility for his unfortunate and premature death. In his exegesis of the fourth lemma of the

survival. Hence, in this case it is proclaimed that ‘one dies because of the exhaustion of vital power.’ We make this explanation in order to harmonize the words of this text. Where Vasubandhu says that ‘in fact there are no more vital capacities when merit is exhausted,’ he is simply saying that in the stage of dying due to both vital power and merit, one dies because of the exhaustion of both.”

又解通伏難。伏難意云。福盡壽未盡，容有受苦而活。壽盡福未盡，必無更活。故知俱盡之時。福盡於死無能。應言壽盡故死。不應言福盡故死！為通斯難故有此文。福盡於死實無功能。但為於俱盡位有死。說為俱盡故死。

⁵²² Skt.: *Caturthī – viṣamāparihāreṇa*. Pradhan, ed., *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, 76. Tib.: *bzhi pa ni ya nga ba yongs su ma spangs so*. D 4090: vol. 140, folio/line 79a.7.

catuṣkoṭi, Vasubandhu notes that dying due to inescapable imbalances often involves a loss of *āyuhṣaṃskāras* that is causally linked to a privation of merit. In his commentary on the *catuṣkoṭi*, Vasubandhu develops his theories on the important roles played by merit and karma in restoring and maintaining the reserves of the vital power of *āyuhṣaṃskāras*.

Asaṅga on the Three Ways of Dying

Asaṅga, in *The Basis for Yoga Practitioners*, poses the question: “How does one die?” (Skt.: *katham cyavyate?*). The presentation of the root causes of dying located in the translation of Asaṅga’s *Basis for Yoga Practitioners* by Xuanzang is essentially in lock step with the accounts found in the earlier *Treasury of Abhidharma*, composed by Vasubandhu.⁵²³ In his taxonomy of dying, however, Asaṅga winnows the *catuṣkoṭi* enumerated in the earlier account of the *Prajñāpāramitā śāstra* from four to three categories of dying. Asaṅga coalesces the exhaustion of the lifespan and vital power into one category. The reconfiguration of the taxonomy by Asaṅga is doctrinally significant in that it serves to amplify the role played by merit in determining the lifespan of a sentient being. Asaṅga lists the ways of dying as follows:

Dying due to the exhaustion of the lifespan (Skt.: *āyuh-kṣepāt*; Chi.: *shoujin* 壽盡; Tib.: *tshe zad pa*). This type of dying is due to the exhaustion of the natural lifespan of a sentient being, as determined by genetic and biological factors. For example, a ninety-five year-

⁵²³ Xuanzang, trans., *Yogācārabhūmi śāstra*: 云何死？謂由壽量極故而便致死。此復三種：謂壽盡故、福盡故、不避不平等故，當知亦是時非時死；或由善心、或不善心、或無記心。 Corresponding Skt. found in Bhattacharya, ed. *Yogācārabhūmi*, 15: *katham cyavyate? /parimitāyuskatayā/tatpunar maraṇam āyuhkṣepād viśāmaparihārataś ca kāle 'pyakāle 'pi vedīṭavyam kuśalacittasya apy akuśalacittasya avyākṛtacittasya api//* Tib.: (D 4035: vol. 127, folio/line 8a.3-4): *ltaṅ 'chi 'pho bar 'gyur zhe na. tshe'i tshad yod bar 'gyur ro/ 'chi pa de yang dge pa'i sems dang sdan ba dang/ mi dge pa'i sems dang ldan pa dad.lung du ma pstan ba'i sems dang ldan pa yang rung ste. tshe zad pa dang/ psod nmas zad pa dang. yang nga pa ma spangs bas dus dang dus ma yin par rig bar bya'o/.*

old-woman dies from influenza during an epidemic. Due to her advanced age, she does not have the stores of vital power that are necessary to battle the illness.⁵²⁴

- (1) Dying due to the exhaustion of merit (Skt.: *punya-kṣepāt*; Chi.: *shoujin* 福盡; Tib.: *bsod nams zad pa*).⁵²⁵ This type of dying is due to the specific moral failings of the sentient being, as determined by the balance of merit and karma accumulated from past and present lives. For example, a fifty-year-old caravansary owner, dies of a heart attack while packing his camel bags. In a prior life, he has hunted and killed tigers for sport. His relatively untimely death is due to the demerits and poor karma he has amassed in his prior life. Pūrṇavardhana's commentary on Vasubandhu's *Kośa*, titled *Commentary Conforming to the Definitions of the Treasury of Abhidharma* (*Abhidharmakośaṭīkālakṣaṇānusāriṇī*), postulates that this form of dying has as its causes the gradual maturation (Skt.: *vipāka*) of karmic seeds over the lifespan.⁵²⁶

- (2) Dying due to an inescapable imbalance (Skt.: *viśamāparihārataḥ*; Chi.: *bu-bi bu-pingdeng*

⁵²⁴ Yogācārabhūmi, Manobhūmiḥ section (D 4035: vol. 127, folio/line 8a.4): tshe zad pa ji lta bu yin zhe na/di lta ste/ 'di na kha cig ji lta 'phangs pa'i tshe ril gyis zad par gyur nas/ chi 'pho ba ste/de ni dus la bab na 'chi ba zhes bya'o/.

⁵²⁵ See Dullyun's 遁倫 *Study Notes on the Yogācārabhūmi*: "One dies because of indulging to the extent that stable food and clothing are wanting." 耽定衣食闕，橫緣故死 (T1829:43.9c07). Corresponding Tib. text of *Yogācārabhūmi* reads: "what is the exhaustion of punya? It is dying and transmigrating because of the loss of well being due to a moral failing." | *bsod nams zad pa ji lta bu zhe na/di lta ste/'di na kha cig yo byad med pas 'chi 'pho ba lta bu yin no/* D 4035: vol. 127, folio/line 8a.5.

⁵²⁶ Pūrṇavardhana's **Abhidharmakośaṭīkālakṣaṇānusāriṇī* reads: "Dying in this way has to do with the nature of the maturation (*vipākatva*) of the spiritual resources (Skt.: *upabhoga*; Tib.: *longs spyod*) that have become mature -- this is dying simply due to the exhaustion of *āyur*. When having viewed the loss of spiritual resources, and with the arising of the cause which "depletes the *āyur*" the capabilities are also depleted. This is because of the fact that the capabilities are depleted of *āyur* and because of the fact that the spiritual resources have been depleted. Tib.: *de'i tshe rnam par smin pa can gyi las gang yin pa de longs spyod kyi rnam par smin par 'gyur bas/tshe zad pa kho nas 'chi ba yin no/ tshe zad na zhes bya ba rgyas par 'byung ba la/ longs spyod zad na tshe yod pa yang ltos nas longs spyod zad pas 'chi bar bya ba la/ nus pa yod na tshe zad na bzlog par bya ba med pa'i phyir/longs spyod zad pa 'chi bar bya ba la nus pa de'i phyir/* D 4093: vol. 144, folio/line 177a.5-6.

不避不平等; Tib.: *ya nga pa ma spangs ba*)⁵²⁷ This type of dying is due to neither the exhaustion of the natural lifespan or to the moral status of the sentient being. For example, a twenty-year-old man is bitten by a rattle snake while walking in a remote area and dies before obtaining treatment. His untimely death is neither due to the exhaustion of his life span or to moral failings.

In his exegesis of the *Prajñapti śāstra* and the interpretations of the text by the *Mahāvibhāṣa* editors Vasubandhu and Asaṅga, Xuanzang concludes that the way a sentient being lives profoundly affects the way that being dies. He then turns to closely examine the role of *āyuhṣaṃskāras*, merit and karma in the specific case of dying from “inescapable imbalances.”

Commentary on the Category of Dying From “Inescapable Imbalances”

In *The Correct Logic of Abhidharma*, Saṅghabhadra analyzes and provides commentary on the *catuṣkoṭi* of the four ways of dying rendered by his contemporary Vasubandhu. While he faithfully reproduces the *catuṣkoṭi* enumerated in the *Prajñapti śāstra* in his text, Saṅghabhadra critiques the analysis of *āyuhṣaṃskāras* made by Vasubandhu in four categories of dying. In his interlinear comments, Saṅghabhadra avers that Vasubandhu, by implicating *āyuhṣaṃskāras* in dying from inescapable imbalances, overextends the role of *āyuhṣaṃskāras* and introduces a redundancy into the tetralemma. Saṅghabhadra states that the logical argument presented by Vasubandhu is compromised by the implication that *āyuhṣaṃskāras* is involved in the categories of dying depicted in lemmas two and four.

⁵²⁷ i.e., “Untimely” 非時 (*akāla*) death. Kuiji explains: “Inescapable and unbalanced entails that due to other conditions, one dies in a perverse way.” 不避不平等，則餘緣枉橫死 – see Kuiji’s *Concise Comentary on Yogācārabhūmi* (*Yugie shidi lun lüè zuan* 瑜伽師地論略纂), fascicle 1, T1829:43.9.b27.

Vasubandhu, however, in his exegesis on the relationship between merit and *āyuhṣaṃskāras*, determines that the loss of *āyuhṣaṃskāras* incurred through the depletion of merit is involved in dying by inescapable imbalances. The commentary by Vasubandhu regarding the interconnection between *āyuhṣaṃskāras*, merit and karma is found in the Treasury. Here Vasubandhu argues that because merit replenishes *āyuhṣaṃskāras*, when merit becomes depleted, the life force that restores and rejuvenates the organs and the *indriyas* is simultaneously diminished.

The analysis of *āyuhṣaṃskāras* and merit by Vasubandhu is in the interlinear notes on the third type of dying in the *catuṣkoṭi*. Vasubandhu writes:

Also, the third way of dying should ultimately be explained in terms of the desertion of impulses that replenish vital power.

又亦應言捨壽行故。⁵²⁸

Within the stage in which one's lifespan is exhausted, merit (Skt.: *puṇya*) is exhausted in death; as there is no further causal capacity [in the body].⁵²⁹

壽盡位中，福盡於死，無復功能。

Hence, one dies when both (vital power and merit) are exhausted, so, as such, it is called “dying because of the exhaustion of both (vital power and merit).”

故俱盡時有死，說為俱盡故死。⁵³⁰

In this passage, and in his discussions on the topic of dying from imbalances, Vasubandhu

⁵²⁸ Skt.: *āyurutsargācceti vaktavyam? na vaktavyam|āyuhṣaṃskāras tanmāraṇam; prathamakoṭyantargamāt|*.

⁵²⁹ Sanskrit reads: “Once the merit is exhausted when one dies, one no longer has any causal capability (*sāmarthyam*) left.” See Pradhan, *Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya*, 75: *kṣīṇe tvāyupi puṇyakṣayaśya maraṇe nāsti sāmarthyam|* Tib. (D 4090: vol. 140, folio/line 79b.1.): *Tshe zad na bsod nams zad pa 'chi bar bya ba la nus pa med do/de lta bas na gnyi ga zad na gnyi ga zad pa las 'chi bar bshad do|* Paramārtha poses the last line of this passage as a question: “once vitality and merit are exhausted, what capacity is left [in the body]? 若壽命已盡福業盡，於死有何能？”

⁵³⁰ T1558:29.26.c02-4.

articulates his theory of *āyuhṣaṃskāras*, merit, and karma. Vasubandhu posits that because vital power fuels the activities that sustain life, including respiration and cardio-pulmonary functioning, dying occurs when the sentient being runs out of *āyuhṣaṃskāras*. Without the fuel of *āyuhṣaṃskāras*, the life-sustaining work of the *indriyas* comes to a halt. Dying becomes imminent.

The process by which merit restores *āyuhṣaṃskāras* is based on the Yogācāra theory of the *indriyas*. Vasubandhu and his commentator Yaśomitra propose that merit plays a crucial role in the regeneration of the store of *āyuhṣaṃskāras* located within the *indriyas*. According to Yaśomitra, the seeds embedded in the *indriyas* flourish into the vital power of *āyuhṣaṃskāras* when nurtured with karma and merit. By engaging in meritorious action, a sentient being continuously waters the seeds that grow into the vital powers that sustain the *indriyas* and the organs of the body. Therefore, when the seeds that grow into the capacities of the *indriyas* are not nurtured or cultivated with meritorious actions and practices, the vital power of *āyuhṣaṃskāras* withers and the sentient being perishes.⁵³¹ Vasubandhu concurs with Yaśomitra's observation that the depletion of seeds, and the resulting diminishment of the store of *āyuhṣaṃskāras*, portend imminent death.

Because performing merit nurtures the vital seeds and replenishes the vital power of *āyuhṣaṃskāras*, merit necessarily influences the timing and quality of dying. Therefore, even in a case of dying due to imbalances, merit plays a role in determining the amount of vital power a

⁵³¹ *tasmādubhayakṣaye sati maraṇamāyuhkṣayādityuktam*| Skt. text from Shastri, *Spūṭhārta*, vol. 1, 250: Yaśomitra adds: "in becoming deceased, owing to the exhaustion of merit, there is no more capability (to survive). The third lemma is not established by that. hence, one becomes deceased due to body (depletion of natural lifespan and punya)." Even there being exhaustion of the driving away of seeds, the termination of the continuum has as its salient characteristic the non-existence (*abhāva*) of the conditions supporting the perduring growth of the stream (*salilā*). With the exhaustion of the vital seeds, and the conditions of the stable operation of power, when the disruption in the production of the vital powers necessary to the living being (*jaṅgama*) having been observed, that refers to the cessation (*nivṛtti*) of the continuum." *saty api ca sārābījākṣepe salilādīsthitivṛddhipratyaye ca jaṅgamādyupakramakṛtā dṛṣṭā sasyādīnām saṃtānananivṛttir iti*. For Tib.: see D 4092: vol. 142, folio/line 157a.2-157a.3.

sentient being has in reserve to recover from a random or untimely life-threatening injury. Vasubandhu also intimates that running out of *āyuhṣaṃskāras* is involved in dying due to the depletion of *jītivāsaṃskāras*. This occurs when a sentient being, nearing the end of an expected lifespan, no longer has the reserves of vital power necessary to sustain the activities of the organs and the *indriyas*. Therefore, by continuously contributing to the reserves of *āyuhṣaṃskāras* through meritorious practices, a sentient being prolongs life and improves the quality of dying.

In his translation and exegesis of the *catuṣkoṭi* on the four ways of dying in the *Prajñapti śāstra*, Xuanzang endorses the theoretical link between merit, karma, and *āyuhṣaṃskāras* made by Vasubandhu and avers that the moral standing of a sentient being is involved in the quality and timing of dying. Vasubandhu provides Xuanzang with the philosophical rationale to support practices designed to accrue merit, and thereby stave off dying or improve its quality. This leads Xuanzang to an investigation of the practices articulated by Asaṅga in *The Basis for Yoga Practitioners* and the rituals to extend life that are described in the Mahāyāna texts.

Section Two: On Dying Well with Merit and Yoga

After his exegesis of the interaction between merit, karma, and dying, Xuanzang conducts a comprehensive examination of the practices that postpone dying or ensure a good death and afterlife. He begins by examining the harbingers of dying described by Vasubandhu in the *Treasury of Abhidharma*, entitled “Discriminating Worldly Things.” He then turns to *The Basis for Yoga Practitioners*, by Asaṅga, for edification on how to prepare for dying. In his translation and exegesis of the work of Asaṅga, Xuanzang examines how life can be extended by increasing the repository of *āyuhṣaṃskāras* through an accumulation of merit and the practice of yoga. Xuanzang notes that the Buddha offers a paradigmatic case of how *āyur* can be accumulated

through meditation and meritorious practices. To make the practices by which dying can be postponed available to the Tang Chinese, Xuanzang translates the *sūtra* of the Medicine Buddha (Skt. *Bhaiṣajyaguru-sūtra*; Chi. *Yaoshi jing* 藥師經) obtained during his travels in the Western Regions.⁵³² Using the example of dying from imbalances, Xuanzang examines how creating merit and practicing yoga can ameliorate the suffering associated with sudden death. In his translation and transmission of these texts, Xuanzang follows through on his doctrinal agenda to bring the teachings of the Buddha, in their unadulterated, into mainstream Chinese Buddhism.

The Five Signs of Imminent Death According to Vasubandhu

Xuanzang begins his analysis of how dying can be postponed by identifying and defining the markers that portend the death of a human being. In his discussions on the physiology of dying and death found in the third chapter of the *Treasury of Abhidharma*, entitled “Discriminating Worldly Things,” Vasubandhu enumerates the five bodily signs that are predictive of the imminent death of a human being. In presenting the “five major signs of irreversible decline” (Skt.: *pañca-maraṇanimittāni*; Chi.: *wu da shuai xiang* 五大衰相; Tib.: *‘chi ltas nga*), Vasubandhu lists the characteristics indicating that a human being is advancing irrevocably and irreversibly toward death. This taxonomy is first articulated by Vasubandhu and then reprised by Xuanzang in his translations of the *Treatise Conforming to Correct Logic* and the *Treatise Clarifying Abhidharma Tenets*, by Saṅghabhadra. Vasubandhu’s enumeration of the five grave signs of irreversible corporeal decline include: incontinence, weight loss, massive sweating from the armpits, bodily stench, and discomfort sitting upright.

⁵³² I render the title of this important scripture – the *Bhaiṣajyaguru Sūtra*, for short – as the *Medicine Buddha Sūtra* – following the Chinese, although we note that in the Sanskrit, there is an untranslatable pun on the word *Bhaiṣajya* (derived from the word *bhiṣaj* – lit., “healer/physician”) which has both the senses of “healing efficacy,” and “medicinal remedy.”

In his rendition of the five major signs of irreversible decline, Saṅghabhadra offers clarifications and qualifications of the doctrines on dying formulated by Vasubandhu. In his presentation of the five major signs of grave physical decline, located in the *Treatise Conforming to the Correct Logic of Abhidharma* (*Abhidharma Nyāyanusāra śāstra*), Saṅghabhadra writes:⁵³³

There are five signs that indicate the grave decline of a being.

復有五種大衰相現⁵³⁴

Firstly, the clothing of the being induces torment and becomes filthy and stained.

一者衣染埃塵

Secondly, the body of the being becomes withered and physically enervated (Skt.: *√glai*).

二者花鬢萎悴

Thirdly, sweat pours from the armpits (Skt.: *kakṣa*) of the body of the being.

三者兩腋汗出

Fourthly, a fetid odor pervades the body of the being.

四者臭氣入身

Fifthly, the being becomes restless and is unable to sit comfortably.

五者不樂本座

Saṅghabhadra adds the following:⁵³⁵

⁵³³ These five signs of irreversible decrepitude are enumerated in *AKBh*, chapter 3 (Shastri, vol. 2, p. 405); as well as in *Ny*, fascicle 30 and in Xuanzang's trans. Saṅghabhadra's XZLT41n1822p0614a0809, fasc. 15. However, they are absent from the Tib. translation of XZL.

⁵³⁴ Paramārtha adds: 必不免死 prior to the list.

⁵³⁵ Ny 30 T29n1562p0514b17-18; XZL, fasc. 15; T41n1822p0614a08-9.

The appearance of these five signs indicates most certain death. It is understood that meeting with these dire conditions is irreversible.

此五相現。決定命終。設遇強緣。亦不轉故。

Within the trajectory to death, the five signs of grave decline are preceded by the six minor signs of physical degeneration. The lesser signs of corporeal decline include: groaning, pallor, excessive perspiration, loss of mental poise or alertness, squinting of the eyes, and constricted pupils.⁵³⁶ In his translations of the five signs of minor decline proffered by Vasubandhu in the *Treasury of Abhidharma*, and in the two commentaries on the *Treasury of Abhidharma*, by Saṅghabhadra, Xuanzang notes that the lesser forms of decline do not herald an irrevocable course toward death. While a sentient being may recover from the minor signs through proper medical intervention, the five signs of irreversible decline mark the entrance into the final stage of dying.

Although the five minor signs of physical decline are manifested by humans, non-human mammals and devas, the major signs of imminent death appear in only in human and non-human mammals living in the *kāmadhātu*. The minor signs of demise are exhibited by humans in the *kāmadhātu*, and to the celestial devas in the outermost *Trayātrīṃśika* heavens of the great triple trichiliocosm.⁵³⁷ Humans and devas, because of their virtuous karmic births into the Pure Lands,

⁵³⁶ Xuanzang's translation of Vasubandhu's AKBh 3.43cd lays out the five minor signs of physical decline as follows: "There are those who say that the major signs of grave decline resemble the three kinds of disasters. There is no severing of the *marmāṇi* in the devas. However, at the end of life, the devas display the five kinds of minor decline. Firstly, in dressing in clothes and ornaments they emit disagreeable sounds. Secondly, the brightness of the body and countenance suddenly turns ashen. Third, perspiration drenches the body. Fourthly, quickness of mind dullens. Fifthly, the pupils constrict and the eyes squint. These are the five signs that indicate one may or may not die." 有說。此似外器三災。此斷末摩天中非有。然諸天子將命終時，先有五種小衰相現。一者、衣服嚴具出非愛聲。二者、自身光明忽然味劣。三者、於沐浴位水滴著身。四者、本性騫馳令滯一境。五者、眼本凝寂令數瞬動。此五相現非定當死 (T1558:29.56.b29-c8). For corresponding Skt. text, see Pradhan, ed., *Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya*, 157.

⁵³⁷ *Nyāyanusāra*, fascicle 30: "It is said in summary that there are five [signs of grave decline]. But how do you know that these five signs do not apply to all? It is known by logic and the sagely teaching. Among the teachings there is a sutra that says: Sometimes, the devas of the Trayātrīṃśika Heavens sit gathered together in the Hall of Skillful Dharma to communally receive and enjoy the joy of the dharma. Among those devas, there is somebody whose life comes to an end because of both natural lifespan and merit have been exhausted. The one dying cannot get

experience quick and painless deaths. Mortals on earth, however need to accumulate good merit and karma to obtain the type of benign death automatically awarded to devas.

In his translations of the Yogācāra corpus of Asaṅga, Xuanzang links the doctrine of karma, and the idea of just deserts codified within, to the different ways a sentient being dies. Xuanzang's translations of Asaṅga's *Basis for Yoga Practitioners* and *Compendium of the Mahayana Teaching*, depict, down to the gory details, how sentient beings bent upon misspending their lives with unskillful behaviors and thoughts come to reap the “bitter fruit of suffering” (Chi.: *ku-guo* 苦果).

Xuanzang on Extending Life Through the Practices of Yoga and Merit

In his comprehensive analyses of the Buddhist texts, Xuanzang finds doctrinal support, beginning with the teachings of the Buddha, for practices and rituals that create merit, restore *āyuhṣaṃskāras*, and improve the quality of the *indriyas*, and in doing so, postpone dying. Using the Yogācāra theory of the *indriyas* and the doctrinal foundation on the roles of merit and karma in dying provided by Vasubandhu in the *Treasury*, Xuanzang undertakes an exegesis to determine how the quality of the *indriyas* is improved by enhancing the stores of *āyuhṣaṃskāras*. In his examination of the practices that restore and rejuvenate *āyuhṣaṃskāras*, Xuanzang turns to two texts: *The Basis for Yoga Practitioners* by Asaṅga and the *Medicine Buddha Sūtra*. In his translation of *The Basis for Yoga Practitioners*, Xuanzang refines a set of five guidelines designed to aid the practitioner searching to improve the quality of dying and reduce the fear that is attendant upon the end of life. In his detailed study and translations of the *Medicine Buddha Sūtra*, Xuanzang

up to sit upright, and suddenly topples over and dies, yet nobody else amongst the gathering of devas in the Dharma Hall even notice. They don't even rise out of their seats.” 總集而說。故言有五。如何得知非一切有。由教理故。教謂經言。三十三天。有時集坐善法堂上。共受法樂。中有天子。福壽俱終。即天眾中。不起于坐。俄然殞沒。都不覺知。經說諸天五衰相現。經五晝夜。然後命終。寧不覺知。不起于坐 (T1562:29.514.b15-20).

describes the “worldly benefits” (Chi.: *xianshi liyi* 現世利益)⁵³⁸ that are received by both the participants in and the recipients of end-of-life rituals. In his translations and exegeses of these texts, Xuanzang identifies how the practice of yoga and the observance of rituals that are designed to accumulate merit improve the quality of dying.

Substantial portions of the translation corpus of Xuanzang are devoted to examining the factors that either hasten dying or prolong the life of a sentient being. Xuanzang predicates the path to extending life on the Yogācāra theory of the *indriyas*. Here Xuanzang avers that improving the quality of the *indriyas*, particularly the faculty of vitality, favorably impacts the timing and the quality of dying of a sentient being. Therefore, by improving the *indriya* of vitality, dying can be postponed.

Yaśomitra, in his commentary on the *Treasury of Abhidharma*, and Puguang, in his study notes on the Chinese translation of the *Treasury of Abhidharma*, aver that the *indriya* of vitality contains both conspecific, or *sabhāgatā*, and species non-specific, or non-*sabhāgatā*, components. Together these two factors determine the totality of the lifespan of a sentient being. The *sabhāgatā* portion that is embedded in the *indriyas* determines the quantity of *jīvitāsaṃskāras* held by a specific species of sentient being and is genetically pre-ordained. The non-*sabhāgatā* components determine the amount of *āyuhṣaṃskāras* that is stored in the *indriya* of vitality.

The quantity of *āyuhṣaṃskāras* is determined by the specific actions, or the karma, accumulated over the course of a life. The degree to which a sentient being can cultivate and augment *āyuhṣaṃskāras*, or vital power, is not predetermined at birth. Because *jīvitāsaṃskāras* is written into the genetic code of a species, the extension of the life of a sentient being is only possible by enhancing *āyuhṣaṃskāras*. Xuanzang invests heavily in the distinction between

⁵³⁸ Xuanzang, trans. *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra* 大般若波羅蜜多經 (*Da Bore poluomi duojing*) T220:7.780a12.

āyuhṣaṃskāras and *jīvitāsaṃskāras* to provide the doctrinal support for the mechanism by which dying can be postponed.⁵³⁹ Hence, Xuanzang regards the work of extending the mortal lifespan of a singular sentient being as specifically connected to the accumulation of *āyuhṣaṃskāras*.

Xuanzang finds the theoretical basis for the mechanism by which *āyuhṣaṃskāras* is built and restored in *The Basis for Yoga Practitioners*. Here Asaṅga introduces the theory of the “field of good merit” (Skt.: *puṇya-kṣetra*) located in the *ālayavijñāna* (Chi.: *alaiyeshi* 阿賴耶識), the store house of consciousness. The seeds (Chi.: *zhongzi* 種子) of *āyuhṣaṃskāras* are buried in the “root consciousness” (Chi.: *benshi* 本識) of the *ālayavijñāna*. When the seeds buried within the subliminal layers of consciousness are suffused (Chi.: *xunxi* 熏習) with the fertilizer of either meritorious, or non-meritorious actions the *indriyas* are impacted. Because dying is the result of the deterioration of the *indriyas*, the quality and timing of dying is contingent on the condition of the *indriyas*.

In his exploration of the ways to extend life, Xuanzang notes that meritorious actions nurture the seeds located in the field of good merit of the *ālayavijñāna*. Taking up an example offered by Sthiramati, Xuanzang posits that constructing a stūpa nurtures the good seeds in a karmic field of merit. Sthiramati states that the practice of *dāna*, for example making donations to build a Buddhist stupa, sponsoring the reading of a sūtra,⁵⁴⁰ or doing other forms of religious work, cultivates the seeds of *ālayavijñāna* that restore *āyuhṣaṃskāras* and in turn prolong life. In the

⁵³⁹ Cox, *Disputed Dharmas*, renders *āyuhṣaṃskāras* as “life force” and *jīvitāsaṃskāras* as “vital force.” She translates part of Nyāyanusāra, fascicle 5, that treats the topic of the difference between the two. See *Disputed Dharmas*, 297, sect. 18.5.

⁵⁴⁰ Fascicle 5 of Sthiramati’s commentary on the *Summary of Abhidharma* by Asaṅga reads: “The vital power has no determinate limit for the sentient being. For else why would the Bhagavān say: at the beginning of the kalpa cycle the *indriyas* are great and superabundant in power. Vital power is extended. Now the sentient beings these days have declined and it is hard even to get to ten years old sometimes when one dies from the exhaustion of merit (*puṇyakṣaya*), but not because of the average lifespan. If one erects a stupa in a temple then one can extend one’s vital power.” 壽若無定限者。世尊何故作如是說。劫初諸根大種殊勝。壽即延長。今時漸劣故壽難至于十歲。福盡即死。不因命也。修故塔寺能延其壽 (T1561:29.328.a22-25).

Indic scriptures, Xuanzang finds doctrinal support for the idea that the practice of yogic meditation and the performance of religious rituals function to accumulate merit, restore *āyuhṣaṃskāras*, and ultimately extend the lifespan of a sentient being.

Restoring *Āyuhṣaṃskāras* Through Meditation To Extend Life: The Example of the Buddha

To Xuanzang, and to all Buddhists, the life of the historical Buddha offers an inspiring example of how a mortal human being extends his life through a disciplined practice of meditation and meritorious action. In the *Sphuṭārtha* commentary, found in chapter two, verse nine of the *Treasury of Abhidharma* (AKBh 2.9), Yaśomitra recounts how the Buddha, through the practice of meditation, extends his life by two hundred human years. According to Yaśomitra, from the age of thirty-one onwards, the Buddha repairs to Vaiśālī during the monsoon season and meditates.⁵⁴¹ Through the practice of meditation for three months every year, over the course of over fifty years, the vital power of the Buddha “surges” (Skt.: *āyurutsarjanam*; *ut/srj*).⁵⁴² By replenishing and rebuilding his stores of *āyuhṣaṃskāras*, the Buddha adds over one hundred years to his genetically-endowed human life expectancy.

As recorded in the Āgamas, and corroborated in the *Mahāvibhāṣa* and by Yaśomitra in his commentary in the *Treasury*, the Buddha discards the vast portion of his *āyuhṣaṃskāras* and dies at the age of eighty-five. The Buddha never “cashes in” on his investments of merit attained through years of meditation.⁵⁴³ By electing to deduct one hundred fifteen years from his available lifespan of two hundred years, the Buddha teaches his followers to refrain from indulging in

⁵⁴¹ Shastri, *Sphuṭārtha*, vol. 1, 154.

⁵⁴² Shastri, *Sphuṭārtha*, Vol. 1, 154, commentary on AKBh 2.10ab: “It should be said: The Bhavagān is the one who has let surge the vital power whose causal ground (*adhiṣṭhāna*) is different from vitality.” *evam tu vaktayam bhaviṣyat – bhagavān jīvitāny adhiṣṭhām āyūṃṣy utsrṣṭavān/*.

⁵⁴³ Ibid., 1.155.

practices that foster an unwholesome clinging to the material world. For Xuanzang, the story of the Buddha illustrates the doctrinal point that the augmentation of the natural lifespan is available to monastics and laity alike. The example of the Buddha demonstrates how the path of meditation and yoga can extend the life of the ordinary human.

Revitalizing *Ālayavijñāna* Through Merit to Extend Life and Improve Rebirth: The Example of King Prasejanjit

As documented in the āgamas, King Prasenajit (Chi.: Bosini Wang 波斯匿王), suffering from a host of debilitating ailments, is expected to die within a matter of weeks.⁵⁴⁴ Intent on extending his life, the king invites the Buddha into his kingdom, and heeding the Buddha's advice, sponsors the production of several *stūpas* in his kingdom. With his meritorious acts to the Buddhist community, the Buddha promises that the King will be able to extend his life and, despite the accumulation of bad karma generated by numerous acts of killing sentient beings, will be able to secure a heavenly rebirth. After his death, the story records that the King is reborn into the vaunted celestial kingdom of the Trayatrimśika Heaven, wherein he resides for a thousand years. Here King Prasenajit, by planting new seeds, and by watering existing seeds in the fallow fields of good merit, revitalizes his *ālayavijñāna*. By replenishing his stores of *āyuhṣaṃskāras* with good karma, the King increases his life expectancy and achieves a heavenly rebirth. The example of King Prasenajit demonstrates how the meritorious activity can extend the life of the ordinary human.

Using the Abhidharma and Yogācāra theories articulated by Vasubandhu in the *Treasury of Abhidharma* and by Asaṅga in *The Basis for Yoga Practitioners*, Xuanzang posits that the life of a sentient being can be extended or curtailed by actions that impact the balance of karma.

⁵⁴⁴ See the discourses between King Prasenajit and the Buddha in *Ekôttarikâgama* 增壹阿含經, translated by Gautama Saṃghadeva 瞿曇僧伽提婆, fasc. 32. (T.125:2.725-26).

Xuanzang avers that the life expectancy of a sentient being can be altered through the judicious management of the fields of merit that restore the stores of *āyuhṣaṃskāras* in the *indriya* of vitality. Enlisting the foundational doctrines of Yogācāra Buddhism, Xuanzang shores up his position that the lifespan of an ordinary human being can be extended (Chi.: *yanshou* 延壽) through yogic practices and rituals that garner merit.

Building the Resilience of the *Indriyas* Through Yoga Training: *The Basis for Yoga Practitioners*

Throughout his exegesis and translation corpus, Xuanzang is pressed to find ways for the Buddhist follower to prepare for, and ameliorate the fear of, dying. After investigating the types of dying experienced by sentient beings and examining the theoretical linkages between merit, karma and dying, Xuanzang looks to Asaṅga for guidance on how to prepare for the end of life. In *The Basis for Yoga Practitioners*, Xuanzang finds a means by which the fear of dying is ameliorated and the quality of dying improved: meditative insight (Skt: *darśana-mārga*; Chi.: *jiandao* 見道). Within the path of yoga articulated by Asaṅga, Xuanzang finds a means by which any sentient being can strengthen the *indriyas* and improve and extend the final stages of life. Xuanzang notes that the practice of meditative insight is available to sentient beings of any moral station in life and does not require monastic training, a guru, or the possession of supernormal bodily capacities or skills. Given the crucial role of faculty development in the path of insight (Skt.: *darśana-mārga*), and his desideratum to design this path to be nearby to as many as possible, Xuanzang was pressed to come up with an account of how the prerequisites to the course of practice are none other than the faculties one was born with and a desire to improve them.

As one dedicated to the cultivation of the spiritual path of Buddhism, Xuanzang is committed to the idea, first attested by the Buddha, that the *indriyas* can be cultivated and improved

by the accumulation of the skillful and unskillful actions. In *The Basis for Yoga Practitioners*, Xuanzang finds the doctrinal rationale and methodological vehicle to demonstrate how the practice of yoga can be used to improve the quality of the *indriyas* and ameliorate the psychological and physical pain of dying. The yoga of dying involves training the five spiritual *indriyas* of faith, perseverance, concentration, mindfulness, and wisdom to quiet and subdue the *indriyas* of suffering and anxiety. By using the meditative insight (Skt. *darśana-mārga*) described by Asaṅga, the sentient being overcomes the fear of dying by counteracting the *indriyas* of anxiety and suffering with the *indriyas* of concentration and skillful aversion. When the capacities of the skillful *indriyas* are amplified, the hedonic faculties of suffering and anxiety attendant with dying are quelled. With Asaṅga's text, Xuanzang finds a means by which ordinary human beings, without the benefit of extraordinary spiritual prowess or training, can attenuate suffering and stress at the end of life. The yoga of dying enlists the power of our better angels, as it were, to rein in the afflictions of suffering and anxiety. Importantly, the path of meditative insight is available to any sentient being who chooses to undertake the practice.

According to the Yogācāra tradition, during a meditation, Asaṅga visits the Tusita heavens and receives teachings from the Maitreya Bodhisattva. Asaṅga's recording of this testimony is the *Yogācārabhūmi śāstra*, the comprehensive description of the Yogācāra path to enlightenment. The first section of *The Basis for Yoga Practitioners* describes the Yogācāra path, the sequence of five steps that are required to tame the body and the mind. By following the path, a sentient being ultimately overcomes the primordial fear that is associated with dying. The five stages of the Yogācāra path, as attested by Asaṅga, are:

- (1) The stage of preparation (Chi.: *ziliang wei* 資糧位),⁵⁴⁵ during which the yogic practitioner

⁵⁴⁵ CWSL, fascicle 7 describes the practices undertaken during the stage of preparation: "the stage of preparation refers to the arousal of aspiration and forbearance (*adhimukti*) to attain enlightenment and arises from the

undertakes the practice and develops initial practices.

- (2) The stage of applied practices (Chi.: *jiaxing wei* 加行位),⁵⁴⁶ during which the yogic practitioner further cultivates the two faculties of knowing the past and the present. During this stage, the practitioner gains leverage over anxiety.⁵⁴⁷
- (3) The stage of attaining proficiency (Chi.: *tongda wei* 通達位), during which the two faculties of knowing the past and knowing the present take sprout.
- (4) The stage of cultivation (*xiuxi wei* 修習位) during which the groundwork for cultivating the faculty of knowing the future is laid.
- (5) The stage of completion (Chi.: *jiujing wei* 究竟位), the final stage during which the ingrained faculties of anxiety and suffering are eliminated and the spiritual fruit of

immediate contemplation of the Noble Truths. The final moment of the stage of preparation extends to the adamant-like samādhi that has the nine uncontaminated faculties including faith and the five skillful faculties, along with pleasure, joy, mind, and subtle aversion, having the faculty of knowing past lives at their nature.”資糧位，謂從為得諦現觀故，發起決定，勝善法欲。最後剎那，乃至金剛喻定，所有信等，無漏九根，皆是已知根性。

The so-called ‘stage of preparation’ extends from the stage of not having yet achieved the (of liberation) conducive to penetrating insight, up to to the accumulation of all of the skillful indriyas. This is because this is the stage of fundamentals during which one is capable of engendering skills far and wide. In these three initial stages (i.e., the stages of preparation, of applied practices, and of attaining proficiency), the practice has at its nature [the mind together with] pleasure, joy, subtle aversion, and the five skillful indriyas including faith, perseverance, concentration, mindfulness, and wisdom.”乃至未得順決擇分，所有善根，名資糧位。能遠資生根本位故。於此三位信等五根意喜樂捨為此根性 (T1585:31.41.a17-22). The latter rubric of faculties refers to the nine uncontaminated faculties (*jiu wulou gen* 無漏九根), the complement of faculties that the practitioner evinces during the stage of observing the truth of the path. For the identification of this ninefold rubric see *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra* (Chi.: *Da zhidu lun* 大智度論), T 1509.25.234b27.

⁵⁴⁶ CWSL, fascicle 7 depicts the path of *prayoga* as follows: “Secondly, the path of applied practices refers to the path of the development of three uncontaminated faculties refers to the four stages of gnosis starting with ‘warmth’ 煖位, the ‘tipping point’ 頂位, ‘patience’ 忍位, and the ‘stage of highest worldly wisdom’ 世第一法, since these are all stimulated by and proximately brought forth during this stage of fundamentals.” 二、加行位。世第一位。調煖頂忍世第一法近能引發根本位故 (T1585:31.41.a17-18).

⁵⁴⁷ CWSL, fascicle 7: “In the stage of *prayoga*, the quest for and verification of subsequent forbearance (*adhimukti*) over disconsolation and dejection means that there still is the faculty of anxiety.” 加行等位，於後勝法，求證愁感，亦有憂根 (T1585:31.41.a20).

enlightenment is reaped.

In his meticulous reconstruction of the scripture, Xuanzang brings this important Yogācāra text to the people of the Tang dynasty in an approachable form. He thus provides an alternative to the complex and baroque Mahāyāna expressions of the Buddhist *mārga*, or the path of ten stages, known as the *Bodhisattvabhūmis*, practiced by Chinese Abhidharma practitioners. While hewing closely to the text of Asaṅga, in his rendering of the five steps of the Yogācāra path, Xuanzang enfolds the ten *Bodhisattvabhūmis* into a simpler yet foundationally-sound guide for the Buddhist practitioner.

In his translation of *The Basis for Yoga Practitioners*, Xuanzang pays exquisite attention to how the practitioner accumulates good and neutralizes bad karma, enhances the physical and mental capacities necessary to tolerate the distress of dying, and ultimately overcomes the fear of dying through the observance of rituals. Xuanzang offers Chinese readers a five-stage program of meditation practice that is designed to improve the physical and psychological fitness of the individual. The training of the mind to degrade and eventually eliminate the inborn faculties of suffering and anxiety is crucial to the explanation of spiritual fruition and “just deserts.”

Xuanzang’s work on the yoga of dying is instructive and pragmatic. For example, he admonishes gravely ill practitioners to avoid thoughts of anger, greed, covetousness, delusion, and conceit. He enjoins the sick and dying to avoid latching onto unskillful behavior patterns and thinking during the important stage of dying.⁵⁴⁸ He also instructs practitioners to take a long view, as the cultivation of good seed may take more than one lifetime to reach fruition.

⁵⁴⁸ Sthiramati’s commentary on Asaṅga’s *Summary of the Abhidharma* reads: “What are the different sicknesses operating the the mind? these are sevenfold: they are 1) craving; 2) anger; 3) delusion; 4) conceit; 5) incipient thought (*vitarka*); 6) subsequent mental application (*vicāra*) and 7) sparse defilements. These are the different sicknesses within the *pudgala*.” 云何病行差別？此有七種。謂貪行、瞋行、癡行、慢行、尋思行等分別薄塵行，補特伽羅差別故 (T1605:31.688.b6).

Xuanzang finds the stages of the Yogācāra path to enlightenment, as articulated by Asaṅga, to be congruent with the pragmatic and egalitarian orientation of the people of the Tang Dynasty. In the picture of Yogācāra Buddhism held by Xuanzang, the practice of yoga is not reserved for the sages or monks living within the spiritual confines of a monastery, but is accessible to all sentient beings.

In addition to investigating how the practice of yoga provides a pathway toward ameliorating suffering at the end of life, Xuanzang explores how an improvement in merit factors into the quality of the end of life. The idea of adding to the store of merit through the performance of religious work is not original to Xuanzang, Asaṅga, or to Mahāyāna Buddhism. References to practices that build merit through *dāna* are found in the *Āgamas*, in Vasubandhu's *Treasury of Abhidharma*, and in the commentaries on the *Treasury of Abhidharma* by Sthiramati and Yaśomitra. Xuanzang addresses the practices by which merit can be improved in his exegesis and translation of the *Medicine Buddha Sūtra*.

The Medicine Buddha Sūtra

While visiting a monastery in Bamiyan, Gandhāra, Xuanzang studies with Abhidharma scholars, and reads the scriptures of the Medicine Buddha, one of the three Buddhas in the Mahāyāna pantheon. The Bhaiṣjyaguru Buddha, or the Healing Buddha, is a bodhisattva, a “being whose essence is enlightenment itself.” According to the scripture, the status of bodhisattva is conferred onto the Bhaiṣajyaguru when, because of his compassion, he defers entering the ultimate bliss of nirvāṇa to save sentient beings near the precipice of death. The *Medicine Buddha Sūtra* (Skt.: *Bhaiṣajyaguru-sūtra*; Chi.: *Yaoshi jing* 藥師經),⁵⁴⁹ is composed of the twelve vows (Skt.:

⁵⁴⁹ I render the title of this important scripture – the *Bhaiṣajyaguru Sūtra*, for short – as the *Medicine Buddha Sūtra* – following the Chinese, although we note that in the Sanskrit, there is an untranslatable pun on the word Bhaiṣajya

praṇidhāna; Chi.: *yuan* 願) taken by Medicine Buddha. Upon attaining enlightenment, the Healing Buddha dedicates himself to spiritual purity, wisdom, and to saving beings from physical suffering, psychological pain, natural disasters, poverty, starvation, and lapses in judgement and conduct.

Xuanzang carries the *Medicine Buddha Sūtra* from Gandhāra to China for study and translation. In his exegesis of the *sūtra*, Xuanzang articulates the protocols for rituals based on the vows of the Healing Buddha. These rituals that are intended to expiate the physical and mental suffering of a sentient being facing impending death. The translation of the *sūtra* by Xuanzang is an important inspiration and doctrinal source for a widespread set of end-of-life practices and rituals in China and East Asia. In a study of early-medieval deathbed practices, Stone (2016) links Japanese rituals such as meditating, counting rosary beads, and formal rituals for the Amitābha Buddha and Medicine Buddha⁵⁵⁰ to the Tang practices described by Xuanzang. The translation of the *Medicine Buddha Sūtra* by Xuanzang stands as the most popular version of the venerated Buddhist sūtra in East Asia.

In his translation of the *Medicine Buddha Sūtra*, Xuanzang describes the rites of the *Medicine Buddha*, a ritual intended to help the beneficiary avoid the nine sources of untimely death (Chi.: *jiu hengsi* 九橫死). To perform the ritual, the family and friends of the dying person gather around the deathbed and recite the sūtra forty-nine times. The ritual aims to ward off the disease and engender peace and well-being in the sick and suffering person and thereby delay the demise

(derived from the word *bhīṣaj* – lit., “healer/physician”) which has both the senses of “healing efficacy,” and “medicinal remedy.” The full title of Xuanzang’s text of the *Medicine Buddha Sūtra* (Taishō No. 450, Vol. 14) is *Meritorious Sūtra on the Tathāgata Vow of the Lapis-Lazuli Light Medicine Buddha* 藥師琉璃光如來本願功德經.

⁵⁵⁰ Stone’s (2016) book is not limited in scope to pre-mortem rites, and includes a variety of post-mortem rites as well, including the famous “seven-seven” memorial rites observed on the seventh day of the week for two fortnights following one’s loved-one becoming deceased. See Stone, *Right Thoughts at the Last Moment*, 369. The timing and observance of these rites is laid bare in Xuanzang’s translation of the *Medicine Buddha sūtra*.

of the recipient by “extending the date” (Chi.: *yanshi* 延時) of death.

Xuanzang enjoins the “women and men of good faith” (Chi.: *shan-nan xin-nü* 善男信女) to sponsor the production of spiritual paraphernalia, such as sūtra pillars (Chi.: *fan* 幡), banners and elaborate candelabra, to use in the performance of the rite of the Medicine Buddha.⁵⁵¹ Within this opulent setting, the lapis lazuli image of the Medicine Buddha, with one hand indicating the “no-fear posture,” (Skt.: *abhayamudrā*) is placed near the suffering person. For the rite to be efficacious, the participants must observe the “eight purification disciplines for lay people” 八齋戒 and avoid sources of mortal hazard 七日七夜受八分齋戒⁵⁵² during the seven day and night duration of the ritual.

Xuanzang states that the observance of the rites of the Medicine Buddha has “worldly

⁵⁵¹ The passage in Xuanzang’s translation of the Medicine Buddha sutra gives the elaborate, and sumptuous, ritual protocol to obtain deliverance from calamities (T14n0450p0407c01-14): “Liberation Bodhisattva says: “Bhādānta! If there is someone sick and one wishes to alleviate their illness, one should maintain the eightfold lay precepts for ritual purification for seven days and seven nights, and to make offerings, based upon one’s ability, of food and paraphernalia to the Bhikṣus, and at six ‘o-clock, daily, and nightly, to bow to and make offerings to the Bhagavān Healing Buddha Bhaiṣajyaguru, one should recite this sutra forty-nine times, and then light forty-nine lamps. One should [also] produce seven statues of Tathāgatas and set out the sevenfold candelabra out together in front such that each candlebra is big and massive like a chariot wheel. Continue this for forty-nine days, such that the lamplight is never flagging, then produce a sūtra banner of five variegated colors, with length of forty armlengths, unfurl it and set free forty-nine types of sentient beings – now then, you can gain the deliverance from calamities! And no longer be harassed by malignant demons or ghosts!” 救脫菩薩言：「大德！若有病人，欲脫病苦，當為其人，七日七夜，受持八分齋戒，應以飲食及餘資具，隨力所辦，供養苾芻僧；晝夜六時，禮拜供養彼世尊藥師琉璃光如來；讀誦此經四十九遍；然四十九燈；造彼如來形像七軀，一一像前各置七燈，一一燈量大如車輪，乃至四十九日，光明不絕；造五色綵幡，長四十九搩手，應放雜類眾生至四十九；可得過度危厄之難，不為諸橫惡鬼所持。

⁵⁵² *Medicine Buddha sūtra*, trans. Xuanzang (T450:14.407.a07-16): “Moreover, Mañjuśrī, if a woman or man of pure faith arrive at a place where her\his body can no longer serve heaven, s\he must single-mindedly take refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Saṅgha, to maintain the prohibitions and the precepts, such as the five precepts, the ten precepts, the four-hundred Bodhisattva precepts, the two-hundred-and-fifty Bhikṣuṇī precepts, without violating them. When faced with fear of falling into one’s death and into a bad transmigratory destiny, if s\he only concentrates and recollects the name of the Medicine Buddha, and makes obeisant offering to him, then s\he will definitely not fall into the three bad transmigratory destinies (of the non-human animals, the pretas, and the hellbourne beings or narakas). 「復次，曼殊室利！若有淨信善男子、善女人等，乃至盡形不事餘天，惟當一心歸佛、法、僧，受持禁戒，若五戒、十戒、菩薩四百戒、苾芻二百五十戒、苾芻尼五百戒，於所受中或有毀犯，怖墮惡趣，若能專念彼佛名號，恭敬供養者，必定不受三惡趣生。

benefits” (Chi.: *xianshi liyi* 現世利益)⁵⁵³ for the recipient and for the participants in the ritual. While it extends the date of death and attenuates the physical and psychological suffering of the sick or dying person, it also provides patrons of the ritual with a means of building merit through *dāna*. Recitation of the *Medicine Buddha Sūtra* is used to help heal the sick, alleviate labor pains,⁵⁵⁴ and restore sight in the blind and hearing in the deaf.

Xuanzang’s translation of the *Medicine Buddha Sūtra* promises a host of benefits for those who choose to undertake and sponsor the elaborate Medicine Buddha rites. The myriad of benefits obtained with proper observation of the rites are expounded throughout the sūtra text. The worldly benefits include the promise of happier rebirths for some, and the assurance of a less stressful death for others. For the beneficiaries of the rituals, the concrete benefits include improvements in health and vitality, and the extension of life, in certain cases, by years. The ability for laypeople to receive these benefits is predicated upon avoiding sources of mortal hazard by adhering to the eight precepts for purification.⁵⁵⁵

⁵⁵³ Xuanzang’s translation of the *Medicine Buddha Sūtra* (T450:14.407.c28-3) reads: “At that time, *Ānanda* inquired of Liberation Bodhisattva: “Son of good family! How can one augment the lifespan than is already exhausted?” Liberation Bodhisattva replied: “Bhādānta! Don’t you know about the nine kinds of inescapable imbalances proffered by the Buddha?” If one were to sponsor the production of sutra banners and candelabra of the continuation of life, then in cultivating all this merit and good qualities, even when the lifespan is becoming depleted, one does not undergo the suffering or maladies!” 爾時，阿難問救脫菩薩言：「善男子！云何已盡之命而可增益？」救脫菩薩言：大德！汝豈不聞如來說有九橫死耶？是故勸造續命幡燈，修諸福德；以修福故，盡其壽命，不經苦患。

⁵⁵⁴ Xuanzang’s translation of the *Medicine Buddha Sūtra* (T450:14.407.a12-16) reads: “Or, when a woman is about to give birth, and is experiencing the pains of childbirth, if she is able to recite the name of the Medicine Buddha and bow to him, in order render reverent devotion to him, then she will gain reprieve from all sufferings and pangs of childbirth. The child born will be fully-able-bodied, noble in mien and build, good and pleasant looking, intelligent, immune from minor diseases. No non-human forces will capture their life force.” 或有女人，臨當產時，受於極苦；若能至心稱名禮讚，恭敬供養彼如來者，眾苦皆除。所生之子，身分具足，形色端正，見者歡喜，利根聰明，安隱少病，無有非人，奪其精氣。

⁵⁵⁵ Restoring vision and hearing in the blind and deaf are acts undertaken under the sixth vow made by the Healing Buddha (T450:14.405a25-9).

The Path to Avoiding Inescapable Imbalances as Attested by Asaṅga and the Medicine Buddha

In his translation of *Medicine Buddha Sūtra*, Xuanzang revisits the discussion of the category of dying from inescapable imbalances introduced by Vasubandhu and Asaṅga. He poses the question asked by the Medicine Buddha: Why does one die from inescapable imbalances? 何不避不平等故死? Xuanzang reprises the list of the “nine ways of dying due to inescapable imbalances” first enumerated in *The Basis for Yoga Practitioners*. The original listing by Asaṅga includes: excessive consumption of food, consumption of unwholesome food, insufficient digestion of food prior to the next meal, consumption of raw food without proper elimination, retaining digested food, insufficient knowledge of either harmful or beneficial practices, untimely actions and indulging in untimely actions (Skt.: *akālacārin*), or impure actions (Skt.: *abrahmacārin*). While the enumeration by Asaṅga is weighted toward untimely deaths due to the improper ingestion and elimination of food, Xuanzang’s list in the *Medicine Buddha Sūtra* describes hazards that are congruent with the life experiences of the practitioner in China.

Why do you die due to inescapable imbalances? As has been explained by the World-Honored-One, inescapable imbalances refer to nine causes: What are the nine? They are 1) Excessively consuming, 2) consuming unwholesome food, 3) not yet digesting before eating the next meal, 4) consuming raw food without expulsion, 5) retaining digested food 6) not being near doctor or medicine 7) not knowing what is harmful or beneficial for yourself 8) untimely acting 9) indulgence in untimely acting (*akālacārin*) or improper acting (*abrahmacārin*). This is called dying in an untimely way.⁵⁵⁶ 如世尊說九因九緣，

⁵⁵⁶ Skt. based upon Bhattachārya, ed., *Yogācārabhūmi*, 15-16. *nava hetavo nava pratyayākṣīṇāyusaḥ kālakriyāyā iti / katame nava?/ amātrābhōjībhavati apathyabhojī aparīṇatabhojī āmaṃ nāddharati pakvaṃ dhārayati bhaipajyaṃ na pratiṣevate (emend: pratiṣedhati) sātmyāsātmyaṃ na jānīte akālacārī bhavati abrahmacārī bhavati iti/ saiva punar akālacāryutir ity ucyate.* Tib. (D 4035: vol. 127, folio/line 8a.50): *Yang nga ba ma spangs pa ji lta bu zhe na, bcom ldan 'das kyi kyang 'di skad du tshe ma zad [8a.6] par 'chi ba'i dus byed pa ni rgyu dgu dang rkyen dgu yod do.*

未盡壽量而死。何等為九？調食無度量。食所不宜。不消復食。生而不吐。熟而持之。不近醫藥。不知於己若損若益。非時非量行非梵行。此名非時死。

In the *Medicine Buddha Sūtra*, Xuanzang identifies the nine ways of the dying from inescapable imbalances as follows: getting sick without available medical treatment 得病無醫, being executed as a criminal 王法誅戮, having vital energy (Chi.: *qi* 氣) stolen by a ghost 非人奪精氣, burning in a fire 火焚, drowning 水溺, being bitten by a wild animal 惡獸啖, falling off a cliff 墮崖咒咀, eating poison, and dying from starvation or dehydration 饑渴.

Woven into his translations of the taxonomies of dying from inescapable imbalances found in *The Basis for Yoga Practitioners* and in the *Medicine Buddha Sūtra* is the counterintuitive premise that dying from random imbalances can be prevented. In his translation of Asaṅga's list, Xuanzang avers that dying from inescapable imbalances sometimes involves “conditions that are extraneous” (Chi.: *yu yuan* 餘緣) to the natural lifespan or to the karma of the sentient being. For example, some beings meet their demise due to random and exceedingly unfortunate events, as in the case of the historical Buddha, who died from food poisoning. Other sentient beings die due to the inaccessibility of medical care during a time of acute need. In both examples, dying is due neither to a natural cause nor to a moral failing of the sentient being. Xuanzang illustrates ways of dying that range from dying from natural disasters to dying from corporeal execution, the predicate of which is the involvement of the sentient being in immoral activities. Xuanzang avers that dying from imbalances, like all other ways of dying, can be postponed by practicing the instructions given by the Medicine Buddha and by obtaining merit in years prior to dying.

In his translations of Asaṅga's five steps of yogic practices and the *Medicine Buddha Sūtra*, Xuanzang makes the case that dying from inescapable imbalances can be avoided by taking the proper steps to prepare for dying. These steps include the applied practices comprised in the yogic

practice in five stages offered by Asaṅga, or through certain ritual interventions for the sick and dying presented in the *Medicine Buddha Sūtra*.

Section Three: Three Karmic Valences of the Mind in the Dying Sentient Being: Good, Bad, and Neutral

The earliest and most venerated portion of the Yogācāra scripture on the nature of dying is called the *Manobhūmiḥ*, or *The Basis of Mind*. The *Manobhūmiḥ* is located near the end of the first folio of *The Basis for Yoga Practitioners*. In his exegesis and translation of this ancient text, Xuanzang depicts, in vivid detail, the rewards and the consequences that are incurred by either engaging in or eschewing the preparation necessary for dying well. The *Manobhūmiḥ* provides the scriptural support for the claim made by Xuanzang throughout his translation and exegetical corpus that karma pervasively and decisively determines the quality and the timing of dying.

The *Manobhūmiḥ*, states that the karmic standing or the state of mind (Skt.: *citta*; Chi.: *xin* 心) of a sentient being, leading up to and during the time of dying, determines the course of dying. The karmic state of the mind of the sentient being describes the capacity to practices of skillful aversion, concentration, and mindful recollection while dying. According to Asaṅga, the mind of a sentient being at the end of life holds one of three karmic valences that reflect a mental disposition toward good, bad, or neutral thoughts and behaviors. The karmic grade (Chi.: *pin* 品) depends on the balance of good and the bad karma that the sentient being carries at the end of life. In his translation of the *Manobhūmiḥ* by Asaṅga, Xuanzang presents the three karmic grades of dying as follows: dying with skillful state of mind (Chi.: *shanxin si* 善心死), dying with an unskillful state of mind (Chi.: *bushanxin si* 不善心死), and dying with an indeterminate or neutral state of mind (Chi.: *wujixin si* 無記心死).

Skillfully Dying

Asaṅga begins his account of the three ways of dying with a description of what it means to die in a skillful way. In the *Manobhūmiḥ*, he poses the following questions: How does one die with a skillful mind? How does one approach the final moments of life in a skillful way? The definition of dying skillfully is as follows:

How does the skillful mind die? Sometimes in dying the individual can remember teachings that have been learned previously. Sometimes the individual can remember the teachings when reminded by others.⁵⁵⁷

At the time the individual remembers the skillful teachings, such as the teachings on faith, and so forth, crudely-formed perceptions arise in the mind. When the subtle perceptions of outside things arise in the dying mind, the dying mind returns to an indeterminant state.

Why does the mind return to an indeterminate state? If the dying mind cannot recall the skillful practices that are learned during life, then the individuals from the outside will not be able to restore the memories of the skillful practices for the dying mind.

云何善心死？猶如有一將命終時。自憶先時所習善法。或復由他令彼憶念。由此因緣。爾時信等善法現行於心。乃至麤想現行。若細想行時。善心即捨，唯住無記心。所以者何？彼於爾時。於曾習善亦不能憶。他亦不能令彼憶念。⁵⁵⁸

⁵⁵⁷ Tibetan has *sems dang ldan par 'chi 'pho* (D 4035: vol. 127, folio/line 8a.7) —lit., “How does the skillful mind die and transmigrate?”

⁵⁵⁸ Corresponding Skt. text from Bhaṭṭacārya, *Yogācārabhūmi*, 18: *Kathaṃ kūśalacittaś cyavate? Yatha api iha ekatyo mriyamāṇaḥ pūrvān dharmān smarati | pareṇa vā punaḥ smāryate | yena asya tasmin samaye kūśalāḥ śraddhādayo dharmāś cittaśamudācaranti | te punar yāvad audārikīsaṃjñā pravartate | sūkṣme punaḥ saṃjñā-pracārekuśalaṃ cittaṃ vyāvartate | avyākṛtaṃ eva cittaṃ santiṣṭate | tathā hi | satasmin samaye pūrva abhyastaṃ ca kūśalam ābhogaṃ kartum asamartho bhavati parair api smārayitum aśakyah ||* Tib. (D 4035: vol. 127, folio/line 8a.7-b1) reads: Dge ba'i sems dang ldan par 'chi 'pho ba ji lta bu yin zhe na, 'di lta ste, 'di na kha cig 'chi ba'i tshe/dge ba'i chos sngon kun tu bsten pa rnams dran nam/gzhan gyis dran par byas kyang rung ste/de'i tshe de la dad pa la sogs pa dge ba'i chos gang dag sems la kun tu spyod pa de dag ji srid du 'du shes rags pa 'byung ba'i bar du'o/ dge ba'i sems dang ldan par 'chi 'pho ba ji lta bu yin zhe na/'di lta ste/'di na kha cig 'chi ba'i tshe/dge ba'i chos sngon kun tu bsten pa rnams dran nam/gzhan gyis dran par byas kyang rung ste/de'i tshe de la dad pa la sogs pa dge ba'i chos gang dag sems la kun tu spyod pa de dag ji srid du 'du shes rags pa 'byung ba'i bar du'o.

Asaṅga, as rendered in the translation by Xuanzang, avers that dying skillfully requires the ability to maintain a calm state of mind in the face of impending death. When facing mortality, the sentient being who carries out the pure practices of yoga during life is more likely to be able to sustain a state of mind of “brightness and clarity” (Chi.: *ming li* 明利) and resist a mental state of “confusion and opacity” (Chi.: *mei lie* 昧劣). Xuanzang notes that the maintenance of a clear and serene state of mind is “advantageous” (Chi.: *li* 利) rather than “disadvantageous” (Chi.: *buli* 不利). Xuanzang employs a pun in that the Chinese character *li*, simultaneously refers to “mental acuity,” and to “advantageousness.” In his *Summary of Abhidharma*, Asaṅga reprises how the skillful mental states of “brightness and acuity” in the face of death are predicated upon the maintenance of the skillful teachings a sentient being has learned through a life time of practice and cultivation.

Retaining a state of mind of “brightness and clarity” in the face of impending death requires preparation and practice. Those who die well possess a single-minded resolution and conviction that is honed by practice and cultivation. Dying well requires an ability to focus on tasks such as tranquil meditation (Skt.: *śamathā*), mindful absorption (Skt.: *samādhi*), or the recitation of the name of the Buddha, or a revered bodhisattva. The practice of dying skillfully requires honing and enlisting the *indriyas* of faith, concentration, aversion, and memory.

Dying skillfully requires the ability to utilize the skills of faith and concentration to quell the activation of the faculty of anxiety that occurs when a sentient being faces mortality. The *indriyas* of anxiety and suffering are genetically pre-programmed to recoil at the signs of dying and death. Without learning the skills required to regulate the faculties of anxiety (Skt.: *daurmanasyêndriyam*) and suffering (Skt. *duḥkkhêndriyam*), the actions of these hedonically undesirable faculties will be exacerbated at the end of life. The cultivation of the *indriyas* of faith

and concentration, through the practice of yoga, reduces the natural and innate anxiety and fear that is associated with dying. When the *indriyas* of faith and concentration are functioning well at the end of life, the process of dying is less stressful.

The practice of dying skillfully requires the ability to efface sensations, however subtle, from outside the mind. This requires enlisting the faculty of concentration and using the “pure objects of faith” to maintain a laser-like focus through the physical and mental trials of dying. According to the discussion in the seventh fascicle of Xuanzang’s CWSL, the pure objects of faith “take the form of the aspirations” (Skt.: *abhilāṣākāra*; Chi.: *xiwang* 希望). Spiritual aspirations are used as lodestones to guide the sentient being toward meritorious thoughts and actions and away from impure objects or distractions in the material world. This, again, requires an ability to enlist the *indriyas* of concentration and mindfulness that have been honed by practice prior to the end of life.

Dying skillfully requires an ability to regulate the unskillful affective states (Skt.: *anuśayas*) of torpor, vexation, and the “six root afflictions,” or *kleśas* 根本六煩惱, of craving, anger, ignorance, pride, irresolution and deluded views. The six root afflictions originate within the mind and the body and function to divert the dying mind from meritorious action and thought. Xuanzang, in his CWSL, views mastering the affective state of vexation as central to dying skillfully. He regards the unwholesome factors of greed, anger, and delusion as rooted in “hostility and resentment” (Chi.: *fen hen* 忿恨).⁵⁵⁹ By enlisting the faculty of aversion, the sentient being discards

⁵⁵⁹ CWSL, fascicle 6 (this is essentially a paraphrase and elaboration on Vasubandhu’s gloss as found in Xuanzang’s translation of the *Pañcaskandhaka* (T1612:31.849.b8-9): “What is vexation? The nature of vexation is, first and foremost hatred and aversion. It has seeking after violent contact in a aggravated way, and contumaciousness as its nature. The encumbrance consists in the non-vexation to stings it refers to the violent contact recollected and manifest in tactile sensation that conditions the mind already to be aggravated and to cry out violently in a crude sound that curses and casts aspersions on others. This encumbrance is consists partially in anger and partially in resentment. It is basically no different from the affliction of anger (*dveṣa*).” 云何為惱。忿恨為先迫觸暴熱恨

unskillful mental states and overrides the sensations of pain that impinge upon the equanimity and mental clarity that are necessary for dying skillfully.

Xuanzang highlights how dying skillfully means exercising the faculty of recollection to mindfully recall and implement the yogic practices that have been practiced routinely prior to dying. Asaṅga recognizes that even the most single-minded and committed sentient being may suffer from limits in the ability to recollect actions and practices due to dementia. For this reason, Asaṅga avers that an individual who is dying skillfully can be assisted by others in the practice of yoga.⁵⁶⁰

Xuanzang states that there is no doubt or irresolution (Skt.: *saṃśaya*; Chi.: *yi 疑*)⁵⁶¹ in the mind of the skillfully dying. This is because the sentient being who is dying skillfully does not fear the consequences of karma and is able to resist an unwholesome desire to cling to material pleasures or to the pain of sentient life. The practice of the yoga of dying results in the relinquishment of the unwholesome thoughts and behaviors that create suffering in the mind of the sentient being on the brink of death.

Unskillfully Dying

Asaṅga continues his account of the ways of dying with a description of what it means to die poorly. In his translation of the *Manobhūmiḥ*, Xuanzang defines dying unskillfully as follows:

How does an unskillful mind die? Sometimes in dying the individual remembers unskillful practices previously learned.

戾為性。能障不惱蛆螫為業。謂追往惡觸現違緣心便恨戾。多發瞋暴凶鄙麤言蛆螫他故。此亦瞋恚一分為體。離瞋無別惱相用故 (T1585:31.33.b23-b26).

⁵⁶⁰ 云何為無記心死。如人曾習善法。臨終不能憶。又無他人提撕令憶。是為無記心死。

⁵⁶¹ Irresolution is one of the six *anuśayas* or afflictive states. These are: erroneous views (*dṛṣṭi*), irresolution, conceit, confusion, anger, and greed. 見、疑、慢、癡、瞋、貪。

Sometimes in dying the individual remembers unskillful practices by being reminded by others.

At that time the individual remembers the unskillful practices, confusion, resentment, and unskillful thoughts enter the dying mind. Coarsely-formed and subtle perception arises, as described in the previously well-explained discussion [of the skillful mind].

云何不善心死？猶如有一命將欲終，自憶先時串習惡法，或復由他令彼憶念；彼於爾時貪瞋等俱諸不善法現行於心，乃至麤細等想現行：如前善說。又善心死時，安樂而死，將欲終時，無極苦受逼迫於身。惡心死時，苦惱而死。將命終時，極重苦受逼迫於身。⁵⁶²

Asaṅga describes the exceedingly painful experiences that are incurred in approaching death with an unskillful mind. For the sentient being who is unable to maintain a calm and resolute state of mind when facing mortality, the pain and suffering attendant on dying beleaguer the body and the mind.⁵⁶³ In his vivid descriptions, Asaṅga contrasts the subjective experiences of those

⁵⁶² Skt. text from Bhattachārya, ed., *Yogācārabhūmi*, 18: *katham akuśalacittaś cyavate / yathāpīhaikatyo mriyamāṇaḥ svayam eva pūrvābhyastān akuśaladharmān samanusmarati / parair vā smāryate / tasya tasmin samayelobhādisahagatā akuśaladharmāś cittesamudācaranti yāvad audārikīsaṃjñā...iti pūrvavat sarvaṃkuśalavat* / Tib. (D 4035: vol. 127, folio/line 8b.2-5): *mi dge ba'i sems dang ldan par 'chi 'pho ba ji lta bu zhe na? 'di ltar 'di na kha cig 'chi ba'i tshe, mi dge ba'i chos sngon goms pa rnams dran nam, gzhan dag gis dran par byas kyang rung ste, de'i tshe de la chags pa la sogs pa mi dge ba'i chos gang dag sems la kun tu spyod pa de dag ji srid du 'du shes rags pa rgyu ba'i bar du'o zhes bya ba thams cad dge ba'i skabs snga ma dang 'dra'o/de la dge ba'i sems dang ldan par 'chi na ni/bde bar 'chi bas 'chi bar 'gyur te,'chi kar de'i lus la sdug bsngal gyi tshor ba drag po 'byung bar mi 'gyur ro/mi dge ba'i sems dang ldan par 'chi na ni, sdug bsngal ba'i 'ching bas 'chi bar 'gyur te, 'chi kar de'i lus la sdug bsngal gyi tshor ba drag po 'byung bar 'gyur ro.*

⁵⁶³ Skt. text from Bhattachārya, ed., *Yogācārabhūmi*, 18: *katham akuśalacittaś cyavate / yathāpīhaikatyo mriyamāṇaḥ svayam eva pūrvābhyastān akuśaladharmān samanusmarati / parair vā smāryate / tasya tasmin samayelobhādisahagatā akuśaladharmāś cittesamudācaranti yāvad audārikīsaṃjñā... iti pūrvavat sarvaṃkuśalavat*. *tatra kuśalacitto mriyamāṇaḥ sukhamarāṇena mriyate / tasya pragādhāduḥkhāvedanāḥ kāyenāvakrāmanti māraṇāntikāḥ /akuśalacitto mriyamāṇo duḥkhamaraṇena mriyate / pragādhāś ca asya duḥkhā vedanāḥ kāye'vakrāmanti māraṇāntikāḥ.*

Tib. (D 4035: vol. 127, folio/line 8b.2-5): *Mi dge ba'i sems dang ldan par 'chi 'pho ba ji lta bu zhe na? 'di ltar 'di na kha cig 'chi ba'i tshe, mi dge ba'i chos sngon goms pa rnams dran nam, gzhan dag gis dran par byas kyang rung ste, de'i tshe de la chags pa la sogs pa mi dge ba'i chos gang dag sems la kun tu spyod pa de dag ji srid du 'du shes rags pa rgyu ba'i bar du'o zhes bya ba thams cad dge ba'i skabs snga ma dang 'dra'o/de la dge ba'i sems dang ldan par 'chi na ni/ bde bar 'chi bas 'chi bar 'gyur te,'chi kar de'i lus la sdug bsngal gyi tshor ba drag po 'byung bar mi 'gyur ro/mi dge ba'i sems dang ldan par 'chi na ni, sdug bsngal ba'i 'ching bas 'chi bar 'gyur te, 'chi kar de'i lus la sdug bsngal gyi tshor ba drag po 'byung bar 'gyur ro/.*

who die skillfully with those who die unskillfully. For example, while a sentient being who dies with a skillful mind may experience benign visual phenomena, the being with an unskillful mind may see disturbing images at the end of life. Xuanzang writes:

In the case of the dying skillful mind, there are untroubling visible phenomena, but in the case of the dying unskillful mind, there are troubling visible phenomena.

又善心死者見不亂色相。不善心死者見亂色相。⁵⁶⁴

Xuanzang notes that for the sentient being approaching the end of life unskillfully, states of delirium and hallucinations are common. When bad karma outweighs the good, the hallucinations can be terrifying and vivid.

At the end of life, the unskillful mind is flooded with thoughts of greed, anger, and delusion that make the process of dying psychologically terrifying and physically painful. Asaṅga, in his “fire and brimstone” pronouncements in *The Basis for Yoga Practitioners*, promises a suffering-laden rebirth for those who die with a mind bent upon unskillful mental states and behaviors. Before the painful reincarnation, however, the sentient being undergoes a gradual course of dying during which horrific imagery is projected onto the unskillful mind. The production of this phantasmagoric imagery is the unique function of the storehouse consciousness, or the *ālayavijñāna*. At the end of life, the memories stored within the *ālayavijñāna* are reactivated and projected onto the unskillful mind. The narrative thread of greed, anger, keeping company with immoral people, adhering to improper doctrines, and engaging in perverse thinking begins to unravel and take the form of horrific images. Xuanzang states:

⁵⁶⁴ Skt. text from Bhattacārya, ed., *Yogācārabhūmi*, 18: kuśalacittasya punar mriyamāṇasya avyākulaṃ rūpadarśanaṃ bhavati / akuśalacittasya tu vyākulaṃ rūpa-darśanaṃ bhavati// Tib.: dge ba'i sems dang ldan par 'chi ba la ni gzugs mthong ba 'khrul par mi 'gyur ro/mi dge ba'i sems dang ldan par 'chi ba ni gzugs mthong ba 'khrul bar 'gyur ro/.

When someone with a high measure of bad karma dies, sweat spews from their pores. Their hair stands on end because of the monstrous images they behold. Their limbs tremble. They void stool and urine. Their eyes roll back. They flail, with saliva and foaming at the mouth. Then there is a reincarnation corresponding to the monstrous phenomena.⁵⁶⁵ 若作上品不善業者。彼由見斯變怪相故。流汗毛豎，手足紛亂，遂失便穢。捫摸虛空翻睛咀沫。彼於爾時，有如是等變怪相生。

Xuanzang concludes that a life poorly lived produces a frightening death and an afterlife of suffering. Dying unskillfully is the “just deserts” for the bad karma accumulated during a life misspent.⁵⁶⁶ In his exegesis of dying skillfully and dying unskillfully, Xuanzang avers that all sentient beings have the potential to obtain a benign and peaceful death by practicing meritorious actions and yoga during life, or to suffer a horrific ending by engaging in unmeritorious acts and ignoring the yoga of dying.

Dying in a Karmically Neutral Way

Asaṅga completes his account of the three ways of dying with a description what it means to approach dying with an indeterminate state of mind. In his translations of the *Manobhūmiḥ*, Xuanzang takes care to carve out the third type of dying in the taxonomy laid out by Asaṅga, the category of “karmic indeterminacy” (Skt.: *avyākṛta*; Chi.: *wuji* 無記). Xuanzang avers that the

⁵⁶⁵ Skt. text from Bhattacārya, ed., *Yogācārabhūmi*, 18: Tatra adhimātrākuśalakāriṇastadvikṛtanimitadarśanāt prasvedaś ca jāyate / romakūpebhyo romāñcaś ca bhavati / hastapādavikṣepādayaś ca bhavanti / mūtrapurīpotsargaś cabhavati / ākāśaparāmarśanam akṣiparivartanam mukhataḥ phenaniḥsraṇam ityevaṃbhāgiyā dharmā utpadyante.

⁵⁶⁶ Yixing’s text of the *Pervasive and Constant Vow of the Ten-Leveled Bodhimaṇḍa* (X1470:74.258c24) reads: “How does one die with an unskillful mind? When someone dies one initially recalls the unskillful practices previously learned. Sometimes memory is instilled from outside. At that time, the unskillful factors of clinging, anger and delusion are manifest immediately to the mind, up to an including the crude and stultic objects of perception manifest as if right before the eyes. Now this is dying with an unskillful mind. 如人命將終。自憶先時串習惡法。或復由他人引起憶念。彼於爾時。貪嗔癡諸不善法現行於心。乃至麤細等想。現行於前。是為不善心死。

status of karmic indeterminacy means that at the time of dying, the karmic tendencies of the mental state of the sentient being have not been determined. The indeterminate mind stands in the balance and can be tipped toward a benign or a painful death, depending on the actions taken by the sentient being at the end of life.

Asaṅga poses the following question: How does one die with an indeterminate, or a karmically neutral, or *avyākṛta*, mental state? He writes:

Dying with an indeterminate mind means that one's practices are neither skillful nor unskillful. Or one does not undertake any practices at all. When one is about to meet one's final moments of life, one cannot recollect anything. Nor can others induce recollection. Then, the neither skillful nor unskillful mind, dies. One does not die peacefully, nor does one die with much vexation. In this state, some humans independently recall the good dharma that they have practiced. Some, in meeting their final moments, cannot remember anything – and moreover, there is no one available to remind them who is dying, and induce recollection of these practices. Furthermore, when an individual [pudgala] who has acted in a wholesome or unwholesome way is about to die, s/he may spontaneously remember the wholesome or unwholesome [dharma] that s/he previously cultivated, and that may lead to further memories. At that time, her/his mind will tend to register those of her/his repeated habits that were most dominant. The rest are entirely forgotten.⁵⁶⁷

云何無記心死？謂行善不善者，或不行者，將命終時自不能憶。無他令憶。爾時非善心非不善心死。既非安樂死亦非苦惱死。又行善不善補特伽羅將命終時。或自然憶先所習善及與不善。或他令憶。彼於爾時於多曾習力最強者。其心偏記餘悉皆忘。⁵⁶⁸

In the depiction of dying with an indeterminate mind, Asaṅga identifies three factors that

⁵⁶⁷ This translation has made reference to that of Lusthaus (2013, p. 591) however, very heavy modifications have been made.

⁵⁶⁸ T1579:30.281.c01-05.

are specific to this category of dying. The first is that the state of the memory of the indeterminate mind is vague and the ability to recall practices is impaired. The second is that dying with an indeterminate mind is hedonically neutral in that it is neither particularly benign nor particularly painful. The third is that the conditions of the mind can be either improved by carrying out skillful practices or remain unimproved by eschewing rituals and yogic practices.

In his *Summary of Abhidharma*⁵⁶⁹ Asaṅga is in lock-step with the earlier Abhidharma commentators in their assessment that consciousness at the time of dying is subtle and faint.⁵⁷⁰ Therefore the indeterminate mind of a sentient being facing mortality struggles to recall meritorious practices.⁵⁷¹ Additionally, the sentient being with an indeterminate mind is not able to rely upon others to remember the yoga of dying. Asaṅga notes that while the indeterminate mind is subtle and faint, it is filled with mental experiences. As in other types of dying, the quality of

⁵⁶⁹ Sthiramati's *Abhidharmasamuccaya* corroborates most of the details of Asaṅga's account in Yogācārabhūmi. See *Abhidharmasamuccaya*, trans., Xuanzang (T1605:31.675.c19). See Sthiramati's commentary on *Abhidharmasamuccaya* (T1606:31.722.a05-12). See exegesis by the Japanese scholar-monk Eison 叡尊 (1201-1290) on the former text (D8891:32.143.b09-2).

⁵⁷⁰ Saṅghabhadra says in his *Clarification of Tenets* (T1563:29.848.c1-6), in response to the question of what constitutes a morally-indeterminate *manovijñāna* at the end-of-life: "Although *manovijñāna* contains mental states associated with three types of sensation (i.e., painful, pleasurable, and neither-painful-nor-pleasurable), yet, at the time of dying or becoming reincarnated there is only neutral sensation. The nature of this [neutral sensation], depending upon the time of dying or becoming reincarnated consists in two kinds of sensations: pain and pleasure. The nature of the sensation that is extremely clear and advantageous does not conform to the nature of consciousness at the time of dying or of becoming reincarnated. The very definition of consciousness at the time of dying or of becoming reincarnated is "opaque" (literally, "not-clear"), since at these times, consciousness is faint and opaque" 意識雖具三受相應。而死生時唯有捨受非苦樂受。性不明利。順死生時，苦樂二受。性極明利，不順死生。非明利識有死生義。以死生時必昧劣故。This is a gloss unpacking the meaning of description of the morally-neutral mind – exercising upekṣā is the precondition for coalescing the sense of clarity and advantageousness that carries one through the end-of-life stage.

⁵⁷¹ Xuanzang's translation of Sthiramati's commentary on *Asaṅga's Summary of Abhidharma* (T1606:31.722.a05-12) reads: "Dying with an indeterminate mind means, that one dies with clarity and mental acuity or one dies without clarity and mental acuity. For some [dying indeterminately], either set of conditions [of clarity and mental acuity] are absent. Some implement applied practices (*prayoga*) without effort, and give rise to the indeterminate mind at the end of their life. Those [who apply applied practices] are referred to here under the "skillful," etc., mind in dying. One should know that, like the explanation of the unskillfully dying mind, the [neutrally] dying mind has its basis in the attachment to the states corresponding with *ātman*. This is the teaching pertaining to the stage of the end-of-life." 無記心死者。謂若於明利心現行位。若於不明利心現行位。或由闕二緣故。或由加行無功能故。起無記心趣命終位。此中所言善等心死者。當知依我愛相應。將命終心位前說。

the mental projections experienced by a sentient being nearing death is due to the balance of karma. Asaṅga proclaims that if good karma outweighs the bad, the mental images that are experienced at the time of dying will be benign, rather than frightening.

In his exegesis and translations of *Manobhūmiḥ*, Xuanzang concludes that the psychological and physiological experience of dying is determined by the mental condition, or the quality of the thoughts and behaviors, that are held in the mind of the sentient being approaching the end of life. He avers that the mental condition of the sentient being is determined ineluctably by karma. With this theoretical groundwork in place, Xuanzang turns to investigate practices to achieve a benign and peaceful course of dying. He finds that improving the course of dying necessarily begins by learning how to overcome the biologically pre-programmed fear of death that is innate to all sentient creatures.

Section Four: Overcoming the Fear of Dying

While encountering his own and others' near-death experiences during his pilgrimage throughout the Western Regions, Xuanzang engages in a search to understand the fear of dying. In his translation corpus and exegesis of the Indic texts, Xuanzang devotes himself to an exploration of the etiology of existential anxiety. Based upon his subjective knowledge and the observations of others who encounter mortality during his travels, Xuanzang stipulates that the fear of dying is experienced by all human beings. He surmises that all sentient beings, even those who die skillfully, must contend with the primitive and innate fear of dying. Xuanzang therefore concludes that, in the face of impending death, all sentient beings have a basic and “primal desire (Skt.: *sahabhūtr̥ṣṇa*; Chi.: *jusheng ai* 俱生愛)” to cling to life.⁵⁷² In the *Viniścayasamagrahāṇī*

⁵⁷² As Lingtai's commentary on CWSL (X819:50.276.b13-15) reads: “Because the nine types of dying minds are associated with inherent desire (*Sahabhūtr̥ṣṇa*). Therefore, we know that they are based in contamination, because

section of Asaṅga's *Basis for Yoga Practitioners*, “the unhinged pudgala” (Chi.: *fangyi puteqieluo* 放逸補特迦羅) is contrasted to the collected state of mind of the Bhikṣu⁵⁷³ going into the stage of dying. Here, Asaṅga's *Basis for Yoga Practitioners* enjoins yogic practitioners to avoid “perpetually dying”⁵⁷⁴ by undertaking a series of practices aimed at liberation from dying, and from the whole process of death and rebirth, or *saṃsāra* (Chi.: *shengsi* 生死). Asaṅga's *Basis for Yoga Practitioners* stipulates, that, if one does not die well in the present life, this may or may not be because of karma from a past life. Furthermore, whether or not one cultivated well and died well in a past life is *not* determinative that one will not die well in this life.⁵⁷⁵

they verify that at the moment of death there is naught but the eighth consciousness.” 九種命終心。俱生愛俱故。故知依染污故。證命終時唯有第八識故。

⁵⁷³ Translation based upon Xuanzang's translation of the passage in *Viniścayasamagrahaṇī* “How is it that one devoted to the zealous study of the Vinaya, a Bhikṣu, is vigilant at the third watch (of the Vinaya), that is, a Bhikṣu? At the end of life, his mind is acutely composed (Tib.: *drag po mngon par 'du byed*). In meeting the end, he dies with mind composed and bent upon the skillful dharma. He says to himself: ‘I, Bhikṣu, am dying with recollection of the perception of the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Saṅgha’ He should die with a mind bent upon skillfulness, and so, in all ways, thus guard and protect the mindfulness: When the Buddhist follower faces the time of dying, essentially, in brief it is good to maintain the skillful state of mind at the time of dying with the recollection focused on the perception of the Buddha. This is a good way of dying. And it is a good way of becoming reborn into the next life. One should, at the third watch of the Vinaya, as a faithful follower of the Buddhist vinaya modestly go about it like that without being non-vigilant (Skt.: *apramāda*).”云何於毘奈耶勤學苾芻依正第三時中應不放逸？謂有苾芻，臨命終時其心猛利，發起如是正加行心。謂我今者應以緣佛緣法緣僧正念而死，應以緣善善心而死。彼遂發起如是如是善守護心，正念現前，以緣於佛法僧正念、及緣諸善善心而死。彼由緣佛緣法緣僧所有正念、及由緣善所有善心而命終故，名賢善死賢善夭沒，亦名賢善趣。於後世。如是名為於毘奈耶勤學苾芻第三時中修不放逸。Corresponding Tib. text (D 4038: vol. 130, folio/line 243a.4-243a.5.) reads: *Ji ltar dge slong 'dul ba'i bslab pa la brtson pas skye ba las brtsams nas dus gsum pa 'di la bag yod par bya zhe na' di na dge slong 'chi ba'i dus la bab pa'i tshe na' di ltar mngon par 'du bya ba'i sems drag po mngon par 'du byed de/ci bdag sangs rgyas la dmigs pa'i dran pas 'chi ba'i dus byed par 'gyur ram/chos la dmigs pa dang*/dge 'dun la dmigs pa dang*/dge ba la dmigs pas dge ba'i sems dang ldan pa'i 'chi ba'i dus byed par 'gyur ram snyam du sems mngon par 'du byed de/de lta de ltar de'i sems kun du bsrung ba dang/dran pa nye bar gnas par 'gyur ro/gang gi phyir sangs rgyas la dmigs pa'i dran pas 'chi ba'i dus byed pa nas/rgyas par dge ba'i sems dang ldan pa'i bar gyis 'che ba'i dus byed pa ni sangs rgyas la dmigs pa'i dran pas 'che ba'i dus byed pa nas rgyas par dge ba'i sems dang ldan pa'i bar gyis 'chi ba'i dus byed pa de'i 'che ba ni bzang ba yin/'chi ba'i dus byed pa yang bzang ba yin/tshe phyi ma yang bzang ba yin te/de ltar dge slong 'dul ba'i bslab pa la brtson pas dus gsum pa de la bag yod par bya'o/.*

⁵⁷⁴ *Yogācārabhūmi* (T1579:30.379.a23-4): Those with vigilance (*pramāda*) do not leave traces behind in dying, the unhinged leave traces behind. Those who are vigilant do not die again. The unhinged will die perpetually (in *saṃsāra*). 無逸不死跡；放逸為死跡；無逸者不死；縱逸者常死。

⁵⁷⁵ Dullyun's 道倫's commentary cites the opinion of Kuiji that provides some clarity on the *Yogācārabhūmi* poem from fascicle 18 (T1579:30.379a23-4): “If there are unhinged pudgalas who do not presently prepare for dying, then since they have died without preparing in the past, then they will not prepare well for dying in the present or in the future. Master Kuiji says: this refers to the cultivation of the truth of the path along the path involving

Xuanzang's examination of the existential fear of death begins with his translations of the *Mahāvibhāṣa* texts and culminates in his later, and original, work found in the CWSL. In his exegesis of the *Mahāvibhāṣa*, Xuanzang isolates and identifies the three primary components of the fear of dying: the fear of no longer living, the fear of being in the end stage of life and the fear of being reincarnated into a life ridden with pain and suffering.⁵⁷⁶ Continuing in his translation of the *Mahāvibhāṣa*, Xuanzang examines how the Buddha, during the culmination of his meditation under the bodhi tree, overcomes Māra, the embodiment of the unskillful emotions of greed, hate and delusion. Xuanzang regards the resistance of the temptations of Māra to be the greatest achievement of the Buddha, and a lesson to all sentient beings. Later, in his CWSL, Xuanzang revisits the problem of existential anxiety experienced by all human beings in a discussion of the three elements of clinging, anger, and delusion. Throughout his exploration of the ancient sūtras, Xuanzang illustrates how ordinary humans, residing in the dusty *sahā* world of the *kāmadhātu*, possess an ingrained fear of dying inculcated by experiences of pain and suffering in past lives.⁵⁷⁷

learning (*śakṣyamārga*), there are those that have already, in the past, not died well, since they had not accumulated cultivation then. It is possible that in the present they will die without preparing well; and, the same for the future, since they will not have cultivated sufficiently, but not because they have not cultivated well in the present necessarily. The ārhats will no longer die (after death), they die in a well-cultivated manner, but not because of preparation in this life, or because they are unprepared.” 若有縱逸補特伽羅現不調死。亦由過去不調而死。於現於未皆不調死。基師又云。調修道諦諸有學者於過去世已死之時，未習道故，可由不調善死。現在未來，由習道故，不由不調善死。諸阿羅漢未來無死，亦名不由調善死、及不調善死。

⁵⁷⁶ Mahāvibhāṣa, fascicle 26 (T27n1545p0386b21-22) Question: who has fear? The sage? The ordinary human (*prthagjana*) or both? 問異生聖者誰有怖耶。有作是說。異生有怖聖者無怖。Response: The ordinary human has fear, but the sage has no fear.

For what reason? The sage has already divorced herself/himself from the five types of fear. These five types of fear are: firstly, fear of no longer living. Secondly, fear of ill repute. Thirdly, fear of massive crowds. Fourthly, fear of dying. Fifthly, fear of bad rebirth.

所以者何？聖者已離五怖畏故。五怖畏者：一、不活畏。二、惡名畏。三、怯眾畏。四、命終畏。五、惡趣畏。

⁵⁷⁷ CWSL, fascicle 4 (T1585:31.22.c10-15): The *kleśas* necessarily carry along with them, inherently, the subsidiary *kleśas* (*anukleśas*). Hence, the word, *kleśa* is sufficient to communicate along with it the subsidiary *kleśas*. 煩惱必與隨煩惱俱。故此餘言顯隨煩惱。

There is a doctrine which holds that there are five *anukleśas* that are omnipresent along with all polluted mental states. For instance, the *Summary of the Abhidharma* holds that depression and disconsolation, unfaithfulness,

The story of the Buddha, however, offers the hope that suffering at the end of life can be transcended by mastering the fear of dying. *The Basis for Yoga Practitioners* offers the hope that, even if one has not prepared for dying, and has undergone painful ways of dying in the past life, there is room in the present life to die better than in a past life. There is room, in this present life, to die better than one has already died in a past life.⁵⁷⁸

The Three Fears

According to the taxonomy laid out in Xuanzang's *Mahāvibhāṣa*, the three forms of fear related to dying are as follows: the fear of no-longer living, the fear of suffering at the end of life, and the fear of reincarnation into a life of suffering.

The subject of the fear of dying appears in chapter twenty of the *Mahāvibhāṣa*, within an examination of how suffering arises from clinging to the *skandhas*, the five aggregates that constitute the physical and mental existence of a sentient being. The *Mahāvibhāṣa* editors place the fear of dying in the context of a discussion of the five *skandhas* to highlight the primacy of this fear for sentient beings.⁵⁷⁹ Here, the *Mahāvibhāṣa* editors construct a fivefold taxonomy of the types of fears experienced by human beings. The five forms of human fear are as follows:

- (1) The fear of no longer living.

and torpor are associated perpetually with all mpolluted mental states 此中有義五隨煩惱。遍與一切染心相應。如集論說。惛沈掉舉不信懈怠放逸於一切染污品中恒共相應。

⁵⁷⁸ Yogācārabhūmi, Vinīścayasamagrahaṇī, fascicle 18: “If one, in the present life, prepares well for dying, then at the time of dying, since in the past one has already died, and since one did not prepare well for dying then (in the past life), in the present life, it is not because one did not prepare for dying (in a past life) that one does not die well. In the future life dying well is not because of whether one has already died well in a past life, nor is it because one has *not* died well (in a past life.” 於現在世，由調善死，而正死時。由過去死已死，於過去世，亦由不調善死。於現在世不由不調善死而死。於未來世不由調善死。不由不調善死而死。 [T30n1579p0379b10-13].

⁵⁷⁹ YBh: Those with vigilance (*pramāda*) do not leave traces behind in dying, the unhinged leave traces behind. Those who are vigilant do not die again. The unhinged will die perpetually (in *samsāra*). 無逸不死跡 放逸為死跡 無逸者不死 縱逸者常死 T30n1579p0379a23-4.

- (2) The fear of public humiliation.
- (3) The fear of massive crowds.
- (4) The fear of suffering in the final stage of life.
- (5) The fear of being reincarnated into an unhappy place.

The *Mahāvibhāṣa* editors aver that dying, in general, is a primary source of fear for sentient beings. On the list of the five basic fears of human beings are three variables directly related to dying: the fear of no longer living, the fear associated with the pain and suffering of nearing the end of life, and the fear of being reborn into an incarnation of pain and suffering. The *Mahāvibhāṣa* text also posits that the five forms of fear are encumbrances that obstruct the path toward enlightenment.

In the discussion of the primary fears of the human being, the *Mahāvibhāṣa* editors consider the “appropriating *skandhas*” (Skt.: *upadānaskandhas*), the aggregates that account for the bodily desires, or the urges to “appropriate” (Skt. *upadāna*) food, sex, and material objects for pleasure.⁵⁸⁰ The fear associated with the relinquishment of the possessions and sensory pleasures of the material realm is regarded as a form of suffering for sentient beings. The root of this type of suffering is found in *rāga* 貪 the “greedy clinging” to the sense of well-being that feeds the “appropriating *skandhas*.” The *Mahāvibhāṣa* editors identify a deeply ingrained aversion to the loss of possessions (Skt. *trṣṇa*) as central to the fear of no-longer living. No-longer living involves facing the inevitable of loss of mortal pleasures.⁵⁸¹

⁵⁸⁰ Dessein (2008, p. 22): for the *Vaibhāṣikas*, the general state of defilement (*kles'ā*), the contaminants (*anus'aya*) evoked by it that lead to mental misconduct (*manodus'carita*) and the actual bad actions (*akus'ala karman*) that proceed from this, form an interconnected chain, linking defilement to a life-stream.

⁵⁸¹ Puguang, *Study Notes on the Kośa (Jushe lun ji)*, fascicle 15: “fear of no longer living is one of five types of fear that the sage overcomes. One does not cling to life at the end, thus one is without the fear of the end of life.” 聖人不畏不活無不活畏 不戀命終故無命終畏 (T1821:41.250.a02-3).

In his analysis of this portion of the *Mahāvibhāṣa* text, Xuanzang avers that the egotistical part (Skt.: *ātman*) of the sentient being is invested in the preservation of the material objects and sensory pleasures of life. According to Xuanzang, this is due to the illusion that the “owner” (Chi.: *zhu* 主) of material things is permanent and unchanging. The *Mahāvibhāṣa* editors posit that the covetous seeking and clinging to pleasurable objects perpetuates the delusions of a permanent self. Therefore, the fear of loss is driven by the chimera of an ego, *ātman*, or self, to whom the material possessions and pleasures of life belong.

Xuanzang diagnoses the clinging to bodily desires and material objects as based in the mistaken view of *satkaya*, the idea that the *ātman* is embodied. The embodied *ātman* is denied by Buddhism. Instead, according to Buddhist teachings, the stream of the conscious mind (Skt.: *saṃtāna*) provides the continuity of the sentient being. Thus, in his analysis of the fear of dying, Xuanzang upholds the tenet of no-self.

The Buddha Overcomes the Fear of Dying

In his translation of the *Mahāvibhāṣa* chapter on the *skandhas*, Xuanzang includes the story of the Buddha defying the assault of the demon Māra, the embodiment of unskillful emotions, to quell (Chi.: *tiaofu* 調伏) his fear of dying and obtain enlightenment. Xuanzang uses this episode in the life of the Buddha to make the doctrinal point that while the fear of dying is ingrained in all human beings, it can be overcome by enlisting the five *indriyas* of faith, concentration, perseverance, mindfulness, and wisdom. In the story of his temptation, the Buddha uses the five cultivatable *indriyas* to vanquish the demon Māra, the symbol of the fear-based obstructions to enlightenment. In mastering his fear of dying, the Buddha obtains liberation from the cycle of rebirth and death.

In this famous episode of the life of the Buddha, the Māra sends his three daughters to Siddhartha Gautama while he is meditating under the bodhi tree to entice him to relinquish his quest for spiritual enlightenment. The daughters are the embodiments of the three poisons of craving, aversion and delusion. By enlisting the five skillful *indriyas*, the Buddha maintains his faith, focus, perseverance, mindfulness, and wisdom and stays the course of meditative insight. While the women shimmer with beauty, the Buddha sees through their glittering exteriors to their “skin, bones, and sinews.” From the enlightened perspective of the Buddha, the “three courtesans” sent by the Demon Māra are no more alluring than “three fetid cadavers.”⁵⁸² By reining in, or “yoking” (Skt.: *xi* 繫) the temptations and distractions sent by Māra, the Buddha effaces the fear of dying and the cravings that sustain this fear. At this point, the Buddha is beyond fear because he is not subject to the cravings that are sustained by the illusory notion of continued survival in a defiled human body.

In his exegesis of the *Mahāvibhāṣa*, Xuanzang underscores the doctrinal message that the cultivation of the five *indriyas* allays the fear of dying that is the fundamental obstruction to liberation. By following the path of the Buddha, the sentient being opens the possibility of seeing

⁵⁸² *Mahāvibhāṣa* 135: As the sūtras say: the three feminine forms of *māra* emanated several hundred female forms. These were young girls, pregnant, and non-pregnant women, middle-aged women and old women in the number of several hundred. Moreover, they were naturally comely and resplendent in their emanations and tempted the Bodhisattva to pay a visit with them, telling the Bodhisattva (i.e., the Buddha-to-be): “Come hither and I wish to consort with you.” The bodhisattva did not accept, and quit the scene with shame and contrition by causing them in his thinking to become old and frail. 如契經說。有三魔女各各化作多百女身。所謂童女產未產女。中女老女。其數容百。又自化身種種嚴飾。為惑媚故詣菩薩所。謂菩薩曰。可起沙門。我等今來願相適事。菩薩不受。尋令彼身作衰老形羞慚而退。

How do you know that it is so? I once heard that the Bhadānta Upagupta stood upright in meditation in the dhyāna absorption, but was cajoled by the demon Māra, then he knew it was Māra. In order to quell her (the demon Māra), by way of his supranormal powers he transformed the women into three dead bodies. And he yoked these around the neck of King Māra. The dead snake, dead dog, and the dead person are the extreme shame of kind māra, no matter what means he tries, he cannot remove them. These three are the three corpses that hung around his neck and even when Māra quickly changed their smell, it goes without saying that the monks were afraid of him. In order to remove the dead bodies Māra jumped into a well and then soared off into the sky.” 云何知然。曾聞尊者鄔波鞠多。端身靜慮魔為燒弄。便以花鬘冠尊者頂。尊者出定驚怪念言：“此誰所作尋？”則知此是魔所為。為調彼故則以神力化作三屍。繫魔王頸。所謂死蛇死狗死人。於是魔王極懷慚恥。種種方便欲去不能。所繫三屍纏繞其頸。轉急轉臭魔既無聊倍增惶恐。為脫屍故。便陷入地更出騰空。

through the illusions of the material world, relinquishing unwholesome impulses and dispelling the fear of dying that obstructs the path to enlightenment. The path to enlightenment is thus available to all who cultivate the *indriyas* through meditative insight.

In his commentary on the tenth verse of the second chapter of Vasubandhu's *Treasury of Abhidharma*, "The Discrimination of Faculties," Yaśomitra concurs with Xuanzang regarding the centrality of craving in the subjective experiences of fear and suffering in dying sentient beings. Yaśomitra enlists the story of the temptation of the Buddha to illustrate how the demon Māra embodies the fear of a painful course of dying and the fear of suffering in an afterlife that is unknown. Both Yaśomitra and Xuanzang use the life of the historical Buddha to make the doctrinal point that the fear of dying, and the fear of an unknown afterlife, can be subdued by cultivating the skillful *indriyas*.

The Root of the Fear of Dying: Clinging, Anger, and Delusion

In his original work in the CWSL, Xuanzang conceptualizes the fear of dying as a pre-programmed aversion to suffering that is based on experiences of dying in past lives. Xuanzang views the subliminal awareness of the pain of past lives as rooted in the *ālayavijñāna*, the storehouse consciousness of the sentient being. The trace memories of pain and suffering endured in prior lives that are stored in the mind inform the subjective experiences of sentient beings dying in the here-and-now. Sentient beings *know* that rebirth entails re-death. Xuanzang notes that the life of the Buddha illustrates how the mastery of the fear of dying results in liberation by breaking the cycle of death and rebirth.

In fascicle five of the CWSL, Xuanzang formulates a taxonomy of one hundred eight mental and bodily afflictions that contribute to the fear of dying in a sentient being. He states that

the fear of dying is generated by the three poisons (Skt. *sandu* 三毒) that form the primary *kleśas* of craving, aversion and delusion. According to Xuanzang, when the six sensory *indriyas* of vision, hearing, taste, smell, touch, and the mind are exposed to the toxins of craving, aversion, and delusion, they become afflicted in six negative ways. The six afflicted states of the *indriyas*, or the “six major afflictions” (Chi.: *da fannao di fa* 大煩惱地法), are unfaithfulness, sluggishness, disconsolation, excitability, unconsciousness, and forgetfulness. When, for example, the *indriya* of mindfulness or perseverance is afflicted by disconsolation, a secondary wave of fear is released into the mind of the dying. The one hundred eight mental and bodily afflictions therefore contribute to the fearful mental state of the dying sentient being.

The taxonomy of the one hundred eight afflictions (Skt.: *anukleśas*; *sui fannao* 隨煩惱) provides the doctrinal support for the practice of the rites of contrition that are observed in Mahāyāna Buddhism. In this ritual, the practitioner holds the Buddhist rosary of one hundred eight beads that represent each one of the afflictions.⁵⁸³ Through chanting and recitation while holding the beads, the practitioner expiates the bad karma generated by the three poisons and battles the one hundred eight fears of dying. Xuanzang recommends this practice for the living as well as for those facing dying, as it is meant to cultivate the five skillful *indriyas* that aid the skillfully dying mind.

Indeterminacy and Dying in a Skillful Way

In his discussion of the primary fear of dying in the CWSL, Xuanzang introduces the idea that a sentient being who has accumulated a share of bad karma in life can improve his or her moral circumstances in the final days and hours of life. Improving the moral and hedonic quality

⁵⁸³ The alternative derivation for the number of 108 *kleśas* is arrived at by the sum of ten declivities 十纏 and ninety-five factors of bondage 九十五結.

of dying entails deactivating the unskillful *indriyas* of anxiety and suffering, and activating the skillful *indriyas* of faith, concentration, perseverance, mindfulness, and wisdom. This concept is based on the idea of the indeterminacy of mind, which avers that even the mind of a deluded sentient being can be improved at the end of life.

In his analysis of the moral grades of dying, Xuanzang develops a taxonomy of the “nine moral grades of minds” (Chi. *jiuzhong mingzhong xin* 九種命終心) of sentient beings who approach the end of life with an accumulation of bad karma. This taxonomy is based on two variables: the degree to which the skillful and unskillful *indriyas* are developed and the degree to which the quality of the mind and the body is in an unwholesome state due to the activation of the *indriyas* of anxiety and suffering and the inactivation of the skillful *indriyas*. There are nine grades of mind of sentient beings who have accumulated a portion of bad karma at the end stage of life. The first group is the three states of mind 三品 where anxiety and suffering are present and producing unwholesome thoughts and actions 不善能發業. The second set of six states 六品 of mind is where anxiety and suffering are present but not producing unwholesome thoughts and actions 不能發業. According to Kuiji’s⁵⁸⁴ and Dullyun’s⁵⁸⁵ exegeses (contained within their respective commentaries on the *Yogācārabhūmi*) on the term,⁵⁸⁶ these nine moral grades are all impedimentary morally-indeterminate (Skt.: *nivṛtāvyākṛta*; Chi. *Youfu wuji* 有覆無記) in nature. This means that all nine moral grades of mind but the final result of dying has not been determined (*avyākṛta*), although spiritual impediments are definitely present.

The doctrinal significance of the taxonomy is important in that Xuanzang posits that even sentient beings with a high portion of bad karma have the potential to improve their karmic

⁵⁸⁴ T1585:31.44.b24.

⁵⁸⁵ T1828:42.321.c6

⁵⁸⁶ As it appears in the CWSL at T1585:31.25b (contained within their commentaries on the *Yogācārabhūmi*).

standing at the end of life.

What is Karmic Indeterminacy?

For Xuanzang, who follows the spirit and the letter of Vasubandhu's teaching in Chapter Three of the *Treasury of Abhidharma*, on "Discriminating Worldly Things," the "state of dying" (Skt.: *cyutirbhava*) comes at the end of a life and before the afterlife. Thirty stanzas later, Vasubandhu elaborates upon the qualities of the state of dying. In this stanza,⁵⁸⁷ Vasubandhu depicts the moral and amoral qualities manifested by the dying sentient being:

Rupture of the skillful roots or retaining them, detachment or loss of detachment, dying and becoming reincarnated, all of these are regarded as mental consciousness. Dying and becoming reborn are naught but aversive sensation.⁵⁸⁸

斷善根與續 離染退死生

許唯意識中 死生唯捨受

cheda-sandhāna-vairāgya-hāni-cyutyupapattayaḥ|

Manovijñāna eveṣṭāḥ upekṣāyāṃ cyutodbhavau|| 3.42||⁵⁸⁹

The above stanza describes the moral state of dying indeterminately. It demonstrates this indeterminacy by laying out two sets of alternatives: first, dying after having severed the skillful roots or retained the skillful roots; second, dying with a contaminated state of mind or dying with a pure state of mind. Dying is characterized as "naught but aversive" for two reasons. First, aversion represents a state of indeterminate karmic and hedonic quality. Raw aversion – the primal

⁵⁸⁷ Shastri, *Sphuṭārtha*, vol. 2, 418-9

⁵⁸⁸ de la Vallée Pouissin (1926, vol. 2, chapter 3, p. 131): *Rupture, reprise, detachment, perte du détachement, mort et naissance sont regardé au manovijñāna. La mort et la naissance, avec la sensation d'indifférence* (3.43a-pd).

⁵⁸⁹ Pradhan, *Abhidharmakośa*, 155-56.

sense of recoiling in the face of pain – can be transformed into a skillful sense of retiring indifference in the face of pain.⁵⁹⁰ Second, the sense of aversion accounts for the “hazy and faint” (Chi.: *mei lie* 味劣) nature of sensation in the dying being. According to the explanation Xuanzang develops, the morally neutral non-impedimentary conditions one finds oneself in during the stage of death make room for adjustment – changes for the better or worse.

In Xuanzang’s *Mahāvibhāṣa*, this category of *avyākṛta* applies to deaths and transmigratory rebirths, in addition to *indriyas* and their interrelation. In this Sarvāstivāda conceptual schema, the exercise of the “skillful-cultivable *indriyas*” (Chi.: *shanxiu gen* 善修根) and the “skillful exercise” of indeterminate *indriyas* is thought to eventually lead toward higher rebirths, and thus the prospect of achieving salvation, while “unskillful” actions do not.

In Xuanzang’s understanding of karma as *cetanā* or intentional activity – because physical and verbal actions are thought to be merely an expression of some inner intention – physical and verbal actions are not thought to have the karmic quality of good or bad in and of themselves, but are rather considered to be of indeterminate karmic quality. Accordingly, a karmically neutral death is a death of neither positive nor negative hedonic quality. It is neither particularly painful nor particularly peaceful. A karmically neutral death is a *avyākṛta* or karmically indeterminate way of dying that has already happened – that is, the sentient being has already died in a way that is neither hedonically nor morally bad or good.

In his glosses on indeterminate ways of dying, Asaṅga expresses the thought that within

⁵⁹⁰ *Mahāvibhāṣa*, fascicle 155: “Question: For what reason do all sentient beings at the end of life, and at the moment of conception, necessarily abide in aversive sensation?” 問：何因緣故一切有情命終結生必住捨受。

Reply: the five kinds of hedonic sensations do not have haziness or faintness as their mode of operation (*ākāra*). But aversion sensation in the state of dotage is not hazy or faint. For example, dying or the state of becoming reincarnated, they abide in aversive sensation in meeting the end of life or in becoming reincarnated. 答：於五受中，無有行相味劣。如捨受者。於十時中，無有味劣。如死、及生時者，故住捨受命終結生。

such scenarios, there is room for improvement as well as for deterioration. The basic thought that Xuanzang extracts from the *Summary of Abhidharma* gloss is that “intrinsically neutral” refers to things that are basically not of a karmic nature, in the sense that they are not related to good or bad karma.⁵⁹¹ The *Summary of Abhidharma* is a seminal work of Asaṅga that is cited heavily in Xuanzang’s CWSL. Xuanzang thus treats it as a work of Mahāyāna Abhidharma – a bridge text from the earlier Abhidharma to the Yogācāra portions of Asaṅga’s corpus. According to the understanding of intrinsic karmic neutrality established by Asaṅga in this work, factors include vitality, conspecificity, name (Skt.: *nāman*; Chi.: *ming* 名), syllable (Skt.: *kāya*; Chi.: *wenshen* 文身), and sentence (Skt.: *vyāñjana*; Chi.: *jushen* 句身).⁵⁹² These factors are neither inherently bad nor inherently good – rather, they are invested with a moral dimension with a specific intention – whether skillful, unskillful, or neither. For example, having vitality is not inherently good or bad, it is just a brute fact of life. The same is true of conspecificity. Some species populating certain

⁵⁹¹ Within the CWSL’s discussions the topic of the four moral grades of kuśala, akuśala, impedimentary, and non-impedimentary avyākṛta is introduced within the subject of the path of learning and of no-learning. (*śaikṣyāśaikṣyamārga*). The text (T1585:31.27.a17-24) reads: “the paths of learning (*śaikṣya*) and not-involving-learning (*aśaikṣya*), can, in sum, be divided into four portions: the skillful, the unskillful, the impedimentary and the non-impedimentary – i.e., the two forms of moral neutrality in hedonic experience (*vedanā*).” 又學無學。或總分四。調善·不善·有覆·無覆二無記受。

There is doctrine which holds that all three forms of hedonic sensation are proportioned into each [of four] moral grades. The five sensory consciousnesses arise simultaneously and lend free reign to greed/avarice and delusion. In those transmigratory destinies (*gatis*). 有義：三受容各分四。五識俱起任運貪癡。純苦趣中任運煩惱。

Avyākṛta is yet-unactivated karma. And [in the bad transmigratory destinies] it is associated with the faculty of suffering. 不發業者是無記故。彼皆容與苦根相應。

The Yogācārabhūmi says that granted one lends free reign to all the *kleśas*, all of these are apprehended and activated immediately before the eyes (*samud*). Granted that this extends to all conscious moments in the body, pervading all indriyas with which these (*kleśas*) are associated. If it does not extend to all conscious moments in the body, then it is associated with all *indriyas* in the basis of mind (*manobhūmi*). 瑜伽論說：若任運生一切煩惱，皆於三受，現行可得。若通一切識身者，遍與一切根相應。

⁵⁹² 何等自性無記？What are those factors intrinsically neutral. They are *sabhāgata*, *nāman*, *kaya*, *vyāñjana*, etc., associated with the mind in the eight loci of the *rūpyadhātu* (i.e., the eight heavenly loci in the fourth concentration sphere 第四靜 of the *rūpyadhātu*). What are those factors belonging to neutral factors? They are the factors that are neither defiled, nor pure in the mind they are all those factors classified under the mind and mental states including *nāman*, *kaya*, and *vyāñjana*, etc.” 謂八色界處意相應品命根眾同分名句文身等。何等相屬無記。謂懷非穢非淨心者。所有由名句文身所攝受心心所法。

dhātus are considered to be more spiritually advanced than others, but belonging to a given species is not a trait that bears an intrinsic moral shade. It is how one lives within that *dhātu* that imbues the *dhātu* factor with a particular moral tinge.

The other distinction introduced in the corpus of Chinese exegesis on Vasubandhu's Treasury is the distinction between “impedimentary moral indeterminacy” (Skt.: *nivṛtāvyākṛta*; Chi.: *youfu wuji* 有覆無記) or “non-impedimentary” determinacy (Skt.: *anivṛtāvyākṛta*; Chi.: *wufu wuji* 無覆無記).⁵⁹³ Impedimentary moral indeterminacy describes entering the stage of dying under the conditions decreed by the course of prior karma. Non-impedimentary moral determinacy describes the conditions that are modifiable or subject to improvement, either by yogic practice or by ritual intervention at the end of life.⁵⁹⁴

Xuanzang's translation of Asaṅga's *Summary of Abhidharma* offers an eightfold taxonomy of the definitions of *avyākṛta* factors. Other authors derive further distinctions within the category of *avyākṛta*, but moral impedimency (Skt.: *nivṛtā*; Chi.: *youfu* 有覆) and non-impedimency (Skt.: *anivṛtā*; Chi.: *wufu* 無覆) are the most general twofold distinction. The various sub-distinctions

⁵⁹³ Nyāyanusāra śāstra 30 (T1562:29.514.a11-12); also passage found in XZL 15: “Since *ārhat*s have profound disaffection towards future rebirth. Therefore, at the end of their life, they eschew the causal basis of skillful karma and reside only within the impedimentary or impedimentary neutral states, since the power (*śakti*) of those states is weak. The *ārhat* conforms to the opaque, weak state [of neutrality] in severing the mind, and thus attaining *nirvāṇa*, abiding only within the two forms of karmic neutrality (i.e., impedimentary and non-impedimentary).” 諸阿羅漢。深厭當生。故命終時。避彼因善。唯二無記。勢力劣故。順於昧劣相續斷心。故入涅槃。唯二無記。

⁵⁹⁴ *Abhidharmahṛdaya* says that four faculties are the last to terminate in the case of gradually dying with a morally-neutral mind: “When one meets the end gradually with a morally-neutral mind, the final to desert the body are the faculties of proprioception/tactition, the mind, vitality, and aversion.” 無記心漸命終時，最後捨四根，身•意•命•護根。The prolific 6th-century scholiast Jingying Huiyuan clarifies: “If one is on course for upward rebirth when dying out from the *kāmadhātu*, one's the five faculties are necessarily deserted, namely, the faculty of tactition, mind, life, aversion, and the bimodally-gendered faculty. How many faculties are deserted by the bimodally gendered human [within the *kāmadhātu*]? This is because those with dual-gender (*dvivyañjanam*) do not graduate by becoming reincarnated into a higher realm.” 若欲界死，生上界者，必捨五根，所謂身根•意•命•捨根•男•女根中。隨捨何根？二形之人，不上生故。Huiyuan is referring to the view, clearly stated in AK 2.22 (Shastri, p. 179) and Saṅghabhadra's Ny (fasc. 9) that those with dual gender, even sages, do not pass into the highest realm — the *arūpyadhātu* — via subsequent reincarnation.

and hairsplitting analyses of the concept of *avyākṛta* lie beyond the scope of this limited study.⁵⁹⁵ CWSL glosses the term “impedimentary moral neutrality” as indicating the capability to present two forms of impediment of the practitioner: “firstly, it can obstruct the pure dharma of s/he bent upon the sagely path (Skt.: *āryamārga*), and secondly, it can shade over the clear mind and render it impure.” 有覆無記：覆調染法，障聖道故，又能蔽心，令不淨故。

So, based upon the picture presented in *The Basis for Yoga Practitioners*, the work of a “mature” Asaṅga – what, if anything, can the dying human mind tilt the scale in its favor, even in the final moments of one’s life? Xuanzang’s accounts of dying in a neutral way unfurl in his translation of the *Yogācārabhūmi*, later adopted into a ritual manual compiled by the Esoteric Buddhist scholar and translator Yixing 一行 (683-727). In Yixing’s text, titled, the *Rites of Contrition for Negative Karmic Recompense* 罪報懺悔,⁵⁹⁶ the neutral way of dying features in a discussion of the mechanics of “contrition” (Chi.: *chanhui* 懺悔). In fact, Yixing quotes, verbatim, the *Yogācārabhūmi*’s description of the moral psychology of the neutral ways of dying. In this ritual text, Yixing extracts the idea of dying in a karmic-neutrally way found in Xuanzang translation of *The Basis for Yoga Practitioners*, and weds this description of dying to the idea of deathbed contrition. The thought is that even those who make contrition for past misdeeds upon their deathbed can achieve the result of a more peaceful course of dying.⁵⁹⁷ This result can be

⁵⁹⁵ For the definition of *avyākṛta* according to Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma, see Dhammajoti (2007, pp. 539-41), “Determinate and Indeterminate Karma” (Section 14.3 of Chapter Three “Karma and the Nature of its Retribution”).

⁵⁹⁶ This text attributed to Yixing is found in a later Song-Dynasty compilation, entitled, *Guide for the Contrition Rites of the Pervasive and Constant Vow of the Ten-Leveled Bodhimāṇḍa of the Sea-Seal on the Buddhāvataṃsaka Sūtra* 大方廣佛華嚴經海印道場十重行願常偏禮懺儀, fascicle 12.

⁵⁹⁷ Yixing adapts Xuanzang’s *Yogācārabhūmi* into rites of contrition for the dying. This text mentions the indeterminate dying mind’s need to “make contrition for retribution for bad acts:” “The indeterminately dying mind is fogged under and inert. Although it is not overly vexed in dying, it is not particularly peaceful either. There is a need to make contrition for bad karmic recompense.” 無記心死者。昏懵不惺。雖非苦惱死。亦非安樂死。罪報懺悔 (X74n1470p0259a08).

achieved through the proper practice of contrition, which entails repenting for any negative actions one may have done in present or past lives, to clear karmic obstacles that may be causing worldly difficulties:

However, the experience is more troubling with the scenario in which the sum of the bad karma slightly outweighs that of the good, and yet nothing is done to rectify that unfortunate situation. If unskillful karma predominates, the passage of death in a karmically-indeterminate mental state (Skt.: *avyākṛta-citta*) consists in terrifying darkness succeeded by bright light. In the final moments of life, the dying person relives these experiences of various unskillful actions in the form of departing visions. Asaṅga pronounces the fate of those who started out in an indeterminate state that has taken a turn for the worse as follows:

受盡先業所引果已，若行不善業者。當於爾時，受先所作諸不善業，所得不愛果之前相，猶如夢中見無量種變怪色相。依此相故薄伽梵說。⁵⁹⁸

When that fruit of previous actions is exhausted, and the effects are realized, as for the doer of unskillful actions, he first experiences the previous signs of the undesired fruit of unskillful actions, and as if dreaming of those unskillful actions, he experiences the monstrous 變怪 manifold visible phenomena of this [undesired fruit] – this was taught through implicit meaning (Skt.: *sandhā*) by the World-Honored-One:

若有先作惡不善業，及增長已；彼於爾時如日後分、或山山峯影等，懸覆遍覆極覆。當知如是補特伽羅從明趣闇。⁵⁹⁹

⁵⁹⁸ Bhattacharya, *Yogācārabhūmi*, 18: kurvann upayukte tasmin pūrvakarmākṣiptephale 'kuśalakarmakārī iha pūrvakṛtasya akuśalasya anīṣṭaphalasya karmanāḥ pūrvanimittāni pratyānubhavati /tadyathāsvapna iva anekavikṛta rūpadarśanam asya bhavati/Tib. (D 4035: vol. 127, folio/line 9a.2-9a.3): sngon gyi las kyis 'phangs pa'i 'bras bu de spyad nas 'chi ba'i dus byed pa de'i tshe mi dge ba'i las byed byed pa ni mi dge ba sngar byas pa'i mi sdug pa'i 'bras bu'i las kyi snga ltas rnams 'dir myong bar 'gyur te....

⁵⁹⁹ Bhattacharya, *Yogācārabhūmi*, 18: yad asya pūrvakaṃ pāpakam akuśalaṃ karma kṛtaṃ bhavaty upacitaṃ tat tasya tasmin samayesāyāhnakālaiva parvatānāṃ vāparvata-kūṭānāṃ vā chāya iva avalambate 'dhyavalambate'bhilambate ca / iti // ayaṃ ca pudgalo jyotistamaḥparāyaṇo veditavyaḥ /de sngon sdig pa mi dge ba'i las byas sheng bsags par gyur ba gang yin pa de de'i tshe de la pyam red kyi dus tshe ri rnams sam. ri'i rtse mo rnams kyi grib ma bzhin bab cing. lhak par 'pap la mngnon du...'bab par 'gyur ro zhes gsungs te. gang zak de na snang pa nas mun kyod du 'go pa lta pur rig par bya'o. D 4035: vol. 127, folio/line 9a.3-9a.4.

If one's unskillful karma consisting of previous bad actions predominates (over the good), then at evening time shade is seen as if veiled by jagged mountain-peaks covering over everything with shade.' – thus it was said –it should be known that this person hastens from darkness into light.

The thread of past karma – the bad karma – is unraveled as if “before the very eyes” of those dying with a mind bent upon unskillful karma. According to Zhizhou, the three lower moral grades of humans beings: lower-high, lower-middle, and lower-lower, are subjected to these departing visions.⁶⁰⁰ For Xuanzang, who abides by the Mahāyāna teachings disclosed by Asaṅga on the *ālayavijñāna*, all of the variegated kinds of experiences in dying, including the vivid departing visions of light and shade, are contained within the *ālayavijñāna*, the root consciousness of the individual sentient being.⁶⁰¹

According to the doctrine of *ālayavijñāna*, when we perform actions, we have sensory impressions, which are combined in the form of the variegated seeds stored up in the *ālayavijñāna*

⁶⁰⁰ In Chinese, the Sanskrit “hanging cloth” becomes “shadows cast by jagged mountain peak” [0210a12] Bhattacharya, *Yogācārabhūmi*, 19, glosses *kṛṣṇasya kutasya* in the Skt.: as “a sort of blanket made of goat hair.” Chengjing's sub-commentary on Kuiji's commentary on *The Basis for Yoga Practitioners* reads [0210a13] When one is about to die there are three images that appear as one vision. They are the image of the two peaks of mountain casting shade. When the three other kinds of shade cast down upon the dying that refers to the individual mind of he/she with bad karma and the visions that manifest with the setting sun by the mountains, peaks, and the shadows cast down by “mountains.” But the mountains are not real mountains. They are the reflections of mountains. Since the bad karma gains entrances into the human being in the state of dotage, he/she sees the sun setting across the mountains in the stage of end-of-life, and the inverted reflections (of the sun) are different in their moral grade. The sunset emerging (from the mountain peaks) is a genuine vision. The rest are reflections, but general reflections. In sequence, there are the shadows falling, pervading, and obscuring light. Those with lower, middle, and upper grades of karma see different things. 將沒時有三影現一見，山影覆二峯倒影像；三餘類懸覆摠意云臨命終時，由惡業故自心，變見於日沒時，所有諸山、及山峯等倒影影像名山等影非有實山。日照發影名山影也。以惡業者從明入闇故，見日輪將欲沒時、及倒影像不同善者，見日出時所有眾相體皆正也。其所現中少影多影、及普遍影。如次懸覆遍覆極覆顯。下中上三品所見各不同也。

⁶⁰¹ Kuiji records in his commentary on the *Yogācārabhūmi*: “When one belongs to the lower (three) grades of karmic standing, the immediate phenomenal characteristics appear like the shadows cast by mountain peaks hanging down. When one belongs to the middle (three) grades, the mountains pervasively cast overbearing shadows. For some belonging to the lower grades, the phenomenal characteristics (of dying) are like the back shadow of the setting sun casting overbearingly. These are all the immediate phenomenal characteristics of future rebirth that appear in the dying as effects of prior bad karma.” 下品惡業者。當相如峯影懸覆。中品如山遍覆。上品如日後分極覆。或下品如日後分影覆。中品如山遍覆。上品如峯影極覆。此是將命終時由先惡業所見當果相。

– literally, the “storehouse consciousness” (Skt.: *cangshi* 藏識). In this functional capacity of the storehouse consciousness, *ālayavijñāna* retains all the memories and mental impressions of past events in the form of the latent seeds. These impressions remain dormant or inert for most of the time in the form of the seed, but manifest continuously in those dying with a mind bent upon unskillful and unwholesome thoughts. They recycle mental impressions, forming the departing visions and creeping sensations experienced by the dying. Death is not the same kind of unconscious state as dreamless sleep, because *ālayavijñāna* has deserted the person in death, but it is merely dormant in sleep. For Xuanzang, *ālayavijñāna* represents the dormant capacities that distinguish death from biological life.

Xuanzang concludes that all ways of dying ultimately fall under the remit of karma. In his exegesis on the nature of the fear of dying, Xuanzang argues that this karma explains why all sentient beings, both human and non-human animals, recoil at dying and death. He argues that we are biologically programmed to recoil in aversion from dying. However, at the same time that he emphasizes the ingrained and preconditioned nature of the fear of death, Xuanzang offers a constructive program for overcoming the fear of dying through practice. Having confronted death through the first-hand experience of near-death scenarios, Xuanzang is aware of the issue of “sugar-coating” the reality of mortality by minimizing the pain and suffering of the dying. Xuanzang’s Abhidharma teachings codified in his translation of the *Mahāvibhāṣa* proclaim that “fear” (Skt.: *bhaya*) is rooted in the uncertainty and anxiety” that bubble up in the mind facing dangerous and taxing circumstances.⁶⁰² In particular, the Sarvāstivāda authority on these matters,

⁶⁰² *Mahāvibhāṣa* 75: “The Honorable Master (Bhādāntācārya) Vasumitra is of the opinion that fear belongs only to the *kāmadhātu*, whilst subtle aversion pervades all three realms (*tridhātu*): 尊者世友作如是說。怖唯欲界厭通三界, He is also of the opinion that fear pertains to affliction, whereas subtle aversion pertains to the skillful roots (*kuśalamūlāni*).” 復作是說。怖在煩惱品厭在善根品。

He is also of the opinion that fear is only either contaminated or non-impedimentary morally-neutral; whereas subtle aversion is only skillful. 復作是說。怖通染污無覆無記厭唯是善。

Vasumitra, takes pains to separate the mental state of fear from that of subtle aversion. The crux of the difference is that subtle aversion is fear” transformed from an unwholesome or karmically-indeterminate moral grade into a skillful moral grade. The erosion of fear comes about through gaining some distance from an irresolute and begrudging attitude towards danger and threats. This is fear transformed into the skillful state of retiring and subtle aversion. The faculty of aversion, when skillfully employed, can undermine the unwholesome tendency of fear and modify brute fear into a retiring sense of disinterest and tranquility.

In contrast to dying poorly or dying neutrally, during which little effort is made to improve the conditions of one’s way of dying, dying well involves the neutralization of the unwholesome activation of the hedonic faculties. The skillful ways of dying all involve the states of faith, concentration, and the recollection of wholesome practices. These states are manifested and sustained by the corresponding “wholesome faculties” or “skillful roots” (Skt.: *kuśalamūlāni*) – the five uncontaminated faculties of faith, spiritual perseverance, mindful recollection of practices, concentration, and wisdom.⁶⁰³

Throughout his CWSL, Xuanzang develops the theory that the karmic grade of the *indriyas* indelibly impacts the karmic quality of the way a sentient being dies. He focuses on the hedonic faculty of aversion in his discussion of overcoming the fear of dying. This is because of the particular nature of the *indriya* of aversion. The *indriya* of aversion is regarded as morally

Bhādāntācārya proclaims that: fear refers to the burning desire to gain distance from one’s uncertainties and anxieties. Once one has gained precious distance from one’s hatred of bad things, that is termed ‘subtle aversion.’ Hence, there is a difference between hatred and subtle aversion.”大德說曰。於衰損事深心疑慮欲得遠離說名為怖。已得遠離深心憎惡說名為厭。如是名為厭怖差別 (T1545:27.386.b12-18).

⁶⁰³ The 6th-century scholiast Jingying Huiyuan 淨影慧遠 derives his explanation from the *Abhidharmahrdaya*. It is basically the same as the explanations found in Xuanzang's *Jñānaprasthāna* and *Mahāvibhāṣa*. See Jingying Huiyuan's *Treatise on the Doctrine of Mahāyāna* 大乘義章: “If one is dying with a mind bent on skillfulness, then just as in the aforementioned moral-neutrally ways, across each and every threshold [between life and death], in each and every case, the applied practice adds on an additional five [skillfull] faculties including faith, etc.” 若善心中而命終者，如上無記，一一門中，皆悉加於信等五根, (T44, no. 1851, p. 559, c27-9).

indeterminate in that it can be either a skillful or an unskillful condition, according to its activation. For example, the unskillful use of the *indriya* of aversion manifests in cringing in the face of pain, while the skillful use of aversion manifests in the equanimity of the mind of the Buddha.

Aversion, as distinguished from faith, concentration, perseverance, and aversion, is an *avyākṛta* faculty, or a faculty that is morally indeterminate. It is because of this *avyākṛta* status that aversion is grouped together with the hedonic faculties and not with the skillful faculties of faith, concentration, perseverance, mindful recollection, and wisdom. This means that aversion can be applied to wholesome ends, which means enlisting aversion to counteract the negative karma and impurities accumulated by the hedonic faculties when free rein is given to unskillful purposes. For example, Xuanzang states that the cultivation of aversion is necessary to combat the fear of dying by overcoming anxiety. Anxiety is the fourth of the five hedonic faculties and is not *avyākṛta*.

Xuanzang builds his yoga of dying upon the literature of both Abhidharma and Yogācāra luminaries in the Buddhist tradition. For Xuanzang, the way to start to overcome one's fear of dying consists in subordinating the faculty of anxiety. The way to quell the unwanted aggravation of the ingrained faculty of anxiety is to activate the countervailing force of one's better angels, as it were – the skillful faculties of faith, concentration, and spiritual tenacity.

In both the Abhidharma and Yogācāra systems of the Buddhist path or *mārga*, the practitioner strives to curb the “immediately manifest activity” (Chi.: *xianxing* 現行; Skt: *sam√ud*) of the faculty of anxiety by counteracting the faculty of anxiety with the “wholesome” activities of the faculty of faith, spiritual perseverance (Skt. *vīryēndriyam*), concentration (*samādhīndriyam*), and aversion (Skt. *upekṣēndriyam*) in the wholesome sense. This wholesome sense of *upekṣēndriyam* is distinct from the tainted or contaminated sense of *upekṣēndriyam* when it refers to the brutish sense of aversion that earthly animals – both humans and otherwise – show when

they cower in the face of pain. The doctrinal basis for the Medicine Buddha deathbed practices for a skillful way of dying is to help overcome anxiety by converting aversion into its pure and sublime sense of retiring indifference to pain and discomfort.

The Medicine Buddha rites elaborated in Xuanzang's translation of the Medicine Buddha sūtra promise that "if one is able to make a reverent offering with the manifold/many marvelous offerings to the Lapis-Lazuli-light World-Honored Healing Tathāgata, then all the nightmarish bad signs, including all sorts of inauspicious signs, will cease and one will not be afflicted by them in dying."⁶⁰⁴ This gleaming promise offers the hope of a better way of dying even for those dying in destitute conditions. Even if one is poverty-stricken and unable to give monetary offerings to the Saṅgha, observing reverent devotion to the Medicine Buddha in moments of need can tangibly improve the conditions of one's final hours.

Counteracting Fear and Anxiety with Equanimity

Equanimity is the skillful manifestation of aversion. During the course of dying, the practitioner may be beset by depression and disconsolation created by the faculty of anxiety in conjunction with the mental faculty, and the sense *indriyas*. According to Sthiramati's commentary on Asaṅga's *Summary of the Mahāyāna*, as well as Asaṅga's auto-commentary on his own *Basis*

⁶⁰⁴ Daehyeon's 太賢 commentary on *Medicine Buddha sūtra* essentially provides a paraphrase of (T450:14.406.c20-a6) in the *Medicine Buddha sūtra* : "If this person (someone) is able to make a reverent offering with the manifold/many marvelous offerings to the Lapis-Lazuli-light World-Honored Healing Tathāgata then all the nightmarish bad signs including all sorts of inauspicious signs will cease and one will not be afflicted by them in dying. This also goes for those who fear of drowning, being cut by knife or killed by poison, falling from cliff, malevolent stampeding elephant, or lions, tigers, wolves, bears, poisonous snakes, malicious ants, centipedes, scutigeros, or mosquitoes.

此人若以眾妙資具，恭敬供養彼世尊藥師瑠璃光如來者。惡夢・惡相諸不吉祥皆悉隱，沒不能為患。或有水火刀毒懸嶮惡象師子虎狼熊羆・毒蛇・惡蠍・蜈蚣・蚰蜒・蚊虻等怖。

If they are capable and achieve mindfulness in recollection of heart/mind and reverently make devotional offering to the Buddha, she gains liberation/reprieve from all manner of fearsome things.若能至心憶念彼佛恭敬供養。一切怖畏皆得解脫。From Daehyeon's *Ancient Jottings on the Original Vow of the Medicine Buddha* 本願藥師經古迹, fascicle 2, T1770:48.260.c07-13.

for *Yoga Practitioners* or his *Treatise Glorifying the Sagely Teaching* (Chi.: *Xianyang shengjiao lun* 顯揚聖教論)⁶⁰⁵ both critical primary sources transmitted and translated by Xuanzang and later incorporated into his CWSL, *upekṣā* provides the singular antidote (Skt.: *pratipakṣa*; Chi.: *duizhi* 對治) to fear.⁶⁰⁶ *Upekṣā*, or aversion in the skillful sense, also directly counteracts other mental impediments, fear foremost among them, that suffuse the mind with a generalized sense of anxiety and unease in the face of mortality.

Asaṅga's *Basis for Yoga Practitioners* spares little gratuitous detail in depicting the horrific ways deluded and impure sentient beings suffer. In contrast to these undesirable scenarios, the desirable scenario occurs when the yogic practitioner activates the faculty of aversion or *upekṣêndriyam* in a skillful way. This faculty exercises its power to countervail and erode the unwholesome aversion to physical pain, and to replace and restore that unwholesome form of aversion with a retiring sense of indifference and equanimity. *Upekṣêndriyam* has both wholesome and "unwholesome" applications. Hence, it is classified as one of the faculties of a karmically neutral or indeterminate nature. Whereas the activation of *upekṣêndriyam* in a benighted worldling may only reinforce her\his unwholesome detestation of and aversion to painful stimuli, in the enlightened sage, the faculty of aversion works in a wholesome way to efface aversive tendencies

⁶⁰⁵ *Xianyang shengjiao lun* reads: "Those without fear still have to, from time to time, observe and perceive it, since without corroboration in experience there is no observing it and no perceiving it. Those born without a sense of trepidation and fear have a withered heart with a vapid lack within it. Thus, when it repeatedly arises, the mind does not cling or become attached to it and excises, and severs it, discarding and effacing it." 無怯怖者。謂於時時中應知應觀。於法由不知不觀不證入故。生於怯怖。心有萎悴心有虛乏。如是數數生時。心不執著除斷棄捨 (T1602:31.513.c08-10).

⁶⁰⁶ Stthiramati's commentary on Asaṅga's *Summary of Abhidharma*: "When the (i.e., Asaṅga's) text speaks about the antidote to fear it refers to the desire that is overly terrified of other sentient beings. The antidote is established for all sentient beings by way of the *mārga* that will guide and save all (sentient beings). 'Two times two' refers to the different causal bases of the fourfold noble truth in (two) different ways as pure and impure, since the *lokôttara mārga* (pertaining to the first two noble truths) and the worldly path (Skt.: *laukika-mārga*) as twofold path together with the two fold way of *vipāśyanā* and *śamathā*, each are multiplications (of two things) that can be corroborated (in the sūtras)." 怖治欲法者。謂說欲過患怖諸有情。立對治道拔濟一切。二二數會者。謂於染淨因果差別四真諦中。以世出世二道及奢摩他毘鉢舍那二道。數數證會故 (T1606:31.773.c25-28).

and to maintain a calm and collected attitude towards the bodily pain experienced throughout life, and especially at the end of life, during the states of being chronically sick or dying.

In addition to the positive role of the faculty of aversion – *upekṣēndriyam* implemented towards spiritually constructive ends – the five cultivatable skillful faculties of faith, concentration, perseverance, mindful recollection, and wisdom are involved in the way the human sages approach their inevitable mortal death. In addition to the hedonic faculty of aversion, the two faculties of faith and concentration play a dominant role in neutralizing the aggravation that the individual suffers due to the inborn faculties of anxiety and suffering. The Abhidharma literature that Xuanzang transmits to China is unequivocal in the judgment that all humans, regardless of geographical circumstance or social standing, are born with an ingrained sense of anxiety aroused by the inborn faculty of anxiety or *daurmanasyēndriyam*.

The final chapter of this study explores another way to overcome the fear of dying. This way involves becoming reborn into the realms of subtle material wherein sentient beings are reborn without the unwholesome and undesirable faculties of suffering and anxiety. These benign realms, containing comparatively little suffering and pain, include the pure lands of the Buddhas – most famously, the Western Paradise of Amitābha. While Xuanzang recognizes the popularity of the cults of rebirth in the Amitābha Pure Land, his Bhaiṣajyaguru rites for the sick and dying highlight the benefits of becoming reborn both in the southern pure land of the Healing Medicine Buddha and, as his hagiographer Huili confirms, in the Tuṣita Heaven of the future Maitreya Buddha.⁶⁰⁷

Although Xuanzang professes a plurality of possible preferred destinations for his future rebirths, one thing is certain: “rebirth in the Pure Land of Amitābha is not for mere *pṛthagjanas*

⁶⁰⁷ *Fayuan zhulin*, T2122:53.406.a3.

and ordinary rubes, since I worry that they would have difficulty cultivating and completing it.”⁶⁰⁸ Xuanzang’s dismissal of the Amitabha cult on the basis of its inferior practicability for “mere mortals like me” is an irony not found in later Japanese followers of the Amitabha cult, judging by Stone’s (2016) recent groundbreaking findings on deathbed rituals in medieval Japan. By contrast, Xuanzang promoted the cults of the Future Buddha and the Medicine Buddhas on the basis of their more general practicability. In the throes of dying, Xuanzang musters the energy to faithfully recite two verses from the Tuṣita Heaven Pure Land sūtras. However, in life, Xuanzang’s promotion of the deathbed rituals designed around the central figure of the healing Bhaiṣajyaguru — or the Medicine Buddha, as he is most commonly known in China, Korea and Japan — lead him into a discussion of the ways to improve the quality of dying for the majority of Buddhist followers.

⁶⁰⁸ Ibid., T.2122:53.406.a5: 彌陀淨土恐凡鄙穢修行難成。

Chapter Four: On Dying the Pious Death

What is a pious death? In the minutes before his death, Xuanzang summoned up the last of his vital energy and recited two stanzas from the *Tuṣita Buddha* sūtra. According to his biographer, Huili, Xuanzang chanted the sūtra to attain reincarnation into the highest realm of the *kāmadhātu*, the heavenly domain of the *Maitreya Buddha*, the successor to the present Buddha. Xuanzang devotes a vast portion of his exegesis of dying to an examination of what it means to die well. While investigating the variety of descriptions of dying given in the Indic scriptures, Xuanzang observes that by attending to the condition of the *indriyas*, the physical and psychological suffering of dying that is innate to all sentient beings can be ameliorated.

Within the Indic texts, Xuanzang finds support for the idea that an improvement in the quality of dying, in this life or the next, is attainable. Xuanzang avers that the possibility of improving the quality of dying well in this lifetime, or of increasing the chance of being reborn into a realm in which the experience of dying is benign, remains available to all sentient beings, up to and during the end of life. In his analysis of the scriptures, Xuanzang concludes that it is possible for sentient beings, including those burdened with bad karma, to increase the possibility of dying well in the present life or in future incarnations by engaging in practices that improve karmic standing.

With the Yogācāra doctrine of the *indriyas*, Xuanzang finds the theoretical foundation for spiritual practices that are intended to improve the possibility of dying well. For Xuanzang, dying well means dying quickly, and with a minimum of mental anguish and physical pain. Dying well is equated to dying skillfully through the cultivation and development of the five skillful *indriyas* (Skt.: *kuśalamulāṇi*; Chi.: *shanxiu gen* 善修根) of faith, perseverance, concentration, mindfulness and wisdom. To die skillfully, the sentient being converts the *indriya* of aversion into a sublime

form and counters the physical and psychological manifestations of the *indriya* of anxiety with the five skillful *indriyas*.

Xuanzang acknowledges that aside from the exalted case of the Gautama Buddha, the psychological and physical aspects of suffering that are concomitant with dying for sentient beings living in the *kāmadhātu* cannot be eliminated entirely. He holds firm, however, to the idea that a sentient being who conditions the skillful *indriyas* with meditation and other wholesome practices increases the likelihood of facing dying with clarity of mind and equanimity. Additionally, the cultivation of the skillful *indriyas* through the path of insight increases the possibility of being reborn into a benign incarnation and a favorable transmigratory realm.

Within the Buddhist cosmology, the transmigratory realm, or the *dhātu*, into which a sentient being is born dictates the range of possibilities of dying that a being will face. From his studies of the *Mahāvibhāṣa* and his analyses of the commentaries of Vasubandhu and Saṅghabhadra on the *Treasury of Abhidharma*, Xuanzang concludes that the quality of dying varies widely within the three environmental realms of the *kāmadhātu*, the *rūpadhātu* and the *arūpyadhātu*. The type of dying is determined, to a large extent, by the *indriyas* that are innate to the sentient being who lives within a specific *dhātu*. For example, a sentient being born into the earthly realm of the *kāmadhātu* will experience physical and psychological distress while dying because the *indriyas* of anxiety and suffering are innate to beings who reside in the *kāmadhātu*. The spiritually-advanced sentient being who is born into the Pure Lands of the *rūpadhātu*, however, will have a quick and painless death, because beings in the *rūpadhātu* are born without the *indriyas* of anxiety or suffering. Moreover, unlike the sentient beings in the dusty *Sahā* world, inhabitants of the *rūpadhātu* need not worry about a “gradual process of dying” (Skt.: *kramacyuti*; Skt.: *jiansi* 漸死) that is ridden with physical pain, terrifying visions of a gruesome nature and emotional

distress. Beings in the *rūpadhātu* die quickly, and without physical or mental torment.

Xuanzang acknowledges that obtaining a skillful death may not be possible, either because a sentient being does not cultivate the *indriyas* prior to or during dying, or because the being is born into a *dhātu* in which a painful way of dying is predetermined. He posits that two factors determine the type of dying experienced by a sentient being: conspecific factors (Skt.: *sabhāgatā*; Chi.: *tongzhong fen* 同衆分) and non-conspecific factors. Conspecific factors are the innate biological and genetically pre-programmed variables that allow a sentient being to live in, and adapt to, a specific *dhātu*.⁶⁰⁹ They include the type and the number of *indriyas* that are borne by a sentient being living within a specific environmental realm. Non-conspecific factors include the experiences and the behaviors that the sentient being engages in from conception until the moment of death. Xuanzang avers that genetics and development are involved in how a sentient being lives and dies and that karma is implicated in the expression of both factors. In his analysis of the Buddhist doctrine of karma, Xuanzang concludes that karma is ineluctably related to the conspecific and non-conspecific factors involved in the dying of a sentient being.

The exegesis of dying takes Xuanzang into an exploration of the role of karma in determining the quality of dying and the placement of sentient being into the transmigratory realm after death. Xuanzang concludes that karma is implicated in the quality of dying in two ways. First, because the balance of good and bad karma that is accumulated by a sentient being determines the condition of the *indriyas* at the end of life, karma dictates the moral and hedonic quality of dying. Second, because the balance of karma dictates the conspecific variables, such as the type and

⁶⁰⁹ Kritzer (1998, p. 30) characterizes the Buddhist doctrine of karma, as the exclusive province of mental consciousness. Kritzer writes: “Whereas Buddhists have always been concerned with the karmic legacy of the past, which is essentially a matter of consciousness, people today, and not just scientists, focus on the transmission of genes, a material or physical process that is yet somehow not completely antithetical to Buddhist notions of karma.” The literature surveyed in this section is concerned with karmic legacy, the phylogenetic and ontogenetic impact of karmic from past lives.

number of *indriyas* carried by a sentient being in a specific realm, karma determines the type of dying that is experienced by that being. For example, sentient beings that are born into the realm of the *kāmadhātu*, as opposed to those living in the *rūpadhātu*, carry the *indriyas* of suffering and anxiety. Dying skillfully in the *Sahā* world, unlike dying well in the Pure Lands, therefore requires training of the *indriyas* with meritorious practices.

Throughout his comprehensive analyses of the Abhidharma and Yogācāra texts, Xuanzang concludes that karma plays a decisive and pervasive role in determining the way a sentient being dies and the *dhātu* into which a sentient being is reborn. While the transmigratory realm determines a range of possibilities for how a sentient being dies, karma dictates the *dhātu* into which a sentient being is reborn. Xuanzang postulates, however, that while karma is the ultimate authority, a sentient being has agency in determining the moral and hedonic qualities of the last stages of life. Therefore, by choosing to improve the mental condition of dying by accumulating good karma, or by neutralizing bad karma, a sentient being improves the quality of dying and the placement into the next realm of rebirth.

Enlisting Yogācāra theory, Xuanzang posits that the seeds of good karma can be cultivated through yogic practice and merit, even in the last minutes and seconds of life. By sponsoring or receiving rituals, a sentient being may improve the spiritual *indriyas*, the quality of dying and the afterlife. Xuanzang explains, however, that if the seeds of spiritual enlightenment do not bear fruit in the form of a benign death in this life, they may in another incarnation. Ultimately, Xuanzang concludes that a sentient being can influence the karmic balance, in this life and the next, through the practice of yoga and meritorious actions.

This chapter is composed of four sections. The first section examines the impact of the karma accumulated in past and present lives on the course of dying. The second section turns to a

discussion regarding the definition of the term “state of dying” (Skt.: *cyutirbhava*) and the process of dying as determined by the Yogācāra scholars. The third section examines how the number and quality of the *indriyas* carried by different species of sentient beings within the three transmigratory realms influence the experience of dying. The conclusion of the chapter is devoted to an examination of the impact of karma on the dying body and the consciousness of the sentient being.

The Impact of Present and Past Karma on Dying

In his exegesis of dying and karma, Xuanzang ascertains that the type of dying experienced by a sentient being is determined by the indomitable force of karma. In his investigation into the process of dying, Xuanzang turns to the description of dying articulated by Vasubandhu in the *Treasury of Abhidharma*. In the first line of the thirteenth stanza of Chapter Three, “Discriminating Worldly Things” (Skt.: *Lokanirdeśa*; Chi.: *Fenpin shipin* 分別世品), Vasubandhu states that the process of dying is shaped by the good and the bad karma that is accumulated by a sentient being at the end of life. In his translation of this stanza, Xuanzang describes how the karma amassed during the current life and the karma inherited from past existences (Skt.: *pūrvabhava*) determine three things: the way a sentient being dies, the course of the intermediate state between incarnations, and the placement into the species and the *dhātu* of the next life. Xuanzang makes it clear that the *dharma*s, or the causal factors that determine the moral status of the sentient being in present and past existences (Skt.: *pūrvakālabhava*), regulate the process of dying, the quality of the intermediate state between incarnations, and the station into which a sentient being is reborn.

In his translation of the description of dying in the *Treasury of Abhidharma* by Vasubandhu, Xuanzang writes:

Dying is the state created by the presence of prior karma, from which it draws forth. It is the state before the moment of becoming reincarnated and after death.⁶¹⁰

此一業引故 如當本有形 本有謂死前 居生剎那後

Ekākṣepādasāvaiṣyatpūrvakālabhavakṛtiḥ|

Sa punarmaraṇāt pūrva upapattikṣaṇāt paraḥ|| 3.13a-d (Shastri, 1976, vol. 2, p. 422)⁶¹¹

In his translation, Xuanzang locates the moment-to-moment process of dying within the transmigratory lifecycle and the prior incarnations of a sentient being. He posits that the entirety of the karma accumulated by a sentient being, in the past and in the present, influences the final moments of the present life and the transition into the next life. In his lyrical Chinese translation of the five-character-per-line verse (Chi.: *wuyan ju* 五言句), Xuanzang uses the character *yin*, 引 to describe how dying “draws forth spiritual fruit.”⁶¹² In this translation of *yin*, Xuanzang highlights how the process of dying draws forth the totality of the karma that is borne by a sentient being and transforms it into either a spiritual reward or a karmic retribution. The seeds of the good karma that a sentient being plants in current and past lives produce a benign death, afterlife and rebirth. Conversely, the fruit of bad karma planted during past and present lives manifests in a painful death, and a less than benign afterlife and reincarnation.

⁶¹⁰ This translation is based on de la Vallée Pouissin, *L'Abhidharmakośa de Vasubandhu*, Vol. 2, 45): “Etant projeté par le même acte qui projette la purvakabhava, c'est-à-dire l'être de la destinée à venir après sa conception, l'être intermédiaire a la forme de cet être. Celui-ci est antérieur à la mort, postérieur à la conception.” That is to say the being of destiny to come after its conception, the intermediate being has the form of this being. (Vol 2: 45) This is anterior to death, posterior to conception. *sa punar maraṇātpurva upapattikṣaṇātparaḥ* // 3.13cd – “Existence in a previous time (Skt.: pūrvakālabhāva) refers to that existence prior to death; and resides in the moment after rebirth.” 本有謂死前；居生剎那後 (Pradhan, p. 125; T29, no. 1558, p. 45, c11-12).

⁶¹¹ De ni 'phen pa gcig pa'i phyir, sngon dus srid 'byung sha tshugs can, de ni 'chi ba'i sngon rol te, skye ba'i skad cig phan chad do/, D 4089: vol. 140, folio/line 7a.7.

⁶¹² Hirakawa, *AKBh Index*, vol. 1, 12.

The Cycle of Rebirth and Karma

In a commentary on Chapter Three in the *Treasury of Abhidharma* by Vasubandhu, Yaśomitra vividly illustrates the impact of karma inherited from prior lives. Yaśomitra uses the example of a *nāraka*, a hellish being, who because of bad karma accumulated in a “past existence,” or *pūrvabhava*, dies in utero.⁶¹³ Yaśomitra claims that the case of the stillborn *nāraka* demonstrates how karma dictates the type of dying experienced by all sentient creatures, including those born and reborn into ephemeral and short-lived life forms.⁶¹⁴ In the *Sphuṭārthābhidharmakośa*, a line-by-line commentary on the *Treasury of Abhidharma*, Yaśomitra states: “Even if the *nāraka* dies in utero, in the intermediate state, the *nāraka* will take to the womb of another mother.” Yaśomitra writes that the vicious cycle of birth, death and reincarnation will continue until the bad karma carried by the *nāraka* is “burnt off” (Chi.: *shao ye* 燒業).⁶¹⁵

Throughout his exegesis on the impact of karma on dying, Xuanzang steadfastly maintains

⁶¹³ Shastri, *Sphuṭārtha*, vol. 2, 420.

⁶¹⁴ Yaśomitra writes: “Even if he dies out in utero, the *nāraka* within the intermediate state will take to [another] mother’s womb.” *Yadi garbhastho 'pi mriyeta tasya nārako 'ntarābhavo mātuh kukṣim nirdahet.*

⁶¹⁵ *Mahāvibhāsa* 70T27n1545p0362a12:

Question: What form does the *antarābhavin* take, given what he/she/it was in the previous life (*pūrvabhava*)? It is admitted that the womb of one bitch can contain five beings in various transmigratory destinies at once. Since [for the *nāraka*], hell arises right before the eyes, how can he avoid scalding the bitch’s womb [upon conception of the *nāraka* in the new embryo], granted the previous life (of the *nāraka*) in the hells contains its share of raging fire that burns and scalds things? 問：若中有形狀如當本有？一狗等腹中容有五趣中有頓起。既有地獄中有現前。如何不能焚燒母腹？地獄本有多為猛火所焚燒故。

Response: this being (i.e., the *nāraka* becoming reborn) was not perpetually burning in the previous life. Sometimes the being was wandering deeper into the hells, or in other (i.e., cold) hells. As the +-*PraJñāPtiśāstra* says: sometimes narakas return to life and a cool breeze gradually arises as the being returns to life. At this time, how much more does the being have sentience and thought in becoming reborn, let alone in the present life, so how much more so in the intermediate state? It is supposed that if one grants that the *nāraka* is perpetually burning, then how is the intermediate being (of the *nāraka* in the previous life) subtle in its embodiment, as it imperceptible and intangible. The fire of the *nāraka* is like this - since the karma (of the mother and of the embryo) are exclusive, the mother should, like the *nāraka* itself, not be burnt (during conception).” 答：彼居本有亦不恒燒。如暫遊增，或餘地獄。施設論說：有時等活捺落迦中。冷風暫起有聲唱言等活等活。爾時有情尋復等活。本有尚然。況在中。設許恒燒如不可見亦不可觸。以中有身極微細故。火亦應爾。諸趣中有雖居一腹非互觸燒，業所遮故。母腹亦爾故不被燒。

that the moral grade of dying can be improved through the retention and the cultivation of the five skillful *indriyas* of faith, perseverance, concentration, mindfulness and wisdom. The promise of a better death in this incarnation, and of the liberation from the endless cycle of birth and death, remains available to all sentient beings, including those who are freighted with bad karma, as in the example of the very unfortunate *nāraka*.

Dying and the Agency of the Sentient Being

In a description of the “state of dying” (Skt.: *cyutirbhava*; Chi: *moyou* 沒有), found in the translations of the *Mahāvibhāṣa* and the *Treasury of Abhidharma*, Xuanzang describes how a sentient being up to, and during the very last moments of life, possesses the agency to modify and enhance moral standing. By the “state of dying” the Abhidharma and Yogācāra scholars refer specifically to the final moments in the life of a sentient being.

Throughout his exegesis of dying, Xuanzang makes the point that a sentient being can either improve the quality of dying by conditioning the five skillful *indriyas* or maintain the karmic status quo by neglecting to cultivate the *indriyas*. In his translation of the *Treasury*, Xuanzang describes how a sentient being can chose to either retain, or to discard the skillful *indriyas*, and thereby alter the hedonic and moral quality of dying during the transitional moments between life and the hereafter.

Throughout his analysis of *cyutirbhava* in the *Treasury of Abhidharma*, Xuanzang defines dying as a state of consciousness over which a sentient being has a modicum of control and self-determination. In his translation of the verses by Vasubandhu on the state of dying, Xuanzang describes the mind of a dying sentient being as in a state of moral indeterminacy. While in an indeterminate state, a sentient being may elect to sever or to retain the roots of the *indriyas* of faith,

perseverance, concentration, mindfulness and wisdom. This choice determines whether a sentient being dies in an impure and contaminated or in a pure and uncontaminated state of mind.⁶¹⁶ Xuanzang avers that both conditions of mind depend upon the choice a sentient being makes to either cultivate or detach from the skillful *indriyas*.

If a sentient being elects to discard the skillful *indriyas*, the balance of karma carried by the sentient being at the time of dying directs the moral quality of dying and the placement in the afterlife. Kuiji, in his commentary on *The Basis for Yoga Practitioners*, writes that the decision to retain or discard the skillful *indriyas* is, for the sentient being, a “maintain it or break it moment” (Chi.: *duan hu* 斷續).⁶¹⁷

The *Mahāvibhāṣa* editors enumerate a list of the “four types of unskillful actions” (Skt.: *akuśala*; Chi.: *si bushan* 四不善)⁶¹⁸ that constrain a sentient being from executing practices that improve or restore the skillful *indriyas* at the end of life. This taxonomy is endorsed and refined by Vasubandhu, Saṅghabhadra and Asaṅga. The taxonomy of the four types of unskillful actions presented by Xuanzang in his translation of *The Basis for Yoga Practitioners* includes:

⁶¹⁶ How many of the twenty-two faculties are contaminated and how many are uncontaminated? 二十二根幾有漏幾無漏。信等五樂喜護意或有漏或無漏。後三根一向無漏。The three hedonic faculties of pleasure, anxiety and suffering are invariably contaminated. The ten contaminated faculties are vision, hearing, olfaction, gustation, male and female procreation, vitality, anxiety and suffering 十根有漏。眼耳鼻舌身男女命憂苦。

⁶¹⁷ T29n1558p0088c17 In AKBh, fascicle 17, Xuanzang describes the “make it or break it scenario” for the *icchāntika* as “either one may elect to follow the paths of ten ways of evil, or not.” The Yogācārabhūmi reads: “What is retaining the skillful roots? It refers to (three conditions) as they keep the *indriyas* keen: one must see relatives and friends that cultivate good merit and karma; One must make an audience with a skillful and good man who teaches the correct dharma; and one must make a decisive determination when having doubt and irresolution. This is the way one restores and retains the skillful *indriyas* [0281a29] 云何續善根。謂由性利根故。見親朋友修福業故。詣善丈夫聞正法故。因生猶豫證決定故。還續善根。

⁶¹⁸ Nyāyanusāra, fasc. 6: provides an alternate classification in terms of clinging, anger, conceit, and irresolution 貪瞋慢疑 T29n1562p0392c15-24.

- (1) Actions that are unskillful for the attainment of enlightenment. These actions include obstinacy, or an unwillingness to engage in the disciplined practices that foster the skillful *indriyas*.⁶¹⁹
- (2) Actions that reflect mental states of poor moral character (Chi: zixing bushan 自性不善) These actions include angry outbursts that demonstrate a brazen and shameless disregard for the well-being of others.
- (3) Actions that are associated with unskillful states of mind (Chi. xiangying 相應不善) These actions include violent or aggressive actions that are aimed at harming others.
- (4) Actions that are contaminated because they originate from an unskillful *indriya*. These are actions that are derived from an unskillful *indriya* such as anxiety and include actions that demonstrate mental or physical restlessness, such as excessive perspiration and bodily shaking (Chi.: dengqi bushan 等起不善).

In Chapter Two, “Investigation of Faculties,” of the *Treasury of Abhidharma*, Vasubandhu posits that the skillful *indriyas* are never lost, unless a sentient being actively and deliberately chooses not to engage in the work required to retain them.⁶²⁰ Throughout his translation corpora and original CWSL, Xuanzang proposes the cultivation of the skillful *indriyas* through meritorious action and yoga as the path to a better life, death and afterlife.

⁶¹⁹ Mahāvibhāṣa, fascicle 51 reads: “Being skillful in the ultimate sense of the word means anything that leads to unease about the cycle of birth-and-dying (saṃsāra).” 謂勝義不善即是生死不安隱故名不善 (T1545:27.263.b08).

⁶²⁰ *Jñānaprasthāna*, fascicle 15 – “Those who have severed the skillful roots have at the maximum thirteen, and at the minimum, eight [faculties].” 斷善根者，極多十三，極少八 (T1544:26.997.a18). Mahāvibhāṣa, fascicle 150 cites this explanation, verbatim, and indicates that the total of thirteen denotes all twenty-two *indriyas*, with the deduction of the three uncontaminated *indriyas* that do not pertain to “those who have severed the roots of morality.” The minimum of “eight *indriyas* refers to the faculties of the body, mind, and vitality, and the five hedonic faculties.” 八者，謂身•命•意、及五受根 (T1545:27.767.b19). The text further states that “this is the same for those undergoing the gradual course of dying, along with the hellish beings (Skt.: *nārakas*), and those who have lost either of six physical sense faculties.” 即漸命終、及在地獄、已失六色根者 (T1545:27.767.b20).

Dying Well Through the Cultivation of the *Indriyas*

In his elaboration of the state of dying, Vasubandhu homes in on the *indriya* of aversion as central to the condition of mental consciousness, or the moral and hedonic state of mind, of the dying sentient being. In his translation of the text of the *Treasury of the Abhidharma*, Chapter Three, verse thirteen, Xuanzang describes the state of dying and being reborn as, “naught but aversive” (Skt.: *upekṣa+eva*). Here Xuanzang depicts the content of the mind of a sentient being in the state of dying as consisting of aversive reactions to sensory stimuli. These include the conscious awareness of painful bodily sensations, as well as the negative thoughts that pass through the mind of a sentient being undergoing the process of dying. According to the Yogācāra doctrine, the status, or the condition of the *indriya* of aversion (Skt.: *upekṣendriyam*) plays an important role in determining the moral tone and hedonic quality of dying. Xuanzang comes to conclude that the state of consciousness of the sentient being determines the quality of dying.

The *indriya* of aversion, in a primitive and uncultivated state, manifests in the psychological experience of distress, and the behavioral response of recoiling, when a sentient being encounters an aversive stimulus. The uncultivated form of the *indriya* of aversion creates the disturbing physical and psychological responses that are experienced by a sentient being during the process of dying. The *indriya* of aversion, however, can be trained to respond to pain without either the behavioral reaction of flinching, or the response of negative thoughts. Xuanzang avers that the *indriya* of aversion can be cultivated to respond with retiring indifference to the negative physical sensations that occur during the demise of the physical body during the process of dying.⁶²¹

⁶²¹ *Mahāvibhāṣa*, fascicle 155 contains the following query and response: “Question: For what reason do all sentient beings at the end of life, and at the moment of conception, necessarily abide in aversive sensation? 問：何因緣故一切有情命終結生必住捨受。

Additionally, the primitive state of the *indriya* of aversion accounts for the “hazy and faint” (Chi.: *mei lie* 昧劣) mental status of a dying sentient being. By altering the *indriya* of aversion through the cultivation of the *indriyas* of concentration and mindfulness, the psychological torpor associated with the state of dying can be mitigated. The sentient being who transforms the *indriya* of aversion into its subtle form, therefore reaches the end of life with equanimity, acuity and clarity of mind.

In his analysis of the Abhidharma stanzas of Vasubandhu and the Yogācāra work of Asaṅga, Xuanzang determines that the cultivation and retention of the skillful roots (Chi.: *xu shangen* 續善根) require constant maintenance on the part of the sentient being, throughout life and during the final moments of dying. Maintaining the skillful *indriyas* entails associating with spiritual people (Skt.: *kalyānamitras*), engaging in meritorious practices and rituals and continuing to refine the spiritual *indriyas* of faith, concentration, perseverance, mindfulness and wisdom.

In his exegesis of the Abhidharma and Yogācāra scriptures on the state of dying, Xuanzang substantiates the claim that a sentient being can improve the quality of dying and the afterlife by choosing to cultivate the skillful *indriyas*. This is accomplished through the practice of yoga and the execution of rituals that build merit and replenish the stores of karma carried in the *indriyas*. By living meritoriously and following the path of yoga, a sentient being accumulates the karma that is necessary to die, and to be reborn, well. Throughout his exegesis of dying, Xuanzang upholds the Buddhist tenet of karma, while sending the hopeful message to practitioners that a sentient being with moral determination can improve karmic standing and the quality of dying and

Reply: the five kinds of hedonic sensations do not have haziness or faintness as their mode of operation (Skt.: *ākāra*). But aversion sensation in the state of dotage is not hazy or faint. For example, dying or the state of becoming reincarnated, they abide in aversive sensation in meeting the end of life and in becoming reincarnated.”
答：於五受中，無有行相昧劣。如捨受者。於十時中，無有味劣。如死、及生時者，故住捨受命終結生 (T1545:27.787.b07-10).

rebirth.

On the Difference Between Dying and Death

Throughout his exegesis of dying and death, Xuanzang endeavors to preserve the Buddhist doctrines of no-self and karma in their pure and undiluted forms. The Buddhist doctrine of no-self states that there is no permanent or unchanging self. Everything in the universe, including dying, is momentary and impermanent. Within Buddhism there is no ending and no death. The translation decisions and analyses of the distinctions between dying and death that Xuanzang makes throughout his translation corpora and original writings reflect his efforts to uphold the Buddhist doctrine of no-self. Additionally, Xuanzang holds that karma is pervasively and ineluctably involved in determining how a sentient being dies. In his analysis of the timing of dying, Xuanzang avers that a sentient being with good karma is rewarded with a quick and relatively painless death, and one with bad karma assumes the consequences of immoral activity in the form of a long-drawn-out death. In his discussions regarding the distinction between dying and death, Xuanzang finds the doctrinal and the philosophical rationale to support the core Buddhist doctrines of no-self, impermanence and karma.

In his examinations of the *Treasury of Abhidharma* by Vasubandhu and the commentaries on this text by Yaśomitra, Xuanzang critically assesses the differences between “dying” (Skt.: *cyav*; Chi.: *mo* 沒) and “death” (Skt.: *māraṇam*; Chi.: *si* 死). Throughout his corpora, Xuanzang makes specific translation choices that are intended to clarify the distinctions between dying and death. In his exegesis of the *Treasury of Abhidharma*, Xuanzang analyzes the difference between dying as a process and dying as a state of completion that results in the death of a sentient being. Additionally, Xuanzang investigates the temporal components of dying and death in a discussion

about “dying slowly” (Skt.: *kramacyutiḥ*; *kramamṛti*) and “dying quickly” (Skt.: *sakṛdmṛti*). For Xuanzang, the Buddhist doctrines of no-self, impermanence and karma are at stake in maintaining the analytical distinction between dying and death.

On the Definitions Between “Dying” and “Death”

To preserve the Buddhist doctrines of no-self and impermanence, Xuanzang maintains that dying is different from death. To Xuanzang, the distinction between dying and the state of being dead is significant in terms of the doctrine of the Buddhist cycle of life (Skt.: *bhavāṅga*). Within the Buddhist cycle of life, the process of dying is the final stage of living. The state of being dead, however, begins with the first moment after death and gives rise to the first state in the endless cycle of birth and death. Within the doctrine of the Buddhist cycle of life, dying is a state of consciousness that is linked to the next moment of consciousness. There is no permanent or enduring self that is lost in dying, or in the state of being dead.

Throughout his translations, Xuanzang makes specific distinctions between the word “dying” (Skt.: *√cyav*; Chi.: *mo* 沒) and the word “death” (Skt.: *māraṇam*; Chi.: *si* 死). Xuanzang uses the word *cyuti* to describe the process of dying. *Cyuti* is derived from the past participle of the root “to fall away” (Skt.: *√cyav*). Implicit in the word *cyuti* are the dual constructions of dying as a process (noun) and dying as an ending (past participle).⁶²² In his commentary on the *Treasury of Abhidharma*, Yaśomitra glosses the word *cyuti* with the past participle “has died/fallen away” (Skt.: *cyutam*) to designate dying as both an ongoing process and the completion of a process. In both senses of the word *cyuti*, dying is depicted as a moment-to-moment process, rather than as an

⁶²² Feldman points out that the word “dying,” like the word “winning” is ambiguous in it carries a “process” sense and a “success” sense: “A runner may be winning (process sense) even though it turns out that he does not win (success sense).” See Feldman, “On Dying As a Process,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 50, no. 2 (1989), 375.

event with a finite ending. Vasubandhu uses the word *cyutirbhava* to describe the “state of dying,” and *marañakṣaṇam* to denote the “moment of death,” the point in time at which a sentient being goes from the state of being alive to the state of being dead.⁶²³

Xuanzang uses the word “death,” *si* 死, corresponding to the Sanskrit word *māraṇam*, to describe the state that a sentient being occupies between life and the afterlife. *Māraṇam* comes from the root “to de cease” (Chi.: \sqrt{mr}). Kuiji, in his meticulous line-by-line commentary on the translation by Xuanzang of *The Basis for Yoga Practitioners*, distills three meanings from the Chinese character *si*, or “death.” The first sense of *si* refers to “the exact time of death, namely the final moment of a life”;⁶²⁴ the second describes the “state of being dead,” up until the moment of becoming reincarnated into a new embryo;⁶²⁵ and the third meaning of the word captures the moment prior to “the moment of death,” or the final moment in the process of dying. In his interpretation of the word *si*, Xuanzang captures the Buddhist concept of momentariness. Death is

⁶²³ Vasubandhu discriminates the four ways of talking about the Buddhist teaching of dependent-co-arising, in terms of the moment (Skt.: *kṣaṇika*), stage (Skt.: *avāsthika*) and state (Skt.: *bhava*). Vasubandhu also divides the life-cycle into four “states”: the state of the previous life (Skt.: *pūrvabhāva*), the state of becoming reborn (Skt.: *upapattibhāva*), i.e., gestation, the state of death/dying (Skt.: *marāṇabhāva*), and the intermediate state (Skt.: *antarābhava*), the discarnate afterlife or *bardo*. The phrase “state of death” is an application of the latter life-cycle analysis to the classification of a death as “serial” (Skt.: *āvasthikaḥ*; Chi.: *fen-wei* 分位) or “momentary” (Skt.: *kṣaṇikaḥ*; Chi.: *cha-na* 剎那). The *Tattvasiddhi śāstra* of Harivārman (hereafter, TatSid) adduces the same four-fold analysis of the cycle of repeated deaths and reincarnations throughout lifecycles. “Our scriptures speak of four states of being: state of previous life, state of dying, intermediate state, and state of becoming reborn.” 又經中說四有。本有・死有・中有・生有 (T1646:32.256.b18-19).

⁶²⁴ Kuiji writes in his commentary on the *Yogācārabhūmi*: “‘Death’ has three meanings: Firstly, the exact moment of death, that is to say, the final moment of a life. The CWSL states that this consciousness consists in the store-house consciousness. And the *Treasury of Abhidharma* states that death is the final moment of a mind, up (but not including) the moment of rebirth. It is of indeterminate karmic nature. 死有三位心：一正死。即末後剎那。唯識論說為第八識。對法論說死有末心。生有初剎那。中有初剎那。唯無記性 (T1828:42.321.b10-12).

⁶²⁵ Saṅghabhadra’s *Clarification of Tenets* reads: “There are four types of states for the sentient being. Firstly, there is the intermediate state, the doctrine of which has been explained above. Secondly, there is the state of being reborn (i.e., pre-natal state). Thirdly, there is the state of being in a past life. Excluding the moment that one is reborn, the states prior to one’s death are four-fold. The state of dying refers to the final thought-moments [of a life]. If you have not gained full independence from sensual desires, then the intermediate-state (i.e., the afterlife) will definitely befall you. In this case, there are four distinct stages during a single life-cycle.” 有情位分四種：一者中有。義如前說。二者生有，調於諸趣結生剎那。三者本有。除生剎那，死前餘位，四者。死有，謂最後念。若有於色未得離貪，此有無間中有定起，即於一生位別分四 (T29, no. 1563, p. 837, c10-23).

conceptualized as a moment-to-moment transition rather than as a final or permanent state of being or non-being.

On Ageing, Dying and Death in the Buddhist Cycle of Life

In their analytical discussions of aging and dying as a stage in the Buddhist cycle of life, the Abhidharma scholars focus on the differentiation between dying and death. Within the Abhidharma Buddhist schema, the moment of biological death is viewed as the beginning of the afterlife, and not as part of the present life of the sentient being. Hence, for Xuanzang, the definition of aging and the relationship of aging to dying and death are crucial because “aging-and-death,” or *jarā-māraṇam* (Chi.: *lao si* 老死), is the link that precedes rebirth in the twelve-link cycle of dying and rebirth in Buddhism.

The Buddhist teaching of the twelve links of dependent co-arising (Skt.: *nidāna*; Chi.: *zhi* (支)) describes the chain of the twelve causal events (Skt.: *pratītyasamutpāda*; Chi.: 緣起) that result in the endless cycle of rebirth and suffering. Each of the twelve links on the chain gives rise to a condition, which in turn gives rise to another condition, and another condition. The twelfth link circles back to the first, thus forming a continuous cycle of rebirth and re-death. Ignorance, followed by mental formations, form the first two links on the chain, with senescence and death forming the penultimate link on the never-ending cycle of the twelve-fold chain. The link of aging-and-death is followed by the final link of rebirth. By breaking the chain of continuous death and rebirth, nirvana, or liberation from suffering, is attained.

In his translation of the *Pratītyasamutpāda sūtra* 緣起經, Xuanzang explicates the glosses on *jarā-māraṇam*, the link on the Buddhist chain of existence that combines aging and death. The *Pratītyasamutpāda sūtra* poses the question: Why is death (Skt.: *māraṇa*) linked to old age? Why

is death (Skt.: *māraṇam*), one of the most crucial borders in the cycle of human life, not a separate link in the chain of dependent co-arising?

The answer provided to this question in the *Pratītyasamutpāda sūtra* and by Xuanzang in the CWSL is that senescence, in and of itself, is not a sufficient condition to give rise to the next link in the chain of dependent co-arising. Taken together, old age and death, or *māraṇa*, provide an inclusive category of the condition for the arising of the next link in the cycle of life. The union of old age with death in the link on the chain is intended to take the deaths of all sentient beings into account in the Buddhist lifecycle, including those who do not live to old age. For example, a stillborn fetus, who experiences death but not aging, requires a place on the chain of dependent co-arising. Therefore, by placing aging and death together as the eleventh link, all deaths of sentient beings are included in the chain of dependent co-arising.⁶²⁶

In his *Treasury of Abhidharma*, Vasubandhu analyzes each link in the twelve-fold chain in the Buddhist teaching of dependent co-arising. He examines the twelve links in four ways: the moment in which the link occurs (Skt.: *kṣaṇika*), the position of the link in the cycle (Skt.: *avāsthika*), the relationship of the discrete event of the link to other links on the chain (Skt.: *prakāṛṣikaḥ*) and the link as a state of existence in the Buddhist life-cycle (Skt.: *saṃbandhikaḥ*).⁶²⁷ In his translation of the paradigm presented by Vasubandhu, Xuanzang posits that each of the

⁶²⁶ CWSL: “When the body is destroyed and life ends we call that ‘death’ – senescence/aging (Skt. *jāra*) is not necessarily present, so it is annexed to death to establish the link (Skt.: *nidāna*).” 身壞命終，乃名為死，老非定有，附死立支 (T1585:31.43.c26).

⁶²⁷ Vasubandhu writes in his auto-commentary to 3.24: “there are four ways to make distinctions within the (twelve links of) dependent co-origination. 又諸緣起，差別說四。

Firstly, moment-to-moment. 一者、剎那。

Secondly, invariably-linked (Skt.: *saṃbandhikaḥ*). 二者、連縛。

Thirdly, staged (Skt.: *avāsthikaḥ*). 三者、分位。

Fourthly, sequential (Skt.: *prakāṛṣikaḥ*). 四者、遠續 (T1558:29.48.c08-10).

twelve links in the chain of dependent co-arising can be analyzed using the four modes. For example, the link of *jarā-māraṇam*, aging and death, can be analyzed in the following four ways:

- (1) As two “moments” (Skt.: *kṣaṇikah*). Here aging and death are conceptualized as two moments in the life of a sentient being. Moment one is ageing, and moment two is dying.
- (2) As grouped together into one independent and discrete stage (Skt.: *avāsthikah*) in the life of a sentient being. Here aging and dying are grouped together as one link on the chain.
- (3) As two conjoined states in the life-cycle (Skt.: *sambandhaḥ*). Here aging and death are conceptualized as one, non-momentary state in the Buddhist life-cycle.
- (4) As related to the previous link on the chain of living in a healthy and able-bodied way and to the future link on the chain of reincarnation. Here the link of ageing and death is viewed as adjacent to other links on the chain (Skt.: *prakāṛṣikah*).

For Xuanzang, the discussion of aging and death in terms of the four modes is doctrinally significant in that it serves to defend the analytical distinction between dying and death. The collation of aging with death within the eleventh link on the chain upholds Xuanzang’s point that death cannot be equated to dying. Dying is understood as an impermanent state, and death is viewed as the impermanent state of no longer being alive. In the teaching of the Buddha on the chain of dependent co-arising, aging and death unfold in successive moments, as two parts of a gradual process that ends with the aging and death of a being and gives rise to the next stage in the cycle of life, rebirth.

On the Distinction Between Living, Dying and Being Dead

In his exegesis of the process of dying and the transition to the next link of the chain of co-arising, Xuanzang determines that state of dying belongs to the last moments of the state of being

alive. The moment of death, or the state of being dead, is defined as the moment of the afterlife that immediately precedes rebirth. To support the distinction between the process of dying and the moment of death, Xuanzang analyzes the four states of the Buddhist lifecycle as enumerated by Vasubandhu in Chapter Three of the *Treasury of Abhidharma*. Vasubandhu divides the lifecycle into four “states” (Skt: *bhavas*):

- (1) The state of being alive in past lives (Skt.: *pūrvabhava*; Chi.: benyou 本有).
- (2) The state of being dead (Skt.: *marañabhava*; Chi.: siyou 死有). This the moment during which a sentient being dies.
- (3) The intermediate state between corporeal incarnations (Skt.: *antarābhāva*; Chi. zhongyou 中有).⁶²⁸ This describes the discarnate afterlife, or the bardo, the state a sentient being occupies between corporeal reincarnations. During this state, the sentient being exists as an intermediate being, or as an *upapāduka*.
- (4) The state of being reincarnated (Skt.: *upapattibhava*; Chi.: shengyou 生有) This is the state during which the sentient being is reincarnated into a new life, in the form of an embryo.

Xuanzang employs the four states of the Buddhist lifecycle analysis by Vasubandhu to emphasize that rebirth is preceded by a process of dying, and that the moment of death is linked to the moment of rebirth. Here he upholds the Buddhist of no-self, impermanence and reincarnation – the idea that because a being is reborn, the being has already died.

On Dying Suddenly and Dying Gradually

In his translation of the *Treasury of Abhidharma*, Xuanzang introduces two ways of dying:

⁶²⁸ What is the state of being dead? The state of being dead is different from the time of dying since it has four *skandhas* at its nature, rather than five *skandhas* 何死有？答：死分諸蘊則命終時五蘊四蘊為性。T27n1545p0959a22-23. The *Mahāvibhāṣa* continues with an explanation of the karmic purity or impurity of the four states of the life-cycle, concluding that only the state of becoming reincarnated (i.e., the state of prenatal development) is contaminated. The other three states of the lifecycle are indeterminate in nature, that is, neither contaminated nor uncontaminated.

“dying gradually” and “dying suddenly” (Skt.: *sakṛtmāraṇam*; Chi.: *dunsi* 頓死).⁶²⁹ The temporal distinction he makes between dying gradually and dying slowly involves the doctrine of karma. A sentient being dies gradually when the *indriyas* clustered in specific groups slowly cease to function. This type of dying occurs, for example, when a sentient being experiences a long illness. Conversely, a sentient being dies suddenly when the *indriyas* shut down “in a single moment” (Skt.: *ekakṣaṇam*; Chi.: *yi chana zhong* 一剎那中).⁶³⁰ This type of death is brought about by a sudden and traumatic blow. In general, dying slowly is regarded by the Abhidharma theorists as more physically and emotionally painful than dying suddenly.

According to Xuanzang, a sentient being can die suddenly in any one of the three *dhātus* (Chi.: *tong sanjie* 通三界). Although the moral logic of karma applies to all ways of dying, the classificatory distinction between suddenly or gradually dying depends upon environmental or *dhātu*-based factors. Although a sentient being with an inferior moral standing is more likely to have a painful and gradual course of dying, factors other than poor karma can result in dying gradually. When perishing suddenly, and with the skillful faculties intact, the sentient being is considered to have a good death. Hence, the type of the faculties that perish together determine both the moral and hedonic quality of the dying of a sentient being.

⁶²⁹ Mahāvibhāṣa 90 describes a view that holds that at the very moment of death, the *skandhas* of the afterlife already arise: Question: does one receive a body during the intermediate state? Reply: one does receive a body but it is rapid and imperceptible. Hence there are those who are of the opinion that the in the initial moment of the afterlife the intermediate *skandhas* arise and the dead *skandhas* are annihilated. In the final moment of the afterlife, the *skandhas* of becoming reincarnated arise. This process is rapid and imperceptible. 問：此等為受中有身不？答：受中有身，然以迅速，難可覺知故作是說：初一剎那死有蘊滅中有蘊生。後一剎那中有蘊滅生有蘊生。由此迅速難可覺知。

⁶³⁰ A passage Xuanzang’s translation of AKBh 3.41 appears to state that *jīvitēndriyam* is the final faculty to meet its demise before the sentient being enters into the “state of being dead” (Skt.: *marāṇabhava*). However, the original Sanskrit text of this sentence in question mentions only *āyur*, without explicit mention of *jīvitēndriyam* or any other faculty. Both Xuanzang’s and Paramārtha’s translations of this sentence, however, interpolate *jīvitēndriyam* into the text: Skt. *itarathā hi tasyāyusaḥ kṣayān marāṇabhavaḥ prasajyeta*. Paramārtha: 若不爾。此中由命根盡。應別立死有。Xuanzang: 若異此者，中有命根，最後滅時，應立死有。

Vasubandhu, Saṅghabhadra and Xuanzang portray dying suddenly as more desirable than dying gradually. The Buddha, for example, is said to have died suddenly, or “in a single moment.” In his exegesis of dying gradually and dying suddenly, Xuanzang upholds the Buddhist doctrine of karma. According to Xuanzang, the sentient being who dies suddenly enjoys the reward of a life well-lived in the form of a benign and relatively painless process of dying, whereas the being who dies slowly and painfully reaps the consequences of bad karma in the form of a protracted and painful process of dying.

What Is Dying Painfully?

In his analysis of dying, Xuanzang examines the existential question of why dying is painful for sentient beings. This inquiry takes Xuanzang into a discussion of two questions related to the process of dying: What happens to the body during the process of dying? How does the body register the physical sensations of pain associated with dying? In his analysis of the physical process of dying, Xuanzang returns to the Yogācāra theory of the *indriyas* and to the roles that the “vital spots,” (Skt.: *marmāṇi*), the faculty of vitality, and the conscious awareness of physical sensation (Skt.: *manovijñāna*) play in the process of dying.

According to Vasubandhu, the organs of the body are sustained by the three humors (Skt.: *tridoṣa*) of wind (Skt.: *vāyur*), bile (Skt.: *pitta*), and phlegm (Skt.: *kapha*). The three humors are generated by the “vital spots,” or the *marmāṇi*, located within the organs of the body. The *marmāṇi* supply the corporeal body and the *indriya* of vitality with the life-giving humors that support, restore and revitalize the physical processes that sustain the sentient being.

When a part of the body is mortally damaged, the *marmāṇi* in the area of the injury are “severed from the living body” (Skt.: *√chid*; Chi.: *duan* 斷; Tib.: ‘*chad*). This causes the three

humors to “spill forth” (Tib.: *bzlog*) into the cavities of the body. As the humors bleed out from the *marmāṇi*, the organs near the original injury shut down and the activities of the *indriya* of vitality begin to terminate. At this point, a domino effect takes hold, and the organs throughout the body gradually and sequentially begin to cease functioning. The *indriya* of vitality, no longer restored by the humors, ceases to sustain the life-giving physical and mental functions of the body.

An injury to the *marmāṇi* initiates the process of gradual dying by depriving the faculty of vitality of the three life-sustaining humors.⁶³¹ The *marmāṇi* are connected throughout the neurological system of the body and are part of the physical *indriyas* that sustain sensory consciousness (Skt.: *manovijñāna*) within a sentient being. In his commentary on verse forty-two in Chapter Three of the *Treasury of Abhidharma*, Xuanzang states that a sentient being experiences the physical sensation of pain through the *manovijñāna*, the mental consciousness of bodily sensation. When the *marmāṇi* are severed from the organs by a traumatic blow to a part of the body, the *manovijñāna* become activated and convey the physical sensation of pain to the conscious mind of a sentient being.⁶³² As the *marmāṇi*, the *indriya* of vitality, and the systems of the body begin to fail, the network of *manovijñāna* registers the sensations of pain and discomfort from all parts of the body to the mind. Finally, as the *marmāṇi* and the *indriya* of vitality

⁶³¹ The *Treatise on the Basis of Gnosis* (T1544:26.1023.c22) contains a question and response about the fatality of severing the *marmāṇi*: “For what reason does one experience the border of death? Reply: it is because the *marmāṇi* sever the faculty of vitality which is destroyed. But how does this match with that one will say that one experiences the border of death? Reply: this matches with saying that the *marmāṇi* sever the faculty of vitality which is destroyed. What sensory sphere does this event belong to? And with how many consciousnesses is it associated with? [1023c22] 云何死邊際受？答：由此末摩斷命根滅。齊何當言死邊際受？答：齊此末摩，斷命根滅。何處攝。答：法處。幾識相應。

Reply: it is associated with *kayavijñāna* and *manovijñāna*. Initially, it is associated with *kayavijñāna*, then, finally, it is associated with *manovijñāna*.” 答身識意識。初末摩斷受。身識相應。最後受。意識相應。

⁶³² *Nyānanusāra śāstra* (T1562:29.514.a13-15), fascicle 30: Although visual consciousness is based in the physical *indriyas*, since it has no particular direction, what so much the more for the mental consciousness? Although it is based in *kāyēndriyam*, as for the teaching that *kāyēndriyam* perishes from the physical loci, *manovijñāna* and *kāyēndriyam*, are rapidly and completely annihilated from no other place (than the *indriyas*). 眼等諸識。(雖)依止色根。尚無方所。況復意識？然約身根滅處說者。若頓死者。意識身根。欸然總滅。非有別處。

deteriorate and cease to function, *manovijñāna* begins to retract, thereby causing the sentient being to lose consciousness of physical sensation. As the vitality of life and consciousness depart the body, a corpse is left behind. To Xuanzang, this is the moment of death.

In the *Treasury of Abhidharma*, Vasubandhu describes how *manovijñāna* is lost gradually as a sentient being undergoes the severing of the vital spots from the corporeal body. Here Vasubandhu lays out a central Yogācāra tenet, that the presence of consciousness is equated with life in a sentient being, and the loss of consciousness is equated with death. In a commentary on the forty-second and forty-third verses in Chapter Three, “Discrimination of Worldly Things,” in the *Treasury of Abhidharma* by Vasubandhu, Xuanzang states that the trail of the deprivation of consciousness from the body leaves insensate, dead material behind.⁶³³ Here, Xuanzang concurs with Vasubandhu in that once consciousness departs the body, all that remains is a corpse.

Dying and the Departure of Consciousness

Xuanzang continues his analysis of the process of dying with an investigation of the theories of Vasubandhu regarding the roles played by *manovijñāna* and karma in determining the realm and the species into which a newly deceased sentient being is reborn. In an auto-commentary on verse forty-two, Chapter Three, of the *Treasury of the Abhidharma*, Vasubandhu addresses the departure of consciousness that occurs during the process of dying and the transition of consciousness into the next species and *dhatu* of the afterlife. Here he postulates, that the location in the body, from which *manovijñāna* departs, is significant in that it predicts the species, and the *dhatu*, into which newly deceased sentient being will be reborn. Vasubandhu acknowledges that karma plays an invariable role in determining from what part of the body *manovijñāna* exits.

⁶³³ This is the presentation found in AKBh 9 3.42cd-43-cd. This passage is also found, verbatim, in Ny and XZL of Saṅghabhadra.

Karma is therefore ineluctably involved in the placement of the deceased being into a species and transmigratory realm.

In his auto-commentary of Chapter Three of the *Treasury of Abhidharma*, Vasubandhu describes the three destinations and the types of species, into which a sentient being who dies gradually within the *kāmadhātu* is reincarnated. According to Vasubandhu, a sentient being can be reborn into one of the realms of the *kāmadhātu* or the *rūpadhātu* in the form of a human, a non-human animal, a *nāraka*, a *preta* or a deva. In verse forty-two in Chapter Three of the *Treasury of Abhidharma*, Vasubandhu enumerates the taxonomy of rebirth into two realms of the *kāmadhātu* and the *rūpadhātu* as follows:

Adhoga, “She Who Goes Below,” is one who will be reborn into a lower realm [this includes non-human animals and *nāraka* in the *kāmadhātu*].

A human (Skt.: *nr*), is one who will be reborn into the human realm [this includes humans in the *kāmadhātu*].

Suraga, “She Who Goes Among the Gods,” is one will be reborn into a heavenly realm [this includes a deva in the *kāmadhātu* or the *rūpadhātu*].

<i>Adho</i>	<i>gacchantīyadho/gāḥ,</i>	<i>apāyagāmināḥ</i>	634
<i>Nṛṇ</i>	<i>gacchantīti</i>	<i>nrg/āḥ,</i>	<i>manuṣyagāmināḥ</i>
<i>Surān gacchantīti sura/gāḥ, devagāmināḥ.</i> ⁶³⁵			

Having explained how humans dying within the *kāmadhātu* follow one of three transmigratory tracks, Xuanzang, in his translation of Chapter Three, verse forty-two in the

⁶³⁴ de la Vallée Poussin, *L'Abhidharmakośa de Vasubandhu*, vol. 2, 135: “d'après une gāṭha qui doit être de Grand Véhicule, des indications différentes.” In his Chinese translation of AKBh (T1558:29.56.b13-16), Xuanzang includes two Mahāyānist quatrains that assign the sites as follows: the head for an Arhat, the heart for a deva-to-be, the navel for a human-to-be, and the feet, for the *preta* (in Chi., lit. “hungry ghost” 惡鬼) or *nāraka*-to-be.

⁶³⁵ Corresponding Tib. (D 4090: vol. 140, folio/line 143a.5) text reads: 'Og tu 'gro bas na 'og tu 'gro ba ste/ ngan song du 'gro ba rnam so/mir 'gro bas na mir 'gro bas te/mi'i nang du 'gro ba rnam so/lhar 'gro bas na lhar 'gro ba ste/ lha'i nang du 'gro ba rnam so.

Treasury of Abhidharma by Vasubandhu, assigns the final locations of *manovijñāna*, or mental consciousness, to specific parts of the body. In the schema outlined by Vasubandhu, the locations in the body from which consciousness departs correspond to the three tracks of rebirth. Vasubandhu describes the tracks of beings with different transmigratory destinies in Chapter Three of the *Treasury of Abhidharma* as follows:

When dying is gradual, *manovijñāna* departs from the feet, the navel, or from the heart, according to whether the being is going downward, going among men, going among devas⁶³⁶ or not being reborn. Water spills from the *marmāṇis*.⁶³⁷

漸死足臍心

最後意識滅

下人天不生

斷末摩水等⁶³⁸

Kramacyutau pādanābhīḥṛdayeṣu manas cyutiḥ/

Adhonṛsuragājānām marmacchedastvabādibhiḥ.

'Og mi lhar 'gro mi skye rnams//rim gyis 'chi na rkang pa dang//lte ba snying gar yid 'chi 'pho//gnad gcod pa ni chu sogs kyis/⁶³⁹

According to Vasubandhu, the balance of karma, held by the sentient being at the end life,

⁶³⁶ Monier-Williams under “*sura*” gives –“god, diety, divinity.”

⁶³⁷ This is de la Vallée Poussin’s, *L’Abhidharmakośa de Vasubandhu*, vol. 2, 135, translation, with modifications: “Quand la mort est graduelle, le manas meurt dans les pieds, au nombril, dans le coeur, suivant que l’être va en bas, chez les hommes, chez les Suras, ou ne renaît pas. Les parties vitales sont fendues par Teau. etc.”

⁶³⁸ The Sanskrit text leads up to the stanza 43a-d (Shastri, 1976, vol. 1 p. 403) with the following question and response concerning the final *indriya* to decay in a “sudden death”: *atha mriyamāṇasya kasmin śarīrapradeśe vijñānaṃ nirudhyate? sakṇmarāṇe samanaskaṃ kāyendriyaṃ sahasā ’ntardhīyate.*

⁶³⁹ D 4089: vol. 140, folio/line 8b.3.

determines the location from which mental consciousness, or *manovijñāna*, leaves the corporeal body. In his analysis of transmigration, Xuanzang concurs with Vasubandhu that the location of the body from which *manovijñāna* departs is dictated by the karma carried by the sentient being while dying. In his CWSL, Xuanzang posits that the *manovijñāna* of a sentient being who dies with predominately good karma, departs from the upper part of the body and the *manovijñāna* of a sentient being with poor karma, departs from the lower portions of the body, including the feet.

The final location in the body from which consciousness disappears is said by Vasubandhu and Xuanzang to indicate the species into which the deceased will be reborn. For example, in the taxonomy of transmigration articulated by Vasubandhu, if *manovijñāna* leaves from the feet, the sentient being is reborn as a *naraka* or a *preta*; if it departs from the navel, the being is reborn as a human, and if it transmigrates from the heart, the being is reborn as a deva.

In his auto-commentary to the 42nd verse of Chapter Three of the *Treasury of Abhidharma*, Vasubandhu states:

For those moving downward [through the transmigratory destinies] *manovijñāna* departs from the two feet.

For those moving toward human rebirth, *manovijñāna* departs from the navel.

彼識最後，兩足處滅。若往人趣，識滅於臍。

According to the assignments made by Vasubandhu, and corroborated by Saṅghabhadra, the consciousness of dying human being who is destined to be reborn in a lower realm in the form of a non-human animal or *nāraka*, departs from the feet. For the dying human being who is reentering an incarnation as a human, consciousness deserts the body from the navel. Regarding the transmigration into a lower realm, Vasubandhu states:

As a sentient being gradually dies, *manovijñāna* first departs from the heart and then from the feet. *Manovijñāna* perishes in this sequence when a sentient being is going to an unfavorable transmigratory destiny. This called going downward.

若漸死者，往下人天，於足齊心。如次識滅，調墮惡趣，說名往下。⁶⁴⁰

In the discussion of karma and the departure of consciousness, Xuanzang is pressed to consider the cases of sentient beings who are destined to be reborn into higher realms, and those who have attained liberation from the cycle of rebirth and dying and therefore will not be reborn. These include humans who will be reincarnated into a celestial realm as a deva, and *ārhats*, sentient beings who have attained liberation from the mortal bondage of dying and rebirth through the disciplined practice of meditation over multiple incarnations. For the devas heading toward the heavens, and the *ārhats*, destined for nirvāṇa, the last stand of consciousness is in the heart. Xuanzang states:

For those who will be reborn as devas and for those who will no longer be reborn (i.e., the *ārhats*), consciousness departs from the heart.

Other masters say that the final seat of consciousness prior to the death of the *ārhat* is the head. This is because the faculty of proprioception is annihilated first in the feet, then in the heart and finally in the head. Once the faculty of proprioception is destroyed, *manovijñāna* departs [from the head].⁶⁴¹

若往天中。識滅心處。諸阿羅漢。說名不生。

彼最後心。亦心處滅。有餘師說。彼滅在頂正命終時。於足等處。身根滅故。意識隨滅。

⁶⁴⁰ Corresponding Skt. text reads: *Teṣāṃ yathāsaṅkhyāṃ pādāyornābhyāṃ hṛdaye ca vijñānaṃ sannirudhyate* — Pradhan, *Abhidharmakośa*, 156. Corresponding Tib. text of AKBh reads (D4090: vol. 140, folio/line 143a.5-143a.6): *De dag gi rnam par shes pa ni grangs bzhi du rkang pa dang/te ba dang/snying gar 'gag go*.

⁶⁴¹ de la Vallée Pouissin notes, *L'Abhidharmakośa de Vasubandhu*, Vol. 2, 135: “Le vijñāna, étant immatériel (*arūpitvāt*) ne réside pas dans un lieu (*avasthā*); mais il a pour support le corps muni d'organes.”

na punarjāyanta ityajāḥ, teṣāmapī hr̥daye vijñānaṃ nirudhyate|⁶⁴² mūrghnītyapare|⁶⁴³
kāyendriyasya teṣu nirodhāt.

In his translation of the depiction offered by Vasubandhu of the transmigration of the consciousness of the devas and the ārhats, Xuanzang, identifies a dispute between the Sarvāstivāda masters and Vasubandhu and Asaṅga regarding the location of the final seat of consciousness. Vasubandhu and Asaṅga locate the departure of *manovijñāna* from the heart, whereas the Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma masters locate the departure of consciousness from the head of an ārhat. According to Huili's biography, in Xuanzang's case, consciousness finally departed from the head, such that Xuanzang's head became rosy in the final minutes before his death.⁶⁴⁴ This is taken as an extremely auspicious sign. However, its final analysis of the departure of consciousness from the body of the ārhats, Xuanzang's translations of Vasubandhu's *Treasury of Abhidharma* and of Asaṅga's *Basis for Yoga Practitioners*, in that in the case of the enlightened ārhats, consciousness departs from heart.

In the evolution of his thinking regarding the departure of *manovijñāna* from the body Xuanzang ultimately comes to conclude that the consciousness of a dying sentient being in the *kāmadhātu* departs not from the feet or the navel, but the heart. He concurs with the Yogācāra masters, Vasubandhu and Asaṅga, in positing that for all humans, regardless of their karma or future rebirth, the final seat of *manovijñāna* in the body before death, is the heart, the most fundamental, and precious organ of the body.⁶⁴⁵ In making this distinction, Xuanzang departs from

⁶⁴² D 4090: vol. 140, folio/line 143a.6: Yang mi skye bas na mi skye ba ste/ dgra bcom pa dag go/de dag gi rnam par shes pa snying khar 'gag go/

⁶⁴³ D 4090: vol. 140, folio/line 143a: *Gzhan dag na re spyi bor zhes zer ro/*

⁶⁴⁴ See Huili's *Biography of the Tripiṭaka Master*, fascicle 10 at T2053:50.277.b07.

⁶⁴⁵ Dullyun writes in his meticulous *Study Notes on the Yogācārabhūmi* (T1828:42.322.a11-25): "The ancient Abhidharma commentaries transmitted from long ago maintain that, if one plants the seeds of good karma, then consciousness gradually departs from the head. 昔來相傳。若種善漸冷至頭面即死。

Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma scholars and aligns with the Yogācāra masters.

Dying in the Three *Dhātus*

In his translation corpora, Xuanzang preserves a taxonomy, composed by Vasubandhu and Saṅghabhadra, that enumerates the ways all sentient beings die within the Buddhist cosmology. Within this taxonomy, the sentient beings who live within the three *dhātus* of the universe (Skt.: *traidhātu*), the *kāmadhātu*, the *rūpadhātu* and the *arūpadhātu*, are categorized according to the number and type of *indriyas* that are lost in dying. Following the Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma theory of the *indriyas*, Vasubandhu and Saṅghabhadra hold that the type of dying experienced by a sentient being is dictated by the species and by the *dhātu* into which a being is reborn.

In verse twelve of Chapter Two in the *Treasury of Abhidharma*, Vasubandhu lists the number and the type of *indriyas* that are lost by sentient beings dying within each of the three *dhātus*. Vasubandhu writes:

If the bad karma predominates, as in the *preta*, consciousness first departs the head, then from the bowels.

若造惡業生鬼中者。從頭漸冷至腹即死。

For the *tiryāṇc*, consciousness departs from the knees. 若生畜生至膝即死。

For those born into the hells (i.e., *nārakas*), it also departs from the knees – here, there is no decisive corroboration in the scriptures. Also, the old version (i.e., the version of the MsG translated by Paramārtha) explains: If good karma predominately arises, then consciousness departs from the upper half. If good karma predominantly arises, it will depart from the lower half and the cold sensation should travel upward. If bad karma predominately arises then the consciousness should depart from the upper half and the cold sensation should travel downward. 若生地獄至脚即死。即皆無文證。又舊世親釋云。若作善業所起冷觸定應向上。若造惡業所起冷觸定應向下。

Some people base their explanation upon the faculty of tactition – if one is born into a good transmigratory plane (*gati*), then consciousness departs from the feet, and gradually deserts up through the head, at which point one dies. 有人即觸云。若生善趣從足漸冷至頭方死。

If one is born into a bad transmigratory plane then consciousness departs from the head and gradually desert the body through the feet, at which point one dies. This treatise (*Yogācārabhūmi*) does not contain this explanation. But we trust in human experience (*renqing*) to base the explanation on the presence of *ālayavijñāna* at the initial moment of conception and its final resting place and locus in the fleshy-heart. Consciousness's desertion of this fleshy heart is called 'death.' 若生惡道從頭漸冷至足方死。此由未見此論故。信自人情。據實阿賴耶識初受生時。最初託處即名肉心。若識捨肉心即名為死。

Dying annihilates numerous indriyas.

In the immaterial realm (Skt.: *arūpadhātu*), dying annihilates three indriyas: *jīvitêndriyam*, *manêndriyam* and *upekṣêndriyam*, the faculty of aversion (Skt.: *upekṣā*).

In the subtle material realm (Skt.: *rūpadhātu*), dying annihilates eight indriyas: the five sensory indriyas of vision, hearing, taste, smell and touch, and the indriyas of *jīvitêndriyam*, *manêndriyam* and *upekṣêndriyam*.

In the *kāmadhātu*, if dying is sudden, eight, nine or ten indriyas are annihilated: the five sensory *indriyas*, the indriyas of *jīvitêndriyam*, *manêndriyam* and *upekṣêndriyam* and the two procreative *indriyas*. (The number of indriyas lost is determined by the number of the indriyas of procreation possessed by a sentient being. A sentient being who is androgynous and does not bear either of the gendered procreative *indriyas*, will die with eight *indriyas*. A sentient being who carries the procreative faculties of either the male or the female gender will die with nine *indriyas*. A sentient being who is a hermaphrodite, and bears the procreative faculties of two genders, will die with ten indriyas.)

In the *kāmadhātu*, if dying is gradual, thirteen *indriyas* are annihilated: the four indriyas of *kāyêndriyam*, *jīvitêndriyam*, *manêndriyam* and *upekṣêndriyam*, the four hedonic indriyas of joy, suffering, pleasure, and anxiety and the five skillful *indriyas* of faith, perseverance, mindful recollection, concentration and wisdom are annihilated.⁶⁴⁶

正死滅諸根

無色三色八

欲頓十九八

漸四善增五⁶⁴⁷

⁶⁴⁶ I have presented the Sanskrit here along with Xuanzang's Chinese, but I have based my translation on Xuanzang's Chinese version, which diverges considerably from both the Sanskrit and Tibetan texts, both in content and presentation. Xuanzang's rather compacted quatrain corresponds to 2.15-16ab in the Sanskrit and the Tib. – for Skt. text see Pradhan, ed., *Abhidharmakośa* 76; for Tib. text see D 4089: vol. 140, folio/line 4b.2.

⁶⁴⁷ Corresponding Skt. reads (Pradhan, *Abhidharmakośa*, 48): *Nirodhayaty uparamān na arūpye jīvitam manah/upeksām caiva rūpe' ṣṭau kāme daśa nava aṣṭa vā* 2.15. *Kramamṛtyau tu catvāri śubhe sarvatra pañca ca* 2.16ab. Tib. (D 4089: vol. 140, folio/line 4b.2-3.): *Gzugs na drug go gong mar gcig|gzugs med dag tu 'chi ba*

In his translation of the auto-commentary by Vasubandhu on the taxonomy of dying, and in his original compilation, the CWSL, Xuanzang articulates detailed descriptions of the types of dying experienced by sentient beings that live within the three transmigratory realms. These include precise descriptions of the deaths of the spiritually-evolved sentient beings who inhabit the “immaterial realm” of the *arūpadhātu*, and the “subtle material realm” of the *rūpadhātu*. With his elaborations of the benign deaths and the happier rebirths of the beings who reside within the heavenly realms of the *rūpadhātu* and *arūpadhātu*, Xuanzang provides inspiration to the Buddhist practitioner who aspires to a better death and rebirth by improving the balance of karma.

The accounts of dying offered by Saṅghabhadra in his two texts, *Treatises on the Correct Logic of Abhidharma*, and the *Clarification of Correct Tenets*, and by Vasubandhu in the *Treasury of Abhidharma*, support the premise that the spiritually and physically refined beings who reside in the *rūpadhātu* and *arūpadhātu*, lose fewer *indriyas* in the process of dying than sentient beings in the *kāmadhātu*. Sentient beings who are reborn into the higher realms are regarded as physically attenuated because they are born without the *indriyas* of procreation, the sensory *indriyas*, or the *indriyas* of suffering and anxiety. Because they lack the hedonic *indriyas* that generate the psychological distress and physical pain associated with dying, beings that are born into the *rūpadhātu* and *arūpadhātu* die with a minimum of physical pain or mental distress.

Dying in the *Kāmadhātu*

The *kāmadhātu*, one of the three realms of the Buddhist cosmology, is the transmigratory realm of sensory desire into which many of humans are reborn. The *kāmadhātu* consists of three environments: the four continents of the earth, (Skt.: *Jambudvīpa*, *Uttarakūṭa*, *Godāniya*,

nisrog dang yid dang btang snyoms nyid//gag par 'gyur ro gzugs na brgyad/2.15 //dod par bcu'am dgu'am brgyad//rim gyis 'chi ba dag la bzhi. 2.16ab

Purvavideha), the eight hot and eight cold hells below the surface of the earth, and the six heavens above the earth, including the exalted *Tuṣita* heaven. The six genera of sentient beings that live across the three realms of *kāmadhātu* include: humans, non-human animals, devas, *pretas*, or “hungry ghosts,” *nārakas*, or “hellish beings” and *upapādukas*, or beings in transitional states between corporeal incarnations. While humans are reborn into the earth and the six heavens, non-human animals are reborn only into one of the four continents on earth. The devas are reborn into one of the six heavens above the earth, including the exalted abode of the Thirty-Three Celestials (Skt.: Trayatrimśika; Chi.: Renli tian 仞利天). *Pretas* are reincarnated into one of the four continents of the earth. *Nāraka* are reborn into one of the sixteen hells below the earth. *Upapādukas* are reincarnated into one of the six heavens. The most desirable incarnation within the realm of the *kāmadhātu* is that of a deva in a celestial heaven. The least favorable incarnation is that of a *nāraka* reborn into one of the six hot hells below the earth.

Dying Suddenly and Dying Gradually Within the Kāmadhātu

In the *Treatise on the Correct Logic of Abhidharma*, Saṅghabhadra describes suddenly dying in the *kāmadhātu* as the synchronous deprivation of eight, nine or ten *indriyas*. In his analysis, Saṅghabhadra follows the fifteenth and sixteenth verses in Chapter Two, “Discrimination of Faculties,” of the *Treasury of Abhidharma*, in which Vasubandhu describes the number of *indriyas* that are lost by a sentient being dying suddenly in the *kāmadhātu*. Here, Vasubandhu specifies that the number of *indriyas* lost in dying suddenly is determined by the gender of the sentient being. In his analysis of dying suddenly in his *Treatise Clarifying Abhidharma Tenets*, Saṅghabhadra writes:

When a being dies suddenly in the *kāmadhātu*, ten, nine or eight *indriyas* are annihilated. When a hermaphroditic being dies, ten *indriyas* are annihilated (the five sensory *indriyas*, mind, and vitality) and the female and male procreative faculties. When a male or female

being dies, along with the eight indriyas, the faculties of male or female procreation are annihilated. When an androgyne dies, eight indriyas are annihilated.

欲頓死時。十九八滅。二形十滅。謂女男根及前說八一形九滅。無形八滅。⁶⁴⁸

In the *Commentary on the Vital Spots of the Illuminating Treasury of Abhidharma* (Skt.: **Abhidharmakośamarmapradīpa*), Dignāga, the great sixth-century Buddhist philosopher and Abhidharma exegete, discusses the rubric of ten, nine or eight *indriyas* that are destroyed when a sentient being dies suddenly.⁶⁴⁹ In his analysis of the number of faculties lost in dying suddenly, Dignāga, subsumes the four hedonic *indriyas* of joy, pleasure, pain and anxiety under the category of the five sensory *indriyas*. This brings the total number of faculties lost by a sentient dying suddenly in the *kāmadhātu* to a total of twelve, thirteen or fourteen *indriyas*, depending on the gender of the sentient being. By including the hedonic faculties in his rubric, Dignāga, makes important doctrinal point, that dying in the *kāmadhātu* involves the faculties of pain and anxiety. Therefore, both dying suddenly and dying gradually in the *kāmadhātu*, involve a measure of physical and mental pain and suffering.

In the *Treatise Conforming to the Correct Logic of Abhidharma*, Saṅghabhadra describes two stages in the process of dying gradually in the *kāmadhātu*.⁶⁵⁰ In the first stage, thirteen faculties

⁶⁴⁸ Passage appears in Xuanzang's translation of *Treatise Clarifying Tenets*, fascicle 5 at T1563:29.798.a23-24 and in his translation of *Nyāyanusāra śāstra*, fascicle 9 at T1562:29.382.b11-12. Corresponding text in the Tib. translation of Saṅghabhadra's *Treatise Clarifying Tenets* reads (D 4091: vol. 141, folio/line 114a.1): *dod pa'i khamdag tu 'chi na/ mtshan gnyis pa zhig na ni/ brgyad po de dag dang/ pho dang/ mo'i dbang po dang dbang po bcu 'gag go/ mtshan gcig pa zhig yin na ni dgu'o/mtshan med pa zhig yin na ni brgyad de*.

⁶⁴⁹ Dignāga writes in his *Commentary on the Vital Spots of the Abhidharmakośa* (D 4095: vol. 147, folio/line 113a.4): "Where there exists the mind associated with skillfulness, *manêndriyam* is associated with abstemious (*abhakṣa*) form of *upekṣêndriyam*, together with vitality, pleasure, and the five skillful faculties." / *yid bde ldan yang/gang zhig yid bde ba'i dbang po dang ldan pa de yang gdon mi za bar btang snyoms dang/srog dang/yid dang/bde ba dang/yid bde ba dang/dbang po lnga dang ldan no*.

⁶⁵⁰ *Māhāvibhāṣa* 150: "The eight refer to the five hedonic faculties, *kāyêndriyam*, *jīvitêndriyam*, and *manêndriyam*, for example, those in the Jambudvīpa who have severed the skillful roots. Pūrvavideha and Godānīya are the same. 八者。謂身命意五受根。即斷善者漸命終位如瞻部洲。毘提訶洲、瞿陀尼洲亦爾 (T1545:27.767.c01-3). For the Uttarakuru, the minimum is thirteen and the maximum is eighteen. The eighteen refer to the androgyne without the three uncontaminated roots. The thirteen refer to *kāyêndriyam*, *jīvitêndriyam*,

are annihilated: the five sensory *indriyas* of sight, hearing, taste, touch and smell, the *indriyas* of procreation, and the four hedonic faculties of joy, pleasure, anxiety, and suffering. In the second stage, the four faculties of *kāyêndriyam*, *jīvitêndriyam*, *mānêndriyam*, and *upekṣêndriyam* are destroyed in one fatal blow.

In his translation of the description of dying gradually by Saṅghabhadra, found in the *Treatise According to the Correct Logic of Abhidharma*⁶⁵¹ and the *Treatise Clarifying Tenets*,⁶⁵² Xuanzang writes:

If the sentient being dies gradually, the four faculties of body, vitality, mind and aversion are the final *indriyas* to fail. The *indriyas* all fail at one time⁶⁵³ 若漸死時，身命意捨四根後滅。此四必無前後滅義。

Human beings who die gradually within the *kāmadhātu* bear at least thirteen faculties at the time of their demise. These include the five sensory *indriyas*, the five hedonic *indriyas* and the *indriyas* of vitality, mind and procreation. Xuanzang regards the thirteen *indriyas*, as the basis for dying gradually. The activation of the hedonic *indriya* during dying means that the sentient being who dies gradually will experience bodily pain and psychological suffering.

Xuanzang avers, however, that by cultivating the skillful faculties of faith, perseverance, concentration, recollection, and wisdom, a sentient being alleviates the physical pain and psychological distress associated with dying. The sentient being who dies skillfully, therefore, dies with eighteen faculties: the five sensory *indriyas*, the five hedonic faculties, the *indriyas* of mind,

manêndriyam, the five skillful faculties, including faith (and the other four senses along with the procreative faculty) that gradually perish.

⁶⁵¹ Found in *Nyāyanusāra*, fascicle 9, at T1562:29.382.b12-13.

⁶⁵² Found in *Treatise Clarifying Tenets* (XZL) at T1563:29.798.a25-26.

⁶⁵³ Saṅghabhadra is here reporting an explanation found in AKBh 2.22 (T1558:29.17.a16) and also corroborated in *Nyāyanusāra*, fascicle 9, within its sub-commentary on the auto-commentary of Vasubandhu.

vitality and procreation and the five skillful *indriyas* of faith, perseverance, mindful recollection, concentration and wisdom. For example, the Buddha died bearing a total of eighteen *indriyas*.

The number of thirteen faculties is regarded as the line of demarcation between human and non-human animal life in the *kāmadhātu*. Within the *kāmadhātu*, dying deprives non-human animals of fewer faculties than humans.⁶⁵⁴ Humans die with more faculties than their animal counterparts in the *kāmadhātu* because humans, unlike non-human animals, have the choice to cultivate the five skillful faculties, during life and while dying.⁶⁵⁵

Special Cases of Dying in the *Kāmadhātu*

In the *Treasury of Abhidharma*, in Chapter Three, “On Discriminating Worldly Things,” and in his commentary on Chapter Two, “Discrimination of Faculties,” Vasubandhu describes the types of dying experienced by sentient beings who inhabit various environments within the *kāmadhātu*. The beings described by Xuanzang in his translations of the texts by Vasubandhu, range from the spiritually-advanced beings who reside in the *Uttarakuru*, the snowy “Continent of

⁶⁵⁴ The *Mahāvibhāṣa* reads “this is the same (the eightfold assignment) for those undergoing the gradual course of dying, along with the hellish beings (Skt.: *nārakas*), and those who have lost either of six physical sense faculties.” 即漸命終、及在地獄、已失六色根者 (T27, no. 1545, p. 767, b18-20).

⁶⁵⁵ Neither Saṅghabhadra nor Vasubandhu spell out the details here in terms of the specific figures and scenarios for non-human animals. However, Xuanzang’s *Mahāvibhāṣa* provides some detail regarding the definition of death for animals: “those born viviparously, ovipariously, or through incubation meet their end gradually with the gradual desertion of the 6 types of physical faculties.” 胎·卵·濕生漸命終者，漸捨眼等六種色根 (T1545:27.464a03). The six deprived by the deaths of non-human animals include the ocular faculty (“vision”), four other physical faculties (tactition, audition, gustation, and olfaction), and vitality. The rest of the explanation in *Vibh* 90 runs: It is said that it is from the hands or from the feet, and so forth, that the bodily faculty is gradually deserted. If all of the atomic particles of the bodily faculty is deserted, then that’s the end of life. In the case of hellish beings, the limbs and joints disintegrate, and the dissipation extends to all parts of the body’s faculties.” 於身根中亦有漸捨，謂手足等。若捨一切身根極微即便命終；若地獄中解諸支節，乃至糜爛亦有身根。 (T1545:27.464.a04-6). The pertinent section of *Mahāvibhāṣa*, fascicle 90, fills out some the details on the topic of how many faculties are deprived in different kinds of animals. Specifically, the above rubric of six faculties excludes the procreative faculties, since both humans and non-human animals born into these realm’s are androgynitic by nature. The bimodal gendered form only changes whether or not an additional two (for the hermaphrodite) or only an additional one gendered faculties are deprived. Sentient beings dying out from the realm of pure matter and the immaterial realm lack bimodal gendered faculties. Those kinds of sentient beings populating the *arūpyadhātu* are androgynous by nature – lit., “born with no bimodal gender” (無二形) .

Eternal Beatitude” to the morally-degraded beings, or *icchantikas*, who live in the “Dusty Saha World” of the *Jambudvīpa*. The discussion of special sentient beings highlights how the quality and the number of faculties lost in dying differs among species living within the four continents of the *kāmadhātu*.

In his analysis of dying among different species Xuanzang finds evidence to support the doctrinal theory that the moral status of the *indriyas* at the end of life determines the type of dying experienced by a sentient being, as well as the *dhātu* into which a sentient being is reborn. With the depictions of the types of dying of sentient beings across the *kāmadhātu*, Xuanzang underlines the doctrinal message that all sentient beings have the opportunity, agency and choice, to improve the balance of karma, up to, and during the end of the life.

Dying in the Continent of Uttarakuru

The spiritually-evolved beings of the *Uttarakuru* are androgenic. Unlike in the *Jambudvīpa*, the region where human beings live, the sentient beings in the *Uttarakuru* do not possess the *indriyas* of procreation. Because of their high level of spiritual evolution, and because they possess bodies that are resistant to the splitting of the “vital spots,” or the *marmāṇi* that generate the pain associated with dying, beings in the *Uttarakuru* die suddenly, and without excessive physical pain or mental anguish. When an androgenic and spiritually-evolved being dies in the *Uttarakuru*, seventeen *indriyas* are annihilated: the five sensory *indriyas*, the five hedonic *indriyas*, the five skillful *indriyas*, mind and vitality.

In *The Basis for Yoga Practitioners*, Asaṅga notes that, because sentient beings in the *Uttarakuru*, lack the *indriyas* of sexual gratification and procreation, they are free from the yoke of sexual desire, that functions for many sentient beings as an obstacle to enlightenment.⁶⁵⁶ In the

⁶⁵⁶ Xuanzang, trans., *Yogācārabhūmi*, fascicle 1 — T1579:30.282.a04-5.

Mental Basis (Skt.: *Manobhūmiḥ*), Asaṅga states that humans within the *Uttarakuru*, “die with their skillful faculties about them” (Skt.: *sēndriyam*; Chi.: *jugen* 具根).⁶⁵⁷ Here Asaṅga observes that, because humans in the *Uttarakuru* are free from the distractions and compulsions of sexual desire and craving, they spend more time cultivating the skillful *indriyas*. The attention to the skillful *indriyas* allows the beings in the *Uttarakuru* to experience benign deaths and favorable afterlives.

Dying as an *Ichchantika*

In the sixth verse of Chapter Two of the *Treasury of Abhidharma*, and in his auto-commentary on this text, Vasubandhu describes a group of humans who are regarded as morally-degraded or “incorrigible” (Skt.: *icchantika*). In the Mahāyāna sūtras, the epithet, “one having severed the skillful roots,” is granted to the *icchantikas* (Chi.: *yichanti* 一闡提; *yichandiqie* 一闡底迦). The *icchantikas* are depicted throughout the Indic scriptures as “lacking in any shred of desire” (Skt.: *icchā+anta*) to cultivate moral thoughts or behaviors.⁶⁵⁸

In his *Basis for Yoga Practitioners*, Asaṅga interprets the renunciation of the skillful *indriyas* demonstrated by the *icchantikas* as volitional. The *icchantikas*, rather than listening to the

⁶⁵⁷ *Basis for Yoga Practitioners*, *Manobhūmiḥ* section: “Moreover, when sentient beings die out from the rupyadhatu, they still have their faculties about them. In the *kāmadhātu*, beings die out with or without their faculties about them. Those dying purely with the practices for liberation are termed ‘preparing well for dying.’ Those dying in an impure way with the practices not for liberation are termed ‘preparing well for dying.’” 又色界沒時皆具諸根。欲界沒時隨所有根或具不具。又清淨解脫死者。名調善死。不清淨不解脫死者。名不調善死。 T30n1579p0282a03-5.

⁶⁵⁸ The epithet, “one having severed skillful roots” would become synonymous with the *icchantikas* (Chi.: *yi-chan ti* [一] 闡提) described in Mahāyāna sūtras. The *icchantikas* are the incorrigibles – those who, by very definition, “any shred of desire,” to cultivate any form of morality. This is a characteristic doctrine about which Xuanzang is adamant. His tradition of East Asian Yogācāra would stalwartly stand by it, even in the face of criticism from other text-traditions of East Asian Buddhism (i.e., Tiantai, Huayan, Chan, etc.), which all assert universal (i.e., non-exclusive), access to enlightenment for all sentient beings. These traditions look to the later Mahāyāna sūtras to derive this doctrine – in particular, the *Lotus* and the *Nirvāṇa* sūtras – rather than the *Abhidharma* and *Yogācāra śāstras*. See Karashima, Seishi. 2007, “Who were the *icchantikas*?” *Annual Report of the International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology*, 67–80.

teachings of the Buddha or heeding the spiritual advice of others, (Skt.: *kalyānamitra*) are driven by base cravings and sensory desires.⁶⁵⁹ The recalcitrant and refractory *icchāntikas* inhabit the *kāmadhātu* and not the spiritually advanced realms of the *rūpadhātu* or the *arūpadhātu*.

In his commentary on *The Basis for Yoga Practitioners*, Kuiji lists six conditions that lead a sentient being to become an *icchāntika* with no hope for salvation.⁶⁶⁰ These are:

- (1) Using the indriyas for the harmful purposes
- (2) Using the indriyas to satisfy sensory desires
- (3) Associating with people of poor moral character⁶⁶¹
- (4) Lacking in shame or remorse about engaging in morally impure behavior⁶⁶²
- (5) Maintaining grossly distorted views
- (6) Lacking compassion for other sentient beings⁶⁶³

⁶⁵⁹ Asaṅga's *Basis* reads at (T30n1579p0281a22-24) "What is severing the skillful roots? It refers to realizing the highest grades of bad karma by being bent upon the immediate indulgence of sensory desires. It is because one follows along with bad people, because one makes machinations about the perfect formulation of distorted views, because one is bent upon performing all manner of malicious acts with no fear of repercussions, and because one is without shame or compassion." 云何斷善根。謂利根者。成就上品諸惡意樂現行法故。得隨順彼惡友故。彼邪見纏極重圓滿到究竟故。彼於一切惡現行中得無畏故。無哀愍故。

⁶⁶⁰ Kuiji enumerates six conditions that can lead to the degrading and the ultimate loss of the skillful root. These are: "firstly, the keenness/dullness of faculties; secondly, being bent upon sensual pleasure and bad conduct; thirdly, meeting with bad fiends; fourthly, gravity of distorted views; fifthly no compunction about bad conduct. Sixthly, demonstrating benevolence towards sentient beings. The keenness of faculties refers to internally thinking and formulating thoughts that lead to fiercely distorted views. They are not scared of nefarious conduct, nor do they arouse thoughts of benevolence or compassion. 一利根。二意樂惡。三逢惡友。四邪見重。五行惡無畏。六於眾生為慈悲。諸利根者。內自思構。邪見猛利。不怖眾惡。不生慈愍。

⁶⁶¹ Kuiji's commentary on YBh: "If one associates repeatedly with bad people and follows along in their ill conduct being bent upon indulging in sensory pleasures, one can cut off the skillful roots. They must whet the skillful faculties and then cut them off. The dull (as opposed to keen) faculties would not be capable of so broadly engaging in ill conduct and indulging in sensory pleasures." 若更逢惡友，順惡意樂，而斷善根。要利根方斷。鈍根不能，廣惡意樂斷，狹意不能，要是欲界。非上二。三天下。非北洲。人非天。

⁶⁶² Kuiji's commentary on the *Yogācārabhūmi* reads: "Some take pleasure in hurting and harming other sentient beings without giving them any aid or help. By the power of this action, the *icchāntika* severs the skillful roots. By the conditioning power of this karma the *icchāntika* also follows along with bad people." 樂損害。非拔濟。依此因力。方斷善根故。緣力必由近惡友故。阿顛底迦畢竟之人。

⁶⁶³ Vibh 150 cites this explanation, verbatim, and indicates that thirteen denotes all twenty-two, with the deduction of the three uncontaminated faculties not pertaining to "those who have severed the roots of morality." The

Kuiji and Xuanzang maintain that all humans have the choice to either retain, or to discard the skillful faculties in the process of dying.⁶⁶⁴ In his commentary on the discussion of the *icchantikas*, found in *The Basis for Yoga Practitioners*, Kuiji posits that, by refusing to cultivate the skillful *indriyas*, the *icchantika* shoot themselves in the spiritual feet. Paraphrasing Vasubandhu's Treasury of Metaphysics,⁶⁶⁵ Kuiji writes:

The body of the *icchantika* must die and be reborn to regain the skillful *indriyas*. Then we will see if they break the precepts again or not.

要身壞後，方續善根。見壞戒或不壞等。⁶⁶⁶

In an auto-commentary to Chapter Two of the Treasury of Abhidharma, Vasubandhu writes:

The *icchantikas* die gradually with eight faculties: the five hedonic faculties of joy, suffering, pleasure, anxiety and aversion,⁶⁶⁷ along with mind, proprioception and vitality. First, they lose the other six physical faculties (i.e., the five senses of vision, hearing, taste and smell, along with aversion and the faculty of procreation).⁶⁶⁸

八者謂五受根、及身·命·意。即失六色根已斷善者。⁶⁶⁹

minimum of “eight refers to the faculties of the body, mind, and vitality, along with the five hedonic faculties (*anubhavēndriyāṇi*).” 八者，謂身·命·意、及五受根 (T1545:27.767.b12-13).

⁶⁶⁴ Kuiji's commentary on *Yogācārabhūmi* paraphrases the *Abhidharmakośa*: “Fascicle seventeen of the *Treasury of Abhidharma* says: are those who are not capable of retaining the skillful faculties within the present body? This excludes only from those bent upon the nefarious conduct, having been reborn from one of the hells.” 俱舍 第十七云：於現身中能續善不？亦有能續。除造逆人，彼人定從地獄將沒 (T1828:42.320.c27-28).

⁶⁶⁵ T1558:29.89.b27-8.

⁶⁶⁶ T1558:29.89.b27.

⁶⁶⁷ Puguang's commentary enumerates this collection of eight faculties that defines the subject of death for some beings in the *rūpyadhātu* “if residing in the stage of non-perception (*asamjñā*), one possesses only the nine, namely, five hedonic faculties along with mind, life, and aversion.” 若非想地中，唯有八根，謂信等五，意·命·捨。

⁶⁶⁸ AKBh 2.20. For Skt. text see Pradhan, ed., *Abhidharmakośa*, 51: pañcabhir vedanādibhiḥ, kāyamanojīvitaiś ca.

⁶⁶⁹ T1545:27.767.b12-13.

Dying with the assignment of the eight *indriyas* borne by the *icchantikas* is regarded as distinctly unpleasant, as it involves a high quotient of pain as well as aversive sensations and psychological distress. By failing to exercise the skillful faculties, the *icchantikas* suffer the dire consequences of poor karma and reap bitter fruit at the end of life.

Dying as a Deva

Among the six heavens of the *kāmadhātu* are the vaunted Pure Lands in which the devas, or celestial beings, reside. The devas live in a happier abode and have longer and less stressful lives than humans who reside in the *Jambudvīpa*. Devas have a minimum of seventeen *indriyas*, including the five sensory *indriyas*, mind, vitality, the five hedonic faculties, and the five cultivatable skillful faculties.⁶⁷⁰ Devas who possess the faculties of procreation bear up to eighteen faculties.⁶⁷¹ Because they have highly developed skillful *indriyas*, devas in the celestial heavens experience painless and quick deaths.

In their commentaries on the *Treasury of Abhidharma*, Sthiramati and Pūrṇavādhara list the five reasons the celestial beings do not experience painful deaths: devas die suddenly; they do not experience the splitting of the vital spots from the body and the spilling of the three humors; they approach the final moments of life with resolution and moral conviction (Skt.: *bhrāntā*);⁶⁷²

⁶⁷⁰ See *Treatise on the Basis of Gnosis*, translated by Saṅghadeva (T1543:26.874.a03) “The bodies of four divine kings contains at a minimum, seventeen, and at a maximum, nineteen. Celestials within the heavens of the thirty-three, the Yāma Heavens (under the *kāmadhātu*), the Tuṣita Heaven (DDB: “pure land in the fourth heaven in the realm of desire 欲界”[accessed Feb. 21 2017]), then heavens where one can partake in one's own pleasure, and the heavens where one can partake of the pleasures created in other heavens are all the same.” 四天王身，若極多十九，若極少十七。三十三天、炎天、兜術天、化自在天、他化自在天亦復如是。

⁶⁷¹ Tullun includes the caveat that “this excludes *nārakas*. The devas only have the fruits of skillful karma. The denizens of the hells undergo the separation, perpetually of the joints and sinews, what else is there to say? 除天那落迦者。天唯善業果。地獄⁶⁷¹恒解支節。更須何須說？ T42n1828p0322a08-9.

⁶⁷² Sthiramati, *Abhidharmakośabhāṣyaṭīkāṭattvārtha*, D 4421: vol. 210, folio/line 408a.7–408b.1: “Where it is said that the *marmāṇi* of the devas are not severed by Vasubandhu in the root text (*mūlam*) it means that their upapādukas as well die suddenly. It is because of the fact that the devas do not undergo the five signs of major physical decline and the because of the fact that they can efface confusion (*bhrāntatva*; Tib.: ‘gryul pa can).” *lha dag gi nang na ni gnad 'chad pa med mod kyi zhes bya ba ni brdzus te skye ba nyid kyis cig car 'chi ba'o 'de dag*

they do not undergo the five signs of the grave and decline; and their bodies decay rapidly and without the release of copious amounts of liquid (Tib.: *chu*; Chi.: shui水) into the environment.⁶⁷³ Devas are perishable and subject to rebirth. Unlike humans in the earthly realm, however, devas have less opportunity to accumulate merit while living in the celestial heavens.

Dying as a Ārhat

In Chapter Six, “Discriminating the Sages,” in the *Treasury of the Abhidharma*, Vasubandhu depicts how *ārhat*s, humans who have perfected the path of learning, die in the *kāmadhātu*. Vasubandhu describes the *ārhat* as dying in a “karmically neutral state”⁶⁷⁴ (Skt.: *avyākṛta*; Chi.: *wuji* 無記). The *ārhat* spends down the spiritual capital accumulated during the course of a life to obtain a skillful death. Prior to achieving nirvana, the *ārhat* no longer carries any good or bad karma, and no longer requires a body in which to be reincarnated. Thus, the *ārhat* dies in a karmically neutral way and is released from the cycle of birth and death.

Dying in the Rūpadhātu

The *rūpadhātu* is one the three realms of the Buddhist universe. It is composed of sixteen

ni 'khrul pa can yin no zhes bya ba ni bzlog par nus pa'i phyir ro/'chi ltas lnga las ni mi 'da' ste zhes bya ba ni bzlog par mi nus pa'i phyir ro.

⁶⁷³ Puṇṇavardhana’s commentary on *Abhidharmakośa*, D 4093: vol. 144, folio/line 329, b.4-5, reads: “Where it is said that the three destructions of the sensory world (*bhājanaloka*) are qualitatively similar in their cause, it refers to the three destructions of being destroyed by fire, being destroyed by water, and being destroyed by wind. What it means by the devas being exempted from this destruction is that they die suddenly and that they later undergo rebirth in a spontaneous reincarnation (of an *upapāduka*). This is because of the fact that the devas can efface the confusion at the end of life and that they do not take on the five signs of great physical decline. Those going towards the hells of uninterrupted suffering also excepted (i.e., *nārakas*), but they constantly undergo the rupture of the marmāṇi (in the hells).” *phyi rol gyi dngos po 'jig pa'i rgyu dang chos mthun pa nad dag kyang 'jig go zhes bya ba'i don to//jig pa ni gsum ste/ mes 'jig pa dang/chus 'jig pa dang/rlung gis 'jig pa'o//lha dag gi nang na ni gnad 'chad pa med mod kyi zhes bya ba ni rdzus te skye ba nyid kyi cig car 'chi ba'i phyir ro//de dag ni 'khrul pa can yin no zhes bya ba ni bzlog par nus pa'i phyir ro/'chi ba ltas lnga las ni mi 'da' ste zhes bya ba ni bzlog par mi nus pa'i phyir ro//di dag ni thams cad la gnod mi za bar mi 'byung la/thams cad kyang mi 'byung mod kyi/*

⁶⁷⁴ AK 3.43 in Xuanzang’s translation reads: 非定無心二；二無記涅槃 Skt. line of verse from Shastri, ed., *Sphuṭārtha*, vol. 2, 401-3: *naikāgracittayoretau nirvātyavyākṛtadvaye* |. De la vallee poussin translates *L'Abhidharmakośa de Vasubandhu*, 132: “Ni L'une ni l'autre pour le « recueilli », pour le « sanspensée ». On obtient le nirvāṇa dans deux pensée» non-définies.” See

celestial spheres (Skt.: *sejie shiqi tian* 色界十七天), or heavenly regions, and is occupied by humans, devas and *upapādukas*. The *rūpadhātu* is known in the Mahayana Buddhist tradition as the Pure Lands, and reincarnation into it is regarded by Buddhist practitioners as a favorable rebirth. Beings that are reborn into this *dhātu* have benign deaths and opportunities to work toward enlightenment.

The three famous texts of the Trans-East-Asian Pure Land tradition (Skt.: *jingtu sanbu jing* 淨土三部經) adduce an example of humans becoming reborn by “sprouting forth” from a golden lotus blossom pedestal 金蓮花坐 that floats above a crystalline lake of seven jewels within the Pure Land (Skt.: *Buddhakṣetra*; Chi.: *Fo cha* 佛刹) of Amitābha.⁶⁷⁵ The Pure Lands are located within the *rūpadhātu*. In the celestial sphere of Abṛiha, known in Chinese as “the heaven containing no worries” (Chi.: *wufan tian* 無煩天) humans are born without the undesirable hedonic faculties of suffering and anxiety.

Humans and devas in the *rūpadhātu* possesses a minimum of three faculties and a maximum of fifteen faculties and do not bear the *indriyas* of suffering, anxiety or procreation. Human and devas born in this *dhātu* carry the hedonic faculties of pleasure, joy, and aversion, the sensory faculties of vision, hearing and touch and the *indriyas* of mind and vitality. They are also born with the five spiritual faculties of faith, concentration, perseverance, mindful recollection of practices, and wisdom, and the three faculties of gnosis: knowing the past, knowing the future and knowing the past, present and future simultaneously. Because sentient beings in the *rūpadhātu* do not have noses or mouths,⁶⁷⁶ they take in nutrition through *kāyēndriyam*, the *indriya* of

⁶⁷⁵ See the description of the higher grades of rebirth in the *Amitāyus Visualization Sūtra* 佛說觀無量壽佛經 and also the translation of the shorter and longer recensions of the *Sūtra of the Golden Land of Bliss* or *Sukhāvatīvyūha* by Gómez, titled *The Land of Bliss. Sanskrit and Chinese versions of the Sukhāvatīvyūha sūtras*, 183-4.

⁶⁷⁶ CWSL, fasc. 4: “Having a nose and a tongue is only part of the bondage to the *kāmadhātu*” 鼻舌唯欲界繫 (T1585:31.20.a06). Also see Dignāga, *Abhidharmakośamarmapradīpa* (AKMP), D 4095: vol. 147, folio/line 113a.3: “When a dying mind is associated with the visual *indriya* but is without desire, then there are the faculties

proprioception. Additionally, because they do not procreate in the *rūpadhātu*, humans and devas are reborn through the “spontaneous transformation” of an existing *upapādukas*.⁶⁷⁷ Sentient beings who die in *rūpadhātu* are either reborn into the *kāmadhātu* or the *rūpadhātu* or break the cycle of death and rebirth and achieve nirvāṇa.

Xuanzang, following the fourteenth verse of Chapter Two of the *Treasury of Abhidharma*, determines dying in the *rūpadhātu* to be the deprivation of the eight *indriyas* of mind, vitality, the sublime form of aversion and the five skillful *indriyas*. In the *Commentary on the Vital Spots of the Illuminating Treasury of Abhidharma*, Dignāga concurs with Vasubandhu in noting that beings dying in the subtle realms lack the faculty of anxiety and suffering. Therefore, beings in the *rūpadhātu* die suddenly and without psychological pain or physical suffering.

Dying in the *Arūpadhātu*

The *arūpadhātu*, or the “formless realm,” is the highest spiritual realm in the Buddhist universe. The exalted realm of the *arūpadhātu* is populated by human sages, devas and *upapādukas* who are enlightened but have not yet attained nirvāṇa. Beings who reside in the *arūpadhātu* have long and pleasant lives enjoying the fruit of their good karma. The *arūpadhātu* is composed of four transmigratory stations, as attested in Āgamas:

- (1) The locus of limitless space 空無邊處 (Skt.: *ākāśa-anantya-āyatana*): Beings who live in this locus the consciousness of limitless space.

of aversion, vitality, mind, and *kāyendriyam*, along with the five [spiritual faculties]. Where there are the faculties of smell, taste, the principle is the same.” /Gang zhig mig gi dbang po ldan pa de ni gdon mi za bar btang snyoms dang/srog dang /yid dang/ lus kyi dbang po dag dang de dang dbang po lnga dang ldan te/ rna ba dang/ sna dan/lce'i dbangpo dag dang ldan pa yang de dang 'dra bar rig par bya'o.

⁶⁷⁷ Dignāga, *Marmapradīpa* (D 4093: vol. 144, folio/line 123a.3): “In the *rūpyadhātu* there are eight fold and they are said to be reborn via spontaneous rebirth. Such it is said in detail in the *śāstra* (i.e., AKBh).” Zugs na brgyad de dag go/de nyid la rgyu smras pa ni/ rdzus te skye ba thams cad ni/zhes bya ba rgyas par 'byung ba ste/.

- (2) The locus of limitless consciousness 識無邊處 (Skt.: *viññāna-anantya-āyatana*): Beings who live in this locus experience consciousness that is not limited by time.
- (3) The locus of emptiness 無所有處 (Skt.: *akiñcanya-āyatana*): Beings who live in this locus experience a state in which there are no physical things.
- (4) The locus of neither perception of non-perception 非想非非想處 (Skt.: *naivasamjñāna-asamjñā-āyatana*): Beings who live in this locus experience a state in which no ideas or physical things exist.

Humans who reside in the fourth heavenly locus of the *arūpadhātu*, the *asamjñikādevas*, or “the state of sensory deprivation” possess the three faculties of mind, vitality and the sublime form of aversion. Vasubandhu describes the celestials who live in fourth abode as deeply absorbed in a state of “perceptionless *samādhi*” (Skt.: *asamjñikāsamādhi*; Chi.: *wuxiang ding* 無想定). He avers that a human being can enter perceptionless *samādhi* by dying in a state of non-perception. This requires subduing the *indriyas* of anxiety, suffering, joy and pain and cultivating the *indriya* of concentration.

Humans in the *arūpadhātu* die with eight faculties: the five skillful *indriyas*, mind, vitality and the sublime form of aversion. Beings in the *arūpadhātu* can improve the moral and hedonic quality of the way they die by exercising the five skillful cultivatable faculties of faith, perseverance, concentration, mindful recollection, and wisdom. In his translation of the *Treasury of Abhidharma*, Xuanzang notes that while humans and devas beings in the *arūpadhātu* die without the five senses,⁶⁷⁸ because they possess the *indriya* of subtle aversion, they retain traces

⁶⁷⁸ Vasubandhu’s text of AKBh commentary on 2.20cd runs: *strīpumindriye duḥkhe cāmalaṃ ca hitvā 'iti varttate| manojīvitopekṣendriyāṇi śraddhādīni ca pañca|*.

Only the last part, “the remaining eight unite those yoked to the immaterial realm,” is corroborated in the Skt. text. Xuanzang’s Chinese translation of this passage in Vasubandhu’s auto-commentary reads: 無色如前，除三無漏・女・男憂・苦，并除五色、及喜・樂根。准知餘八根通無色界繫，調意・命・捨・信等五根。 This explanation is “cribbed,” verbatim, in *Nyāyanusāra śāstra*, fascicle 5 (T1562:29.381.c09) and *Clarification of Tenets*, fascicle 9 (T1563:29.797.c05).

of discomfort during their quick deaths.

The Special Cases of Dying in the *Arūpadhātu*: *Rāgins* and *Vairāgins*

In “Discriminating Sages,” Chapter Six of the *Treasury of Abhidharma*, Vasubandhu describes how sages die in the *arūpadhātu*. He identifies two types of sages: *rāgins*, or beings “who have not yet transcended desire” (Chi.: *wei liyu-zhe* 未離欲者), and *vairāgins* (Chi.: *liyu-zhe* 離慾者), or beings “who have gained detachment from worldly desires.” Kuiji, in his commentary on *The Basis for Yoga Practitioners*, lays out the four ways a sentient being detaches from worldly desire to attain the spiritual status of the *vairāgin*.⁶⁷⁹ They are:

- (1) Cultivating the skillful *indriyas*.
- (2) Listening to the correct dharma.
- (3) Detaching from the cognitive and behavioral encumbrances to spiritual cultivation.
- (4) Contemplating reality as it really is.

As depicted in the *Basis of Mind* section in *The Basis for Yoga Practitioners* by Asaṅga, the *rāgin* remains entangled in sensory desire and thus contains traces of attachment to the cycle of living and dying.⁶⁸⁰ *Vairāgins*, who are free from sensory desire, die quickly with their skillful faculties about them and are released from the cycle of death and rebirth.

In the ninth and tenth fascicles of the CWSL, Xuanzang states that the *vairāgins* who reside

⁶⁷⁹ Kuiji’s commentary on the *Yogācārabhūmi* reads: “There are four conditions for becoming a *vairāgin* – firstly, the maturation of the *indriyas*, sages and ordinary humans (Skt. *prthagjana*); secondly, listening to the appropriate dharma; thirdly, gaining distance from the obstructions; and fourthly, giving rise to the correct way of thinking. Only, then [when these conditions are met] can one gain distance from sensory desires. Being a *vairāgin* consists of wisdom. [0008c03] 離欲四緣。一凡聖根熟。二聞隨所應法。三離所應障。四起正思惟。方能離欲。體唯是慧 (T1829:43.8.c03-4).

⁶⁸⁰ *Mahāvibhāṣa*, fascicle 30 reads: “the *rāgin* sage in the contaminated state enters into the correct *samādhi* in departing life ; knowledge of the truth of suffering and of types (*anvaya*) have already arisen [while dying].” 聖者未離欲染入正性離生。苦類智未已生 (T1545:27.476a19).

in the *arūpadhātu* die in a sudden and relatively painless way because they do possess the *indriyas* of suffering, or the two faculties of bodily sensation, *kāyēndriyam* and *manēndriyam*. The dying of the *vairāgin* involves the loss of ten faculties: the five skillful faculties, the mind, sublime aversion, vitality, and the hedonic faculties of joy and pleasure. All of the faculties of the *vairāgin* are brought to an end quickly, resulting in a sudden and painless way of dying. For dying is the stage immediately before final nirvāṇa.⁶⁸¹

Karma and Consciousness

In *The Basis for Yoga Practitioners*⁶⁸² and in the *Compendium of the Mahāyāna*, Asaṅga states that the final seat of consciousness for all humans, regardless of their karma, is in the fleshly heart (Skt.: *hṛdaya*; Chi.: *xin* 心) of the sentient being. Xuanzang, in his CWSL, ultimately follows Asaṅga and concludes that once consciousness departs the heart of the sentient being, all that remains is a corpse. The termination of the human heartbeat thus marks the ending of one life and the beginning of the next in the Buddhist cycle of birth and death.

After a comprehensive examination of the Abhidharma canon on the nature of dying, Xuanzang turns to *The Basis for Yoga Practitioners* and to the *Compendium of the Mahayana* by Asaṅga to investigate the Yogācāra theories on consciousness and the physiology of dying. The Yogācāra philosophers develop two core ideas regarding the role of consciousness at the end of life: that the final resting place of consciousness in the dying sentient being is in the heart, and that

⁶⁸¹ Dullyun's commentary on *Yogācārabhūmi* mentions the opinion of one "Master Jing who says that 'Although the ārhat prepares well for dying, he dies now without having prepared for dying in a past life. Since he does not stand ill-prepared for dying now, he will not be reborn into the future.'" 景師云。羅漢今身雖調善死，此死亦由過去不調善死故有今死，於現在不由不調善死而於未來俱不由死，以更不生故 (T1828:42.421.c27-a1).

⁶⁸² For Skt. text see Bhattacharya, ed., *Yogācārabhūmi*, 18: *Yatra ca kalaladeśe tadvijñānaṃ sammūrechitaṃ so'sya bhavati tasmin samaye hṛdayadeśah*/ Xuanzang, trans., YBh: 又此羯羅藍，識最初託處，即名肉心。如是識於此處最初託，即從此處最後捨 (T1579:30.283.a18-20).

the final form of consciousness that persists in the sentient being is *ālayavijñāna*, the “storehouse consciousness” that contains memory and karma. While *ālayavijñāna* is a subliminal form of consciousness, it is omnipresent in the sensory or cognitive activities of the sentient being, and is responsible for the vestigial consciousness of the sentient being in the final moments before death.

Xuanzang formulates his theories of consciousness and dying in his final and original work, the *Cheng weishi lun*, or CWSL. While initially intended as a catechism of the Yogācāra tenets prepared by Xuanzang for his disciples in Chinese, the CWSL provides a synthesis of the Abhidharma theories and Yogācāra philosophy of Asaṅga and Dignāga. Within the CWSL, Xuanzang addresses the impact of karma on consciousness at the end of life and articulates his original theory that *ālayavijñāna* accounts for the last traces of consciousness experienced by the sentient being on the brink of death. In his exegeses of consciousness and dying, Xuanzang explores the explanation of the loss of consciousness that is articulated by Asaṅga in the Yogācāra texts; analyzes the nature of *ālayavijñāna*; and investigates the premise asserted by Asaṅga, in the “Mental Basis” in the *Basis for Yoga Practitioners*, that the subliminal consciousness is the part of the sentient being that transcends the body in dying and is reincarnated in another body.

Xuanzang comes to endorse and elevate the idea, first presented by Asaṅga, that *ālayavijñāna* is the form of consciousness that transmigrates from one life to the next. In the CWSL, Xuanzang decisively concludes that karma is implicated in the consciousness of the sentient being and responsible for determining the quality of dying and the afterlife. In his analysis of karma, Xuanzang offers to the Buddhist practitioner the hope that by improving karma through the practice of yoga, the conscious experience of dying can be improved.

The Loss of Consciousness

Xuanzang begins his exploration of consciousness and dying with the question: What is the nature of consciousness at the end of life? To address this question, Xuanzang returns to the descriptions of consciousness leaving the body that are given by Asaṅga in the *Basis of Yoga Practitioners* and the *Compendium of the Mahāyāna Teaching* and by Vasubandhu in the *Treasury of Abhidharma*. In his analysis of these texts, Xuanzang homes in on a discrepancy between the two depictions of how consciousness departs the body during dying.⁶⁸³ While Asaṅga avers that the final seat of consciousness for all humans is in the heart, Vasubandhu posits that there are three ways for consciousness to depart the body, and that the departure of consciousness from the heart portends that the newly deceased being will obtain a higher rebirth. The dispute between the two Yogācāra luminaries pulls Xuanzang into taking a closer look into how consciousness departs the corporeal body.

Asaṅga, in the *Compendium of the Mahāyāna Teaching*,⁶⁸⁴ and Vasubandhu, in his

⁶⁸³ Zhizhou is sensitive to this discrepancy. He writes that the sequence of *marmaṇi* differs between the *Abhidharmakośa* and the *Yogācārabhūmi*, and between the various sūtras of the Buddha: “However, all sentient beings are not equivalent (in this matter of the marmāṇi). Sūtra on the Threefold Realm (*Tridhātuka Sūtra*) says: When the human is in his last hours and will be reborn into the Avīci Hell, the numinous consciousness escapes from the feet. For those reborn as animals, consciousness escapes from the knee. For those falling into the realm of the hungry ghosts, consciousness departs from the abdomen. For those reborn as humans, consciousness leaves from the heart. For those reborn as gods (Skt. *devas*), consciousness escapes from the eye. Why is this sūtra (on the Threefold Realm) different from the Foundation for Yoga Practitioners (*Yogācārabhūmi-śāstra*)? Because the Compendium of the Māhāyana (*Māhāyana-saṃgraha-sūtra*) takes the skin, and the Foundation for Yoga Practitioners take the cavity of the heart, from which consciousness finally vanishes.”

眾生未然。三界經云。人臨終時，將生地獄，神識從足出。生畜生者，從膝出；墜餓鬼者，從腹出。生人者，從心出。生天者，從眼出。作聖人者，從頂出。與《瑜伽》等何故差異？

⁶⁸⁴ Xuanzang’s translation of the passage from the *Compendium of the Mahāyāna* reads: “Asaṅga’s *Treatise* [of the *Compendium of the Mahāyāna*] says that whether the cold sensation is based in the upper or lower part of the body depends upon good and bad karma. If one does not believe in *ālayavijñāna*, then none of that is possible. For this same reason, if one departs from all of the matured consciousness of the seeds (in *ālayavijñāna*), then the arising of the *saṃkleśas* would not be possible.” 論曰。又將沒時造善造惡。或下或上所依漸冷。若不信有阿賴耶識皆不得成。是故若離一切種子異熟識者。此生雜染亦不得成。

commentary on this text,⁶⁸⁵ agree that karma dictates the course of dying and the location of the departure of consciousness from the body. Asaṅga states that during dying, consciousness migrates to the upper regions of the body and ultimately departs from the heart. According to Vasubandhu, if a sentient being dies with a balance of good karma, consciousness departs from the lower parts of the body, and if the sentient being dies with a balance of bad karma, consciousness departs from the upper half of the body. Xuanzang endorses the positions held by both Yogācāra theorists that the departure of consciousness from the body during dying depends upon the balance of good and bad karma in the individual. He also supports the idea that the specific location of the departure of consciousness from the body predicts the course of future rebirth.

In the *Mental Basis* section of *The Basis for Yoga Practitioners*, Asaṅga holds that consciousness departs from the heart regardless of the balance of good or bad karma held by the sentient being. He states:

When one who has performed bad actions approaches the end-of-life, consciousness withdraws the support from the upper part of the body. The upper part of body becomes cold. Then consciousness withdraws up to the region of the heart.

⁶⁸⁵ Xuanzang's translation of the passage from Vasubandhu's commentary on the *Compendium of the Mahāyāna* reads: "When one is about to die consciousness departs from the lower or from the higher part of the body depending upon whether the karma is good or bad. This is because those who create good karma must rise up (in the transmigratory ranks, i.e., attain a better rebirth), whereas those who create bad karma must go down. If you don't allow that *ālayavijñāna* exists as the maintainer (*upadātṛ*), then what is the basis of the slowly-creeping cold sensation in the dying? It is because of that fact that *ālayavijñāna* is the capability of maintaining (this sensation). Sometimes consciousness departs downwards, sometimes upwards, but always in a series – the cold sensation exists in the deserted area." 釋曰。將捨命時，造善造惡，或下或上，身分漸冷。以造善者，必定上昇。若造惡者，必定下墜。若不許有阿賴耶識為能執受，云何得有所依漸冷？阿賴耶識能執受故。或下或上，如其次第。隨所捨處，身即有冷 (T1597:31.333.a10-14).

Paramārtha's translation of this passage in MsG and the MsGBh reads similarly to Xuanzang's: 論曰。正捨壽命離阿梨耶識。或上或下次第依止。冷觸不應得成。

[0171c04] 釋曰。是人於死時中。若有善業。定應向上。若有惡業。定應向下。若汝不信有本識。云何此依止身。或下冷觸。或上冷觸。次第得成。若無有本識。云何得成本識能執持五根？本識若捨，依止身隨所捨處，冷觸次第起所捨之處，則成死身。

When one who has performed good actions approaches the end of life, consciousness withdraws its support from the lower part of the body. The lower part of the body becomes cold. Then consciousness withdraws up to the region of the heart.

The final location of consciousness is in the heart. When consciousness withdraws to the heart, the whole body becomes cold.

又將終時。作惡業者，識於所依從上分捨，即從上分冷觸隨起。如此漸捨，乃至心處。⁶⁸⁶

造善業者，識於所依從下分捨。即從下分，冷觸隨起。如此漸捨，乃至心處。當知後識，唯心處捨，從此冷觸遍滿所依。⁶⁸⁷

In his description, Asaṅga describes how the accumulation of karma determines the physiological experience of the sentient being in the process of dying. If the good karma predominates over the bad karma held by a sentient being, as consciousness travels to the heart, the upper half of the body becomes cold; if the bad karma outweighs the good karma, then the lower portions of the body become cold. The evacuation of consciousness registers physiologically as the loss of bodily warmth. As consciousness withdraws from the extremities of the body and coalesces in the region of the heart, bodily warmth gradually vanishes, leaving portions of the body cold.

⁶⁸⁶ Bhattachārya, ed., *Yogācārabhūmi*, 16: *Tataś cyutikāle 'kuśalakarmakāriṇāṃ tāvad ūrdhva-bhāgād vijñānam āśrayaṃ muñcati / urdhva bhāgo vā asya śītībhavati / sa punas tāvan muñcati yāvadd hṛdayapradeśaṃ*. Tib. text reads (D 4035: vol. 127, folio/line 9b.7-10a.1.): *De bas na re zhig mi dge ba'i las byed byed pa rnam ni 'chi 'pho ba'i tshe rnam par shes pas ro stod nas lus 'dor bar byed de/de'i ro stod grang mor 'gyur ro//de yang snying gar thug pa'i bar du 'dor bar 'gyur ro/legs pa byed byed pa rnam kyi rnam par shes pas ni/ro smad nas lus 'dor par byed de/de'i ro smad grang mor 'gyur ro/de yang snying gar thug pa'i bar du 'dor bar 'gyur te/snying gnas rnam par shes pa 'pho bar rig par bya'o.*

⁶⁸⁷ T1579:30.282.a07-12, YBh, fasc. 1. Bhattachārya, ed., *Yogācārabhūmi*, 16: *Sukṛtakāriṇaṃ punaradhobhāgād vijñānamāśrayaṃ muñcati / adhobhāgaścāsyā śītībhavati tāvad hṛdayapradeśaṃ / hṛdayadeśācca vijñānasya cyutir veditavyā / tataḥ kṛtsna evāśrayaḥ śītībhavati. ro smad nas lus 'dor par byed de/de'i ro smad grang mor 'gyur ro//de yang snying gar thug pa'i bar du 'dor bar 'gyur te/snying gnas rnam par shes pa 'pho bar rig par bya'o/* D 4035: vol. 127, folio/line 10a.1.

In the CWSL, Xuanzang presents an account of gradually dying in which he determines that *ālayavijñāna*, the subliminal layer of consciousness, is a form of consciousness that registers the physical sensation of coldness during the process of dying gradually. Xuanzang states:

With the gradual approach of death, depending upon either the good, or the bad karma held by the sentient being, sensations of cold arise, from either the lower or the upper portions of the body. The sentient being registers the sensation of cold through *ālayavijñāna*. The operating consciousnesses of the five senses (Skt.: *pravṛttivijñānas*) no longer register the sensation of cold. The five operating consciousnesses of vision, hearing, taste, smell and touch have their basis of consciousness in the body and do not register the cold.⁶⁸⁸

又將死時，由善惡業，下上身分，冷觸漸起。若無此識，彼事不成；轉識不能執受身故。眼等五識，各別依故，或不行故。⁶⁸⁹

In the account presented in the CWSL and in the translation of the *Summary of the Abhidharma*, Xuanzang concurs with Asaṅga that if the good karma outweighs the bad, consciousness departs from the “upper part of the body” (Chi.: *shen shangfen* 身上分), or the arms, the chest and the upper abdomen. If the bad karma prevails over the good, then consciousness deserts the body from the “lower part of the body” (Chi.: *shen xiafen* 身下分), or the feet, legs and lower abdomen.

In his study notes on the CWSL, Zhizhou, the disciple of Kuiji, offers two scenarios for the process by which consciousness departs the body. In the first version, Zhizhou states that when bad karma predominates over good karma, *ālayavijñāna* retreats from the lower part of the body, lodges in the heart, and then ultimately departs from the upper part of the body and the heart at the

⁶⁸⁸ Translation is mine, loosely based on Wei Tat's helpful edition. See Wei tat 韋達, trans., *Ch'eng Wei-Shih Lun: The Doctrine of Mere-Consciousness by Hsüan Tsang, Tripitaka Master of the T'ang Dynasty* (Hong Kong: The Ch'eng wei-shih lun Publication Committee, 1976). Heavy modification, however, has been made.

⁶⁸⁹ CWSL, fascicle 3, T1585:31.17.a13-16.

same time.⁶⁹⁰ In the second scenario, when good karma predominates over bad karma, consciousness retracts from the lower part of the body and coalesces in the heart. Consciousness gradually fades from the upper part of the body and then departs from the heart during the moment of death. Here, Zhizhou avers that the impact of karma on the retraction of *ālayavijñāna* from the parts of the body is a matter of timing, but that for all sentient beings, regardless of karmic standing, consciousness leaves from the heart.⁶⁹¹ Zhizhou posits that in either scenario, the departure of *ālayavijñāna* from the heart marks biological death.⁶⁹²

In the *Basis of Yoga Practitioners* and the commentary by Zhizhou, it is determined that *ālayavijñāna* is the last form of consciousness in the body prior to death. During the process of dying, *ālayavijñāna* sustains the vital life functions, such as the beating of the heart up to and

⁶⁹⁰ Zhizhou writes in *Deducing the Doctrines of the CWSL* (*Cheng weishi lun yan mi* 成唯識論演秘), fascicle 3: “There are two explanations: the first says that the sensation of cold of external phenomena are different in their upward or downward direction and that consciousness within the place of the heart directs the upward or downward direction, and that consciousness vanishes suddenly at one time.” 有二釋：一云：外相冷觸下上不同，識於心處與其上下，一時頓捨 (T1833:43.885b27-29).

⁶⁹¹ In Zhizhou’s *Deducing the Doctrines of the CWSL*: “The second says that as for those who do good, consciousness gradually vanishes from the lower part up to the fleshy heart, and then later consciousness from the upper part. Doing bad and overturning good, comes from this fleshy heart, and it is in fact the last thing to vanish, and the upward or downward direction depends upon the previous character of that *ālayavijñāna*’s giving up on life, but downward and upward are not opposed in principle.

二云：若造善者，從下漸捨，至肉心藏，後從上捨。造惡翻善，由此肉心，實最後捨，上下據彼捨命前相，理亦無違 (T1833:43.885.b28-c2).

⁶⁹² Zhizhou writes in his *Deducing the Doctrines of the CWSL*: “We clarify: so based upon what can it be known that the scriptures rely on the external phenomena? In discussing sensation coming up or going down; externally it is also not absent. How is the *Māhāyana-saṃgraha śāstra* which speaks of the ‘heart-mind,’ different from the *Basis for Yoga Practitioners* which takes the ‘cavity of the heart’ (as the final locus of consciousness)? We aver that it [this sensation] is simply from outside of the skin— thus we know the convergence; at some pains we can indeed follow it. 詳曰：准何得知，經依外相？論觸上下，外亦不無。如何《攝論》唯就膚內？又經言心，何異《瑜伽》所說心藏？斷唯皮外：故知所會；難可憑准。

Now we further explain: the scripture accords to the existing differences between sage, unenlightened being, superior, and inferior, in speaking of the desertion of phenomenal experience. By principle, it is in fact the place of the heart that is the last to be abandoned. We don’t rely upon inside or outside the skin to differentiate [between different beings]. The three phenomena are: abandoning from down; abandoning from up; and abandoning from the middle. These are the same as gradually going up or down from the *Basis for Yoga Practitioners*, etc. It is just that the *sūtra* and *śāstra* exhibit differences in presentation, but their doctrines are not contradictory.” 今復釋云：經約聖凡勝劣有別分云捨相，理實心處，最後捨也。不據皮膚內外差異。三相下捨；二相從上；一正捨處。同《瑜伽》等上下漸等。但是經論開合有別，義不違也 (T1833:43.885.c07-14).

during the last moments of life.

The Role of Subliminal Consciousness in Dying

In his CWSL, Xuanzang describes *ālayavijñāna* as the “subliminal” (Skt.: *asaṃviditaka*; Chi.: *bu kezhi* 不可知) form of consciousness that exists outside the awareness of the sentient human being. Xuanzang enumerates the eight types of consciousness of the sentient being as follows: visual consciousness (Skt.: *cakṣurvijñāna*; Chi.: *yanshi* 眼識), auditory consciousness (Skt.: *śrotavijñāna*; Chi.: *ershi* 耳識), olfactory consciousness (Skt.: *grhāṇavijñāna*; Chi.: *bishi* 鼻識), gustatory consciousness (Skt.: *jihvāvijñāna*; Chi.: *sheshi* 舌識), tactile consciousness (Skt.: *kāyavijñāna*; Chi.: *shenshi* 身識), mental consciousness of sensation (Skt.: *manovijñāna*; Chi.: *yishi* 意識), self-reflexive consciousness (Skt.: *manas*; Chi.: *mona* 末那) and storehouse consciousness (Skt.: *ālayavijñāna*; Chi.: *alaiyeshi* 阿賴耶識). Yamabe writes: “*ālayavijñāna* is not only a subconscious layer supporting the surface mind but also a latent physiological basis supporting the body.”⁶⁹³ The *ālayavijnana*, in this reading consistent with Xuanzang, is the psycho-physical basis or *āśraya* of the physical and sensory *indriyas* of the body.

According to Xuanzang, the eighth form of consciousness, *ālayavijñāna*, is responsible for maintaining specific biological states in the body, including dreamless sleep; annihilative concentration (Skt.: *nirôdhasamāpatti*), a form of meditative absorption wherein all sensory activities come to a halt; and the vegetative state of the body that occurs during the final moments before dying. *Ālayavijñāna* is described as subliminal because it does not manifest in response to a percept (Skt.: *ālambana*; Chi.: *suo yuanyuan* 所緣緣) in the way that visual consciousness or auditory consciousness responds to an object outside the body and registers the response to the

⁶⁹³ Nobuyoshi Yamabe, “*Ālayavijñāna* From a Practical Point of View,” *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. 46, (2018), 316.

sentient being. Instead, *ālayavijñāna* activates the autonomic physical and cognitive functions of the body without stimulation from the external environment. In addition to maintaining the autonomic cardio-pulmonary functions, *ālayavijñāna* is present in the form of a hazy consciousness during vegetative states at the end of life. Xuanzang regards the departure of *ālayavijñāna*, rather than the loss of *manovijñāna*, or the consciousness of physical sensation, as the marker of biological death for the sentient being.⁶⁹⁴

In *The Basis for Yoga Practitioners*, Asaṅga describes the subliminal state of consciousness provided by *ālayavijñāna*, as follows:

When the physical sense faculties are not impaired, *ālayavijñāna*, exists below the conscious mind. *Ālayavijñāna* contains the seeds of the forthcoming moments of mind.

*tasya... rūpiṣv indriye(ṣv avi)pariṇateṣu pravṛttivijñānabījaparigrhītam ālayavijñānam anuparataṁ bhavati ...*⁶⁹⁵不變壞諸色根。中有能執持轉識種子阿賴耶識。⁶⁹⁶

Here Asaṅga describes *ālayavijñāna* as the omnipresent and primal source of consciousness for all sentient beings. When a sentient being is gradually dying, the gradual decay of the body causes the sensory consciousness of *manovijñāna* to recede. *Ālayavijñāna*, existing below the conscious mind, maintains the rudimentary physical functions and the vital organs of the body as well as the memories and traces of consciousness of the dying sentient being. The final “moment of becoming deceased” (Skt.: *marāṇakṣaṇam*) comes about with the final and complete evacuation of *ālayavijñāna* from the body.

⁶⁹⁴ Lingtai formulates an inference encapsulating this thought: “Your final moments of life are *definitely not* constituted in *manovijñāna*, because the cognitive support of *manovijñāna* is not apprehended in experience (reason), like *jīvitēndriya* (example). 汝命終時，定非意識，意識所緣不可得故，如命根也。(X0819:50.276.b19-20)

⁶⁹⁵ Skt.: text with emendations based upon Schmithausen, "Some Remarks on the Genesis of Central Yogācāra-*Vijñānavāda* Concepts," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 46, no. 2 (2018): 272

⁶⁹⁶ T1579:30.340.c28-9.

In the CWSL, Xuanzang posits *ālayavijñāna* as the last form of consciousness to depart the corporeal body. He states:

According to the Abhidhārma scholars, subtle mental consciousness, of *manovijñāna*, is present at the moment of conception, and at the moment of death. The movement of this type of consciousness is not detected by the sentient being. One should know, however, that the consciousness at moment of conception and the moment of dying is not *manovijñāna*, rather it is the eighth consciousness of *ālayavijñāna*. It is generally established (Skt.: *prasiddha*; Chi.: *jicheng* 極成) that *manovijñāna* is not present at the moment of conception or at the moment of death.

有餘部執。生死等位別有一類微細意識。行相所緣俱不可了。應知即是此第八識。極成意識不如是故。⁶⁹⁷

Xuanzang therefore diverges from the Abhidhārma scholars with his claim that *ālayavijñāna*, rather than *manovijñāna*, is the form of consciousness to depart the body at the end of life.

On the Role of *Ālayavijñāna* in Dying

In his effort to uphold his position that *ālayavijñāna* is the sole form of consciousness present during the process of dying, Xuanzang is pressed to rule out the position taken by the Abhidhārma scholars that *manovijñāna* is the last form of consciousness in the sentient being. In scrolls three and four of the CWSL, Xuanzang presents arguments to support his position that, *ālayavijñāna* sustains the sentient being at the end of life, after sensory consciousness, or *manovijñāna*, leaves the sensory organs of the body. In this discussion, Xuanzang determines that consciousness does not end when the sensory organs deteriorate and cease to register sensory stimuli. As the five consciousnesses that are associated with sensory organ, stop operating,

⁶⁹⁷ CWSL, fascicle 3, T1585:31.17.a10-12.

ālayavijñāna continues to sustain the vital functions of life: the beating of the heart, breathing and the vestiges of consciousness in the body. As the sentient being gradually dies, the work of sustaining the rudimentary vital functions of life falls squarely to *ālayavijñāna*.⁶⁹⁸

In the CWSL, Xuanzang develops a *reductio ad absurdum* argument to prove that the continuation (Skt.: *xiangxu* 相續) of the physical functions of the body at the end of life are not maintained by *manovijñāna*. In his line of reasoning, Xuanzang determines that because the activity of *manovijñāna* depends upon the presence of the sense organs of the body, *manovijñāna*, by definition, cannot sustain the organs of the body at the end of life. The beating of the heart, breathing and the trace memories of consciousness that are present in the dying sentient being are therefore maintained by a form of consciousness other than *manovijñāna*. In the CWSL, Xuanzang uses a six-part *hetu* to combat the argument presented by the rival Abhidhārma scholars that *manovijñāna* is present during the last moments of life. The counterarguments presented by Xuanzang are as follows:

- (1) *Manovijñāna* is not located in a stable place within the body.
- (2) *Manovijñāna* is located in the sensory indriyas of the body.
- (3) *Manovijñāna* does not present a continuous series of sensation. It only presents the sensation that is associated with the specific sensory indriya.
- (4) *Manovijñāna* is interrupted when the sensory indriyas decay.
- (5) *Manovijñāna* is produced from stimuli that are outside the body.
- (6) *Manovijñāna* only operates one sensory indriya at a time.

In developing his argument, Xuanzang gives three specific reasons *manovijñāna* is not the last form of consciousness at the end of life. He states that *manovijñāna* cannot register the

⁶⁹⁸ Kuiji notes that some schools of Buddhism recognize forms of life that are insensate 無識之壽.

sensation of coldness that is associated with the process of dying; that *manovijñāna* is not always present in the body; and that *manovijñāna* becomes detached from the sensory *indriyas* during the process of dying. Xuanzang then positions *ālayavijñāna* as the last form of consciousness in the body. He writes:

The sixth consciousness (of *manovijñāna*), is not always present in the body. This is because it does not abide stably in a sensory sphere in the body.

Ālayavijñāna is present in all *indriyas* of the body and continues in a perpetual series.⁶⁹⁹

第六意識不住身故。⁷⁰⁰ 境不定故。遍寄身中，恒相續故。

Kuiji, in his study notes on the CWSL, concurs with Xuanzang that *manovijñāna*, because it is attached to the sensory *indriyas* in the body, cannot be the last form of consciousness within the body. Kuiji writes:

The connection of *manovijñāna* to the organs of body is severed during the process of dying. Therefore, the operations of *manovijñāna* are constantly changing and interrupted. While gradually dying, the sentient being is conscious of a continuous sensation of coldness. *Manovijñāna*, because it is severed from the sensory *indriyas*, cannot register the sensation of coldness.

又第六識境不定故緣境轉易。此命終時行相微細。緣一類境。非第六識有是相狀。⁷⁰¹

⁶⁹⁹ This is basically Yamabe's translation, with modifications. See his "*Ālayavijñāna* from a Practical Point of View," 291.

⁷⁰⁰ In the original CWSL passage, the two reasons given to exclude *manovijñāna* are given by the Chinese character *gu* 故, meaning "because of the fact of x." In Xuanzang's translations from Sanskrit, the character *gu* very often indicates an abstract suffix in ablative (e.g., *x-tvāt*), meaning, "because of the fact of x." The two reasons by which to establish *ālayavijñāna* are given in the next sentence – four-character phrase prosody entails that the first 故 is elided. The change of subject from the first to reasons to the second two reasons within important passage has not been sufficiently addressed by commentators. The more accurate explanation of this passage is in the form of two counter inferences to exclude the sixth consciousness and two inferences to establish the existence of the eighth consciousness – *ālayavijñāna*.

⁷⁰¹ CWSL-SJ, fascicle 4, T1830:43.365.c12.

In the CWSL Xuanzang states the continuous sensation of cold is not registered by *manovijñāna*. Xuanzang states:

It is not the case that the sensation of coldness of the dying body is registered by *manovijñāna*. Only the maturing consciousness of *ālayavijñāna*, continues to operate and sustain the dying body. As parts of the body are abandoned by *manovijñāna*, the sensation of coldness gradually spreads across the body. At this point *ālayavijñāna* sustains the vital power, heat and consciousness of the body. The parts of the body that *ālayavijñāna* registers as cold are no longer alive. Although *ālayavijñāna* senses the dead areas, it no longer sustains or supports these regions of the body. The eighth consciousness of *ālayavijñāna*, is therefore established [as the last form of consciousness in the gradually dying body].

不應冷觸，由彼漸生。唯異熟心，由先業力。恒遍相續。執受身分。捨執受處，冷觸便生。壽煖識三不相離故。冷觸起處，即是非情。雖變亦緣而不執受。故知定有此第八識。⁷⁰²

The CWSL states that because the functioning of *manovijñāna* is interrupted by the deterioration of the sensory organs, it cannot register the coldness of the body that occurs in the process of gradually dying. Xuanzang avers that, at this point in the process of dying, *ālayavijñāna* because it remains intact as the organs in the body decay, is responsible for registering the sensation of coldness in the body. The CWSL adduces this consciousness of cold in the final moments of a mortal life, to argue for the existence of *ālayavijñāna* throughout life, even up to the very end. The difference between *ālayavijñāna* when the sentient being is thriving, and when it is entering its decline, is that it remains omnipresent in all areas of the body during periods of thriving, while it becomes attenuated during the stages of dying. The ongoing presence of *ālayavijñāna* is evident in the activities of respiration, circulation, the beating of the heart, and the hazy vestiges

⁷⁰² CWSL, fascicle 3, T1585:31.17.a18-22.

of consciousness that the sentient experiences up to the very moment of death. Xuanzang ultimately concludes that *ālayavijñāna* is the final repository of consciousness prior to dying. At the moment of death, *ālayavijñāna* disaggregates from the body, and continues on into the afterlife, leaving the no longer sentient body in its wake.

In his description of dying in the CWSL, Xuanzang maintains that the presence of the vital physiological qualities that are supported by the three *indriyas* of vitality, mind and *kāyēndriyam* provide direct evidence for the presence of *ālayavijñāna*. In his exegesis of dying, Xuanzang determines that *ālayavijñāna* sustain the three vital factors that compose the *indriya* of vitality that are required to sustain life (Skt.: *uṣman*), vital power (Skt.: *āyur*), and consciousness (Skt.: *vijñāna*). When *ālayavijñāna* is no longer sustains the *indriya* of vitality, the vital functions of the body cease, and the sentient body is dead.

***Ālayavijñāna* as the Locus of Transmigration**

The compilers of the CWSL determine that *ālayavijñāna* is the form of consciousness that is present at the moments of conception and death. This text states that *ālayavijñāna* is the “locus of transmigration that links one life to the next.” It reads:

Furthermore, if not for *ālayavijñāna*, it would make no sense for the sūtras to speak of the transmigration through the four kinds of mortal births and the five transmigratory planes. This is because apart from this consciousness there would be no locus of transmigration.

又契經說有情流轉五趣四生。若無此識彼趣生體不應有故。⁷⁰³

In his description of the moment of death, Xuanzang states that *ālayavijñāna* departs from the heart of the sentient being. During the time between death and reincarnation, *ālayavijñāna*

⁷⁰³ T1585:31.16.b03-4.

exists as a disembodied form of consciousness. In this transmigratory state, *ālayavijñāna* carries the good and bad karma of the deceased being in the form of seeds (Skt.: *bīja*; Chi.: *zhong zi* 種子). During this transmigratory period, *alayavijñāna* hurtles through space until it inseminates a new embryo (Skt.: *pratisaṇdhikāla*; Chi. *jiesheng shi* 結生時) with the seeds of the karma of the recently deceased sentient being. The karma of the deceased sentient being is thus retained and then transmitted to a new life through *ālayavijñāna*.

In the CWSL, Xuanzang explains the process of reincarnation in terms of the Buddhist theory of the five *skandhas*. At the moment of death, the corporeal *skandha* becomes separated from the four other *skandhas* of the sentient being. As it becomes disaggregated from the enlivening force of the other four *skandhas*, it ceases to live. The four remaining *skandhas* persevere for forty-nine days in the form of the disembodied consciousness of *ālayavijñāna* until they become associated with another living corporeal *skandha*. To Xuanzang, this is the process of rebirth.

Conclusion: On Dying and Rebirth Without a Self

Using a textual analysis of the Abhidharma and Yogācāra translation corpus of Xuanzang and his colleagues, this study examines the exegetical process by which he, and his Tang Buddhist team of translators and scholars, come to a conceptualization of death and dying that does not involve the loss of an enduring entity or self. In their massive translation projects, Xuanzang and his team reconcile the Buddhist doctrine of the *indriyas* with the tenet of no-self. In their exegesis, Xuanzang and his coterie, come to view dying in terms of a process of deterioration, and death in terms of the ultimate loss, of a triad of *indriyas* that sustain sentient life. With the theory of the *indriyas*, Xuanzang and his colleagues provide a rationale for how the quality of dying can be improved through practices that activate and enhance the spiritual *indriyas*. Ultimately, in their development of the Buddhist theory of the *indriyas*, Xuanzang and his cohorts conceptualize death as the termination of a process in which the three *indriyas* of *kāyēndriyam*, vitality, and mind cease sustaining the vital life functions of the body. This provides the theoretical basis for Xuanzang, and his coterie of translators and scholars, to formulate within their extensive Abhidharma and Yogācāra translation corpus, definitions of dying and death that do not rely upon a single entity in the form of a soul, or an *ātman*, that sustains life, or is lost in death.

Employing a source criticism research methodology, this study compares the translations of the Abhidharma and Yogācāra masterworks, conducted by Xuanzang and his collaborators in the seventh century, with the earlier translations in Chinese, and the received versions of the same texts in Sanskrit and Tibetan. This study supports the work of Stone (2016)⁷⁰⁴ and Watson (2014)⁷⁰⁵, in finding that Xuanzang, and his coterie of translators, in their Chinese versions of the

⁷⁰⁴ Stone, *Right Thoughts at the Last Moment*, “Modernist Assumptions and the ‘No-Self’ Question,” 9-13.

⁷⁰⁵ Watson, *The Self’s Awareness of Itself*, “The Buddhist-Brāhmaṇical Ātman Controversy,” 51-71.

Abhidharma and Yogācāra texts, draw a sharp distinction between the Brāhmaṇical and Buddhist doctrines on dying and death. It finds that, in their translations of these texts, Xuanzang and his colleagues, make it clear that what survives dying and death is, not the *ātman*, as depicted in the Brāhmaṇical scriptures, and in the early Chinese renderings of the Abhidharma and Yogācāra texts. This research builds upon the findings of Stone (2016) and Watson (2014), in highlighting how, in their translations of the Abhidharma and Yogācāra treatises, Xuanzang and his colleagues realign the Chinese Buddhist conceptualizations of dying and death with the ancient Indic teachings on no-self and impermanence.

In their translations of the Abhidharma and Yogācāra corpus, Xuanzang and his collaborators develop and refine the theory of the *indriyas*, as part of their sustained effort to expiate the Brāhmaṇical concept of the *ātman*, and Buddhist concept of the *pudgala*, from the Chinese Buddhist texts. This study supports the findings of Stone (2016) and Watson (2014) by demonstrating how Xuanzang, and his Tang scholars and scribes, attempt to expiate the *ātman* from their translations and exegeses of the Brāhmaṇical and Buddhist scriptures of dying and death. It extends the findings of Stone (2016) and Watson (2014) by demonstrating how Xuanzang and his collaborators replace the *ātman*, with the Abhidharma theory of the *indriyas*, in their explanatory accounts of dying and death. Specifically, this study validates Stone (2016) and Scherbatsky (1919)⁷⁰⁶ in finding that Xuanzang and his cohorts, eschew the use of the word *ātman* unless specifically referencing the Brāhmaṇical concept of an enduring entity that bears the karma of a sentient being and transcends death. In addition to the removal of the *ātman* from the Buddhist discussions of dying and death, this study points out that Xuanzang and his translators refrain from

⁷⁰⁶ See F. Th. Scherbatsky, “The Soul Theory of the Buddhists,” in *Bulletin de l'Academie des Sciences de Russie* (1919), 823-24.

using the term *pudgala* unless referring to the Brāhmaṇical teaching of the soul.

With their exacting methodology and translations of the Buddhist scriptural teachings on dying and death, Xuanzang and his coterie of followers and translators strengthen and fortify the core tenets of no-self, karma, and reincarnation for Chinese Buddhism. They accomplish this by: enlisting the Abhidharma theory of the *indriyas* to explain what is lost in dying, if not a self, *ātman* or *pudgala*; by employing Indic logic to dispute the Sāṅkhya and Vaiśeṣika conceptualizations of an *ātman* that carries karma and survives death; by describing, in meticulous detail, how karma impacts the hedonic and psychological experience of a dying sentient being; and by describing how a sentient being, by improving the quality of the spiritual *indriyas*, can obtain a better death and rebirth.

This study uses a source criticism methodology to illustrate how Xuanzang and his translation team, fortify the doctrine of the *indriyas*, enlist Indic logic, explicate the role of karma in dying and provide the theoretical and doctrinal support for the practice of yoga and deathbed rituals. For example, by comparing the CWSL with the earlier Abhidharma treatises available in Chinese translation, such as the *Vibhāṣa* from the fourth and fifth century, this study demonstrates how Xuanzang, in his specific enumeration and descriptions of sequence of *indriyas* involved in dying, supports the doctrine of the *indriyas* as explanation for what is deprived in death.

By comparing the Abhidharma translations by Xuanzang, with the Brāhmaṇical treatises of Sāṅkhya and Vaiśeṣika, the Chinese translations of Paramārtha, and the received versions of the *Sāṅkhyakārikās* in Sanskrit, this study demonstrates how Xuanzang and his collaborators use the rules of logic and debate, known as *hetu-vidyā*, developed by the great Indian philosopher, Dignāga, in their analyses of the early Indic sūtras and śāstras. In the CWSL, and in their exegesis of the Buddhist and Brāhmaṇical texts, Xuanzang and his colleagues apply an unparalleled

methodological rigor, derived from one of the greatest minds of sixth-century India, to formulate their rebuttals of the doctrine of the spiritual soul. For example, in their refutation of the Sāṅkhya doctrine of the twenty-five *tattvas*, Xuanzang and his colleagues abide by the Indic rules of logic demanding that, if an argument is to be valid, the premise must be confirmed by the opponent and the disputant.

By comparing the translation of the *Treasury of Abhidharma* by Xuanzang and his coterie, with the previous Chinese translation by Paramārtha, and the received modern editions in Sanskrit and Tibetan, this study illustrates how Xuanzang uses the concept of *āyuhṣaṃskāras* to explicate how the process of dying can be improved through the practice of meditation and meritorious actions. A detailed conceptualization of *āyuhṣaṃskāras* does not appear in either the earlier version by Paramārtha, or in the received Sanskrit and Tibetan translations of the *Treasury of Abhidharma*.

Xuanzang avails himself of the Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma theories of Vasubandhu to demonstrate that even sentient beings freighted with bad karma, can obtain a benign death by exercising the spiritual *indriyas*. This finding is based on a comparison of the translation of the *Mahāvibhāṣa* by Xuanzang, with the earlier Chinese translations of this text by Samgavarman, the received Sanskrit and Tibetan versions of the *Treasury of Abhidharma* and the *Commentaries of the Abhidharma* by Dignāga and Sthiramati that are extant in the Tibetan Derge canon. In their *Mahāvibhāṣa*, Xuanzang and his collaborators, enumerate the number and the type of *indriyas* that can be cultivated through practice to obtain a good death. While the taxonomy of the spiritual *indriyas* is explicated in many of the early Indic texts, in his meticulous rendering of the theory of the twenty-two *indriyas*, Xuanzang describes how the attainment of a better way of dying, through the cultivation of the spiritual *indriyas*, is available to all sentient beings.

By comparing the translations of the Abhidharma corpus by Xuanzang and his colleagues, to the early Chinese translation of the *Mahāvibhāṣa* by Saṃgavaramin and Daoti, this study finds that the systematic taxonomy of the ways dying in terms of the *indriyas* born by a sentient being appears, in its full form, in the version of the *Mahāvibhāṣa* composed by Xuanzang with his translation team. In the *Mahāvibhāṣa*, Xuanzang and his team systematize the categories of dying in terms of the *indriyas*, karmic status, species, and transmigratory realm of the sentient being. The meticulously detailed description of the types of *indriyas* that are lost in the processes of dying gradually or suddenly is not elaborated in earlier versions of the *Mahāvibhāṣa*.

Throughout his translation corpus, and compilation of the CWSL, Xuanzang upholds the Buddhist tenets of no-self, karma, and the fundamental idea that reincarnation does not involve an embodied or enduring *ātman*. In his exegeses of death and dying, Xuanzang incorporates the Buddhist notions of momentariness, impermanence, and consciousness-only into the discussions of dying and death in the Chinese texts. Using the theory of the *indriyas*, Xuanzang confirms that all sentient beings, including the Buddha, are born with both the limitations of inherited karma, and the innate capacity to expand spiritually and thereby transcend the attachments to the unstable aspects of the material world that cause suffering. The promise of spiritual growth and the attainment of enlightenment is available to all sentient beings through the improvement of the spiritual *indriyas* of faith, perseverance, concentration, mindfulness, and wisdom. In his discussion of karma and reincarnation, Xuanzang sends the important message, that any sentient being, regardless of karmic endowment, can improve the quality of dying and afterlife, by cultivating the *indriyas*.

In his body of translations of the Buddhist sūtras and śāstras, Xuanzang enriches the theoretical grounding for the rituals and practices that are intended to improve the course of dying

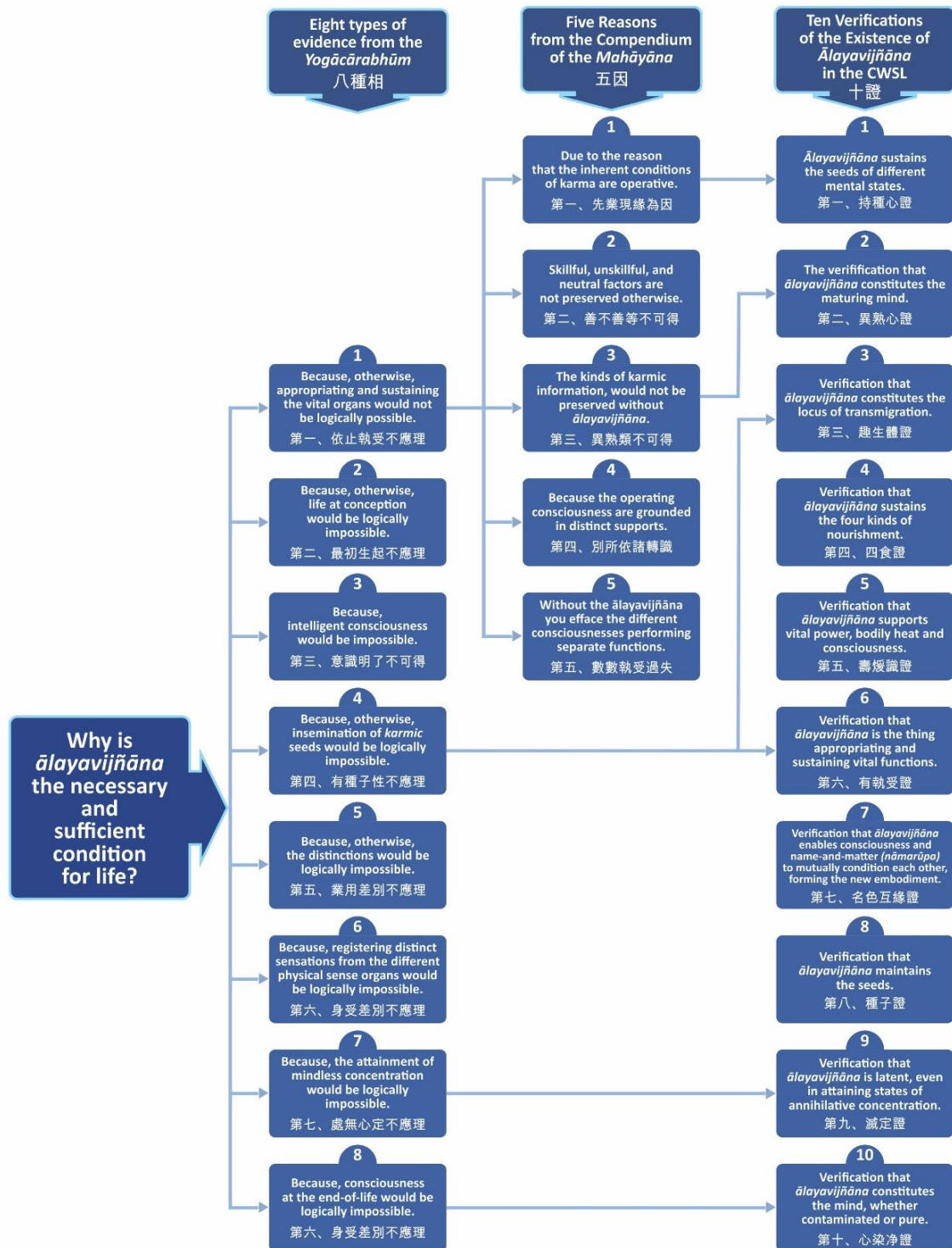
and rebirth. With his theory of the *indriyas*, Xuanzang confirms that, because humans are born with the faculties of pain and suffering, the physical and psychological distress of dying can be eased, but never eliminated. Through his analysis of the early Indic texts, however, Xuanzang finds ways in which a sentient being can approach death with an equanimity and clarity of mind that reduces the subjective experiences of anxiety. A sentient being can improve the quality of dying by following the spiritual path of yoga and by engaging in practices and rituals that garner merit. In his exegesis of the texts of dying and death, Xuanzang finds pragmatic solutions to address the existential fear of death that is innate to all sentient beings.

In his later compilation, the CWSL, Xuanzang articulates how theory of the *indriyas* is intertwined with the core Buddhist doctrine of the *skandhas*, the five aggregates that comprise a sentient being. In this work, Xuanzang explicates the nature of the *indriyas* in terms of the five *skandhas* and conceptualizes reincarnation in terms of the perseverance of the consciousness of the sentient being, in the form of the *ālayavijñāna*, into the afterlife. This research identifies how Xuanzang and his collaborators, expand the Yogācāra theory of the continuum of karma and the *skandhas* into a formulation of the survival of the sentient being that upholds the core tenet of no-self. It demonstrates how, in their exegeses and translations of the Abhidharma and Yogācāra Buddhist texts, Xuanzang and his coterie of scholars, extend the doctrine of the survivability of death without recourse to an *ātman* or a *pudgala*. Future investigators into the translation corpus of Xuanzang will find a robust theory of the survivability of the sentient being in terms of the doctrine of the *skandhas*.

By retrieving and translating the Indic scriptures, many of which survive to the present day only in the Chinese translations composed by his team, Xuanzang, the scholar-monk, and pilgrim, and polymath of the early Tang Dynasty, realigns Chinese Buddhism with its Indic textual origins.

By retrieving the Buddhist scriptures from India, and by translating the Indic masterworks with his coterie of scholars and scribes, Xuanzang banishes the Brāhmaṇical *ātman*, and the Buddhist *pudgala*, from the Chinese Buddhist canon and provides the doctrinal foundations for rituals and practices that are deeply immersed in the spiritual message of the Buddha.

Appendix 1



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ABMN = **Abhidharmakośavṛtti-marmapradīpa* // *Chos mngon pa'i mdzod kyi 'grel pa gnad kyi sgron me zhes bya ba*, Derge Tengyur Canon (Tôhoku Version), Work Number 4095: vol. 147, by Dignāga.

ABLN = **Abhidharmakośaṭīkālakṣaṇānusāriṇī* // *Chos mngon pa'i mdzod kyi 'grel bshad mtshan nyid kyi rjes su 'brang ba* by Pūrṇavardhana, Derge Tengyur Canon, Work no. D 4093: vol. 144.

ABS = *Abhidharmasamuccaya* of Asaṅga, ed. P. Pradhan, Santiniketan 1950 (Visva-Bharati Studies, 12).

AIBS = The Buddhist Canons Research Database: a Project of the American Institute of Buddhist Studies (*AIBS) and the Columbia Univ. Center for Buddhist Studies (CCBS). <http://databases.aibs.columbia.edu/>.

AK(Bh) = Pradhan, P., ed. (1967). *Abhidharmakośa(bhāṣyam)*. Patna: K.P. Jayaswal Research Institute.

AKBh Index = *Index to the Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* (P. Pradhan Edition), 阿毘達磨俱舍論索引, ed. A. Hirakawa et al. 3 vols. Tokyo: Daizo Shuppan, 1973–1978.

BBhū = **Buddhabhūmy-Upadeśa* (*Fodi jing lun* 佛地經論), trans. by Xuanzang, seven fascicles, T26, no. 1530.

CWSL = **Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi śāstra* (*Cheng weishi lun* 成唯識論) (*Treatise Demonstrating Consciousness-only*), ten fascicles, T vol. 31, no. 1585.

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D = Derge (*sDe dge bsTan 'gyur*). Electronic edition from the ACIP: <http://databases.aibs.columbia.edu/>.

DDB = *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism* <http://www.buddhism-dict.net/ddb/>.

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<http://www.sanskrit-lexicon.uni-koeln.de/monier/>.
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- NP** = *Nyāyapraveśakaśāstra* of Baudh Ācārya Diñnāga, edited by Anandasankar Bapubhai Dhruva (1930). Baroda Oriental Institute.
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- PS(T)** = *Pañcaskandhaka* and *Pañcaskandhakaṭīkam* (for critical editions of the former see Steinkellner, Li Xuezhong (2012); for the Ṭīkam see Kramer (2014), ed., *Pañcaskandhakavibhāṣa*: Part 1: Critical Edition. Part 2: Diplomatic Edition (Sanskrit Texts from the Tibetan Autonomous Region, published by China Tibetology Center and Austrian Academy of Sciences).
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- SK** = *Sāṅkhyakārikās*, ed. Sharma Dutt (1933). Poona (Punā): The Oriental Book Agency.
- VS** = *Vaiśeṣika sūtras*, ed. Muni Jambuvijaya (1961). Baroda: Oriental Institute. (Gaekwad's Oriental Series, no. 136).
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THL = Tibetan & Himalaya Library Dictionary (hereafter THL), online version available @ <http://www.thlib.org>

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