

Buddha and God: A Contrastive Study in Ideas about Maximal Greatness*

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This study has three main goals: first, to suggest what kind of enterprise Buddhist intellectuals were engaged in when they began to construct systematic theories about the properties essential to a Buddha; second, to offer a moderately detailed presentation of one such systematic theory, that of classical Indian Yogācāra; third, to engage in a critical, though very tentative and preliminary, comparison of this system with one example of a Christian intellectual's attempt to delineate the properties essential to God.

BUDDHA, BUDDHAS, AND BUDDHAHOOD

The term "Buddha" was first appropriated (though not invented) by Buddhists as an honorific title for a specific historical individual. Rather little is known about this individual; it is not even certain in which century he lived.¹ But it is clear that this person and only this person was the primary and original referent of the term. It is also true, however, that, even in the earliest texts available, it is possible to see the beginnings of a self-

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¹ Heinz Bechert's *Die Lebenszeit des Buddha—das älteste feststehende Datum der indischen Geschichte?* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986) gives a thorough review of the state of play on this question. He reviews the two major contenders for the date of Buddha's death—the "long chronology," which places it 218 years before Aśoka's consecration (i.e., ca. 486 B.C.E.), and the "short chronology," which places it 100 years before Aśoka's consecration (i.e., ca. 368 B.C.E.)—and dismisses both datings as later constructions in the service of nonhistorical ends (p. 52). He concludes that all indications suggest that the Buddha's life ended not long before Alexander's wars of conquest spread to the Indian subcontinent in the second half of the fourth century B.C.E. (pp. 54–55).

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conscious attempt on the part of Buddhists to broaden the term, to delineate a universal "Buddhahood" (*buddhatā* or *buddhatva* in Sanskrit), and to assert that many individuals have partaken of this in the past and that many more will do so in the future. That is, Buddhists started to think about what properties an individual must have in order to be a Buddha (and thus to give form and content to the universal Buddhahood) and also to tell stories about the past and future individuals who have had and will have these properties.

The first part of this process—that of describing the properties an individual must have in order to be a Buddha—can most easily be seen at work in the early lists of epithets with which "our" Buddha (Śākyamuni) is dignified. One example will suffice to give some flavor of this part of the process: the Buddha is often honored with nine epithets, the famous *iti pi so gāthā*, especially common in the Pali *Nikāyas*. He is called (1) worthy, (2) fully and completely awakened, (3) accomplished in knowledge and virtuous conduct, (4) well gone, (5) knower of worlds, (6) unsurpassed guide for those who need restraint, (7) teacher of gods and men, (8) awakened one, and (9) lord.² This list, especially when taken together with other common epithets of the Buddha such as *tathāgata* ("he who has come[or: gone] thus") or *anuttarasamyaksambuddha* ("unexcelled completely awakened one"), describes a figure of unmatched religious virtuosity, one whose profundity of knowledge and insight is supreme and whose skill in helping others toward salvation is unparalleled. In almost every epithet applied to the Buddha in the early texts this thrust towards the superlative is very clear: the goal is to predicate every possible good quality of the Buddha and to show that he has it to the greatest possible extent. Something of this can also be seen in what the later Theravādin commentators have to say about the ninefold epithet list just mentioned. Each of the epithets in it was analyzed and commented upon, and highly stereotyped glosses were developed for each. The ninefold list, though, had far less influence upon the systematic thought of the purely Indian schools; there, different lists of Buddha-properties (*guṇa*) became standard. But the underlying intellectual process was the same: the development of and commentary upon these epithet lists show a desire to give a systematic analysis of what it is to be a Buddha, a desire to limn maximal greatness.

The other part of the process, that of telling stories about those past and future individuals who may appropriately be described by these epithets, can be clearly seen at work in the very early list of six Buddhas who preceded Śākyamuni,³ and in the *Jātaka* stories, stories about the previous

² See T. W. Rhys-Davids and J. Estlin Carpenter, eds., *Dīgha-Nikāya*, 3 vols. (London: Pali Text Society, 1890–1911), 1:49 and passim.

³ The list of six former Buddhas is found (in the mouth of Śākyamuni) in Rhys-Davids and Carpenter, eds., 2:2.

lives of Śākyamuni and (in some cases) his interactions with earlier members of the class, most prominently with that figure known as Vispaśvin.⁴ Studying the development of this body of mythology and folklore, and the religious practices that were connected with it, would provide a great deal of insight into the ways in which ordinary, nonvirtuoso Buddhists then understood and related themselves to the universal category "Buddha." But such a study will not be the focus of interest in what follows. I am interested here, not in Buddhism "on the ground," but rather in Buddhism as analyzed and systematized by professional (i.e., monastic) intellectuals, that is, in the theories developed by these intellectuals about the properties essential to any possessor of Buddhahood.⁵

This is clearly an enormous field, one that has scarcely yet been touched by contemporary Western scholars of Buddhism. An ideal name for it, perhaps, would be "buddhology" by analogy with the Christian discipline of christology, were it not for the fact that the former term has already been appropriated by Westerners as a label for all scholarly discourse about Buddhism.⁶ Another possible label for the enterprise, by analogy with the *īśvaravāda* used by Indian philosophers to denote that intellectual discipline which ascertains, through debate, the properties proper to *īśvara*, or God, might be *buddhavāda*. This could prove a useful label, even though it is not used, so far as I am aware, by any Indian Buddhist thinker. The non-Sanskritist should bear in mind that I use this term to denote the discourse used by Buddhists to delineate the properties essential to any Buddha.

For the metaphysically minded it might be useful to think of *buddhavāda* as a systematic attempt to define and list those attributes which something must have in order,⁷ within the constraints of Buddhist

⁴ On former Buddhas in general see Richard F. Gombrich, "The Significance of Former Buddhas in the Theravādin Tradition," in *Buddhist Studies in Honour of Walpola Rahula*, ed. S. Balasooriya et al. (London: Gordon Fraser, 1980), pp. 62–72.

⁵ I borrow the phrase "on the ground" from Gregory Schopen, "Burial *ad sanctos* and the Physical Presence of the Buddha in Early Indian Buddhism," *Religion* 17 (1987): 193–225. Schopen appears to hold, for reasons unstated and unfathomable to me, the imperialistic view that Buddhism "on the ground," Buddhism as actually practiced, is somehow more interesting, a more desirable and appropriate object of study, than (say) the Buddhism expressed in texts by professional intellectuals. The truth, of course, is that *both* are interesting and appropriate objects of scholarly study. What Buddhist monks in Aśoka's India did (and what inscriptional evidence tells us about what they did) is, for those who like that kind of thing, a worthy and appropriate object of study, just as is what Sanskrit-writing intellectuals in Gupta India wrote. The academy is, fortunately, large enough for both interests.

⁶ David Snellgrove uses the term "buddhalogy" for the discipline I intend here. It remains to be seen whether and to what extent this usage will gain scholarly currency. See Snellgrove, *Indo-Tibetan Buddhism: Indian Buddhists and Their Tibetan Successors*, 2 vols. (Boston: Shambhala, 1987), 1:32.

⁷ The ontologically neutral "something" (*kimcit*) seems preferable here to the more loaded "being" or "existent." As I shall suggest, Buddha turns out to be not some particular existent but rather the totality of all existents.

metaphysics, to be maximally great.⁸ This, of course, is a purely formal definition; the term "greatness" has not yet been given any content. It will be given some substance in what follows. I mention it here only to give a sense of the kind of intellectual enterprise under way, and to suggest some (possibly) useful parallels with (somewhat) similar Western metaphysical enterprises. If there are any transcultural universals in the sphere of religious thinking, it is probable that among them is the impulse to characterize, delineate, and, if possible, exhaustively define maximal greatness. This tends to be done by listing, developing, refining, and arguing about just which attributes any possessor of maximal greatness *must* possess. Debates within Christian theological circles about whether, for example, God is atemporal—although they often deal with surface issues such as the logical problems created by asserting God's atemporality (can God be both atemporal and an agent?) or the hermeneutical problems created by denying it (since many of Western Christianity's most influential systematic thinkers after Augustine have made a great deal of God's atemporality, can any theology that denies it remain Christian?)—actually tend to rest upon deeper intuitions about whether atemporality is a proper attribute for a maximally great being to possess. So also, *mutatis mutandis*, for debates about whether and in what sense it is proper to say that a Buddha is omniscient. Such "deeper" intuitions are deeper not in the sense that they are more profound or more important than the "surface" logical and hermeneutical issues; they are deeper only in the sense that they operate at a level of the individual's or tradition's psyche which is more difficult of access and which almost always appears only in the subtext of those texts openly debating such questions as God's atemporality or a Buddha's omniscience. Philosophers from all cultures tend not to openly discuss whether and why, say, the attribute of atemporality contributes to maximal greatness; it is usually perfectly (intuitively) obvious to those moving within a particular tradition that it does (or that it does not).⁹ The overt debate then centers upon whether an account of the attribute in question can be given that is both internally coherent and consistent with other propositions whose truth the tradition holds dear.

One way, then, of understanding something of the metaphysical preconceptions of any religious tradition is to look at those attributes usually predicated by the tradition of any possessor of maximal greatness. I have this enterprise in mind in the study that follows. This is, of course, only a

⁸ Thomas V. Morris and William J. Wainwright have recently provided some useful discussion of this terminology as it is used in Christian philosophical theology. See Morris, "Perfect Being Theology," *Nous* 21 (1987): 19–30; Wainwright, "Worship, Intuitions and Perfect Being Theology," *Nous* 21 (1987): 31–32.

⁹ Morris (p. 26) gives a list of such intuitively obvious (obvious, anyway, to a Christian theist) properties. I shall return to this below.

propaedeutic for a broader comparative enterprise. It would, I think, be illuminating to engage in a systematic comparison of those properties which have been taken to be great-making by (some part of) the Buddhist tradition with those that have been taken to be great-making by (some part of) the Christian tradition and to try and determine why the lists differ when they do. If nothing else, intuitions about what makes for maximal greatness might be called into question. And challenges of this kind often force revealing post hoc rational justifications for profound religious intuitions, justifications from which there may be much to learn. I shall make some suggestions along these lines in what follows.

MATERIALS FOR THE ANALYSIS OF BUDDHAHOOD IN THE YOGĀCĀRA TRADITION

I shall now offer a descriptive analysis of the most important among those properties regarded as essential to any possessor of Buddhahood by the thinkers of preclassical and classical Indian Yogācāra. By the former I mean the thought expressed in those Yogācāra texts which predate Asaṅga and Vasubandhu and which were clearly influential upon their thinking; and by the latter I mean precisely the early fifth-century C.E. synthesis produced by Asaṅga and Vasubandhu. I do not mean to imply that this synthesis was conceptually monolithic; such is certainly not the case. There are many interesting differences of emphasis (and even of substance) between the thought of Asaṅga and that of Vasubandhu, but these differences will not be of central importance for this study.

Even as regards the preclassical and classical Indian Yogācāra I shall be very selective and shall concentrate my attention upon two important ways in which the texts of this period analyze and describe what they take to be essential to Buddhahood. The first is analytical: there is a set of six categories used in Yogācāra texts (and elsewhere) to explore, analyze, and define the various dimensions of Buddhahood. The categories are (1) essential nature (*svabhāva*), (2) cause (*hetu*), (3) result (*phala*), (4) action (*karman*), (5) endowment (*yoga*), and (6) function (*vr̥tti*). A set of categories such as this is a purely formal analytical tool; it can be used to analyze any concept whatever. One can ask of anything what it essentially is (*svabhāva*), where it comes from and what its effects are (*hetu* and *phala*), what sorts of actions it engages in (*karman*), what qualities it possesses (*yoga*), and how it functions (*vr̥tti*). There are instances in Yogācāra texts of just this set of analytical questions being applied to topics other than Buddhahood. An example occurs in Asaṅga's *Abhidharmasamuccaya*[AS],¹⁰ a

¹⁰ This text survives only partially in its original Sanskrit. For an edition of the fragments see V. V. Gokhale, "Fragments from the *Abhidharmasamuccaya* of Asaṅga," *Journal of the Bombay*

"kind of classified lexicon of technical terms of the Mahāyāna abhidharma, i.e., the works of the Yogācāra school or the Vijñānavādins," as Takasaki puts it.¹¹ In this text, the six categories mentioned are employed in the context of a discussion of "philosophical analysis according to meaning" (*arthaviniścaya*). The general point of the passage is that if one wants to engage in an analysis of something's (some word's or concept's) meaning or referent, one should proceed by exploring the six dimensions of meaning in that term or concept (*ṣaḍarthān ārabhya viniścayo bhavati*). The six dimensions are the six categories just mentioned.¹² It seems likely that this more general use of the six categories in connection with the semantic analysis of terms was well known in the Yogācāra tradition, alongside the more specialized application to the analysis of Buddhahood,¹³ although it is difficult now to disentangle which (if either) of these two uses was chronologically earlier.

The earliest surviving instance of an explicit application of the six categories to Buddhahood seems to be in a set of four verses found in two important early texts, the *Buddhabhūmisūtra* [BBhS] and the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra* [MSA].¹⁴ In these texts the verses are used to ana-

Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society 23 (1947): 13–38. Pralhad Pradhan had produced a reconstruction of the entire text into Sanskrit, based on the extant fragments and the Tibetan and Chinese translations. See Pradhan, *Abhidharmasamuccaya of Asaṅga* (Santiniketan: Visvabharati, 1950). Walpola Rahula has translated the whole reconstruction into French: *Le compendium de la super-doctrine (philosophie) (Abhidharmasamuccaya) d'Asaṅga* (Paris: École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1971). Note that the abbreviations used in this paper are AS—*Abhidharmasamuccaya*; ASBh—*Abhidharmasamuccayabhāṣyam*; BBhS—*Buddhabhūmisūtra*; BBhV—*Buddhabhūmi-vyākhyāna*; DT—Derge Bstan 'gyur (Tanjur); MS—*Mahāyānasāṅgraha*; MSA—*Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra*; MSABh—*Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkārabhāṣyam*; MSAṬ—*Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāratīkā*; MSAVBh—*Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāravṛttibhāṣyam*; MSBh—*Mahāyānasāṅgrahabhāṣyam*; MSU—*Mahāyānasāṅgrahopanibandhana*; P'I—Peking Bstan 'gyur (Tanjur).

¹¹ Takasaki Jikidō, *A Study on the Ratnagotravibhāga (Uttaratantra): Being a Treatise on the Tathāgatagarbha Theory of Mahāyāna Buddhism* (Rome: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1966), p. 406.

¹² This section of the AS does not survive in Sanskrit. For the Tibetan text see DT, *sems-tsam* RI 11717–117b5. For a Sanskrit reconstruction see Pradhan, pp. 102–3. Sthiramati's comments in the ASBh are especially helpful here. See Nathmal Tatia, ed., *Abhidharmasamuccayabhāṣyam* (Patna: Kashi Prasad Jayaswal Research Institute, 1976), pp. 141–42.

¹³ Takasaki calls this the "description of ultimate reality." See Takasaki Jikidō, "Description of the Ultimate Reality by Means of the Six Categories in Mahāyāna Buddhism," *Indogaku Bukkyōgaku Kenkyū* 9 (1961): 740–731. Takasaki also points out that the six categories are used in the *Yogācārabhūmi*, but only in the context of *śabdavidyā* (grammatical learning), one of the five sciences into which Buddhist theorists divide the branches of intellectual learning. The use of these categories in connection with grammar and semantic analysis has obvious links with the AS's use of them to expound *arthaviniścaya*. The categories are also used in the *Ratnagotravibhāga* (together with another four, making ten in all), but since the doctrinal emphases of this text are in many respects different from those of the MSA and BBhS, I shall not make use of it in discussing them further.

¹⁴ See Nishio Kyoo, ed., *The Buddhabhūmi-sūtra and the Buddhabhūmi-vyākhyāna of Āṣṭabhadra* (Tokyo: Kokusho Kankokai, 1982), 1: 22–23; MSA 9: 56–59; Sylvain Lévi, *Mahāyāna-*

lyze "pure Dharma Realm" (*dharmadhātuviśuddhi*), effectively a synonym for Buddhahood and a term about which I shall have more to say later. The relative chronology of the BBhS and MSA is obscure. The former is a short sūtra,¹⁵ and the latter is verse-*śāstra* in twenty-one chapters and 805 verses,¹⁶ and while direct dependence of some kind is obvious, it is possible that the BBhS borrowed from the MSA, that the MSA borrowed from the BBhS, or that the four verses in question were a separate unit of tradition, used independently by the authors of both.¹⁷ I incline to the view that the BBhS is earlier than the MSA and acted as a source for it, but the decision taken on this issue will not affect the central argument of this article. In addition to these four verses, the six categories are also used in the two concluding verses of the MSA, verses which are then cited by Asaṅga in the final chapter of the *Mahāyānasāṅgraha* [MS].¹⁸ Naturally, there are commentaries and subcommentaries on all of these texts; I shall make use

Sūtrālaṅkāra: Exposé de la doctrine du Grand Véhicule selon la système Yogācāra (Paris: Librairie Ancienne Honoré Champion, 1907–11), 1:44.

¹⁵ The BBhS is difficult to date. It appears to use the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra* as a source, and if this is correct the terminus a quo of the former is ca. 300 C.E. The dependence of the BBhS upon the *Samdhinirmocana* is suggested by the fact that the opening scene-setting description is virtually identical in each text. See Nishio, 1:1–4; Étienne Lamotte, *Samdhinirmocanasūtra: l'Explication des mystères* (Paris: Adrian Maisonneuve, 1935), pp. 31–35. Lamotte also provides some discussion of this issue in his translation of the MS: *La somme du Grand Véhicule d'Asaṅga* (*Mahāyānasāṅgraha*), 2 vols. (Louvain-la-Neuve: Institut Orientaliste, 1973), 2:317–19. (Hereafter referred to as *La somme*.) John P. Keenan has recently argued in "Pure Land Systematics in India: The *Buddabhūmisūtra* and the *Trikāya* Doctrine," *Pacific World* 3 (1987): 29–35, that the BBhS may be even earlier than the *Samdhinirmocana*. In spite of this uncertainty about the terminus a quo, the terminus ad quem for the BBhS is still more difficult to arrive at. It depends principally on the decision arrived at about the relative dating of the BBhS and the MSA (see below).

¹⁶ There are problems with both the chapter division and verse enumeration of the MSA, problems too complex to explore fully here. The surviving manuscript of the Sanskrit text of the MSA does not mark all the chapter divisions, though it does mention a total of twenty-one chapters. The two printed editions, based on this manuscript, are unsure where to divide chap. 21 from chap. 20, and thus give a final chap. 20–21 with 61 verses. See Lévi, *Exposé*, 1:175–189; Sitansusekhar Bagchi, *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra of Asaṅga* (Darbhanga: Mithila Institute, 1970), pp. 168–80. Following the Tibetan translation found in PT (though there are differences in DT), I regard the chapter given as 20–21 by Lévi and Bagchi as actually consisting in two chapters. The division should be made after verse 42. MSA 21 thus has, in my reading, 19 verses.

¹⁷ Both Asvabhāva and Sthiramati, in their commentaries to the MSA, strongly suggest that it is dependent upon the BBhS. See MSAṬ, DT sems-tsam BI 72b–c; MSAVBh, DT sems-tsam MI 133a7–133b7. Hakamaya Noriaki also expresses this view. See Hakamaya, "Shōjō hokkai kō" [Research on the purity of Dharma Realm], *Nantō Bukkyō* 37 (1976): 1. Takasaki seems to have once held this view (*A Study*, 403–4), but does so no longer (*Nyoraizō shisō no keisei* [The formation of Tathāgatarbha thought] [Tokyo: Shunjūsha, 1974], pp. 346–47). The proper solution remains unclear, though see John P. Keenan, "A Study of the *Buddhabhūmyupadeśa*: The Doctrinal Development of the Notion of Wisdom in Yogācāra Thought (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin—Madison, 1980), pp. 336–54, for some detailed arguments for the MSA's priority, a position which he has now abandoned ("Pure Land Systematics").

¹⁸ See MSA 21:18–19; (Lévi, *Exposé*, 1:188); MS 10.10.25–26 (section 10, subsection 10, subsections 25–26) (Lamotte, *La somme*, 1:90).

of these as it seems necessary and relevant to do so.¹⁹

The sixfold method of analyzing Buddhahood was thus of importance in both the preclassical and classical periods of Yogācāra thought, the periods that interest me here. It also provides a convenient structure for an exposition of the topic, and in what follows I shall have a good deal to say about Buddhahood's essential nature and action. I shall have less to say about its cause and result since under these categories come such issues as the practices that need to be engaged in order to reach Buddhahood (important, but not the central concern of this article), and how these practices issue in their desired end. I shall also have relatively little to say about Buddhahood's "function" (*vr̥tti*) since this has to do with Buddhahood's internal economy, with the differentiation of function according to the three-body (*trikāya*) doctrine. This also is a fascinating topic, but one which is largely beyond the scope of this paper. The sixth category, Buddhahood's "endowment" (its *yoga*, literally that to which it is yoked or joined) has to do with the specific properties or attributes which any buddha has. In expounding this aspect of Buddhahood, epithet lists once more become significant, and the production of such lists is the other main way in which Yogācāra theorists present Buddhahood.

The list of Buddha's good qualities, which had become standard by the time of Asaṅga (and probably earlier), is usually said to have twenty-one members (though there are other ways of splitting it up which yield a different number).²⁰ Its locus classicus is an extended verse hymn to the good

¹⁹ The major commentators, in approximate chronological order, are Vasubandhu, author of the MSABh and MSBh, commentaries on the MSA and MS, probably active in the early fifth century C.E.; Sthiramati, author of the MSAVBh, a commentary of the MSA, active in the sixth century C.E.; Śīlabhadra, author of the BBhV, a commentary on the BBhS, perhaps a younger contemporary of Sthiramati and possibly a pupil of Dharmapāla; Asvabhāva (whose name is uncertain since no Sanskrit text by him or mentioning his name has survived; the Tibetan is *Ngo bo nyid med pa*, which might equally well translate *Niḥsvabhava*), author of the MSAṬ and MSU, commentaries on the MSA and MS. Asvabhāva may have been a younger contemporary of Dharmakīrti; he cites the latter's *Nyāyabindu* in the MSU (DT, sems-tsam R1 106a7–106b2), and if we follow Chr. Lindtner's suggested date for Dharmakīrti of 530–600 C.E., this would yield a late-sixth-century date for Asvabhāva. See Lindtner, "A Propos Dharmakīrti—Two Works and a New Date," *Acta Orientalia* 41 (1980): 27–37; "Marginalia to Dharmakīrti's *Pramāṇaviniścaya*," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Südasiens* 28 (1984): 149–75. On more general questions of dating see Erich Frauwallner, "Landmarks in the History of Indian Logic," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Süd- und Ostasiens* 5 (1961): 125–48; Kajiyama Yuichi, "Bhāvaiviveka, Sthiramati and Dharmapāla," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Süd- und Ostasiens* 12–13 (1968): 193–203; Hakamaya Noriaki, "Sthiramati and Śīlabhadra" *Indogaku Bukkyōgaku Kenkyū* 25 (1977): 35–37.

²⁰ The *guṇas* are [1] *apramāṇa* (MSA 21:1); [2] *8 vimokṣa* (MSA 21:2); [3] *8 abhivāyātana* (MSA 21:2); [4] *10 kṛtsnāyatana* (MSA 21:2); [5] *1 araṇā* (MSA 21:3); [6] *1 praṇidhijñāna* (MSA 21:4); [7] *4 pratisamvid* (MSA 21:5); [8] *6 abhijñā* (MSA 21:6); [9] *32 lakṣaṇa* (MSA 21:7); [10] *80 anuvyañjana* (MSA 21:7); [11] *4 pariuddhi* (MSA 21:8); [12] *10 bala* (MSA 21:9); [13] *4 vaiśāradya* (MSA 21:10); [14] *3 arakṣa* or *ārakṣa* (MSA 231:10); [15] *3 smṛtyupasthāna* (MSA 21:11); [16] *1 vāsanasamudghāta* (MSA 21:12); [17] *1 asaṃmoṣatā* (MSA 21:13); [18] *1 mahākaruṇā* (MSA 21:14); [19] *18 āvenikadharmā* (MSA 21:15); [20] *1 sarvākārajñatā* (MSA 21:16); [21] *1 pāramitūparipūrī* (MSA 21:17). See Lévi, *Exposé*, 1:184–89.

qualities of Buddha found,²¹ inter alia, in the final chapter of the MSA and the final chapter of the MS.²² It is likely that these verses formed a unit of tradition independent of both these texts and earlier than either. The Tibetan canonical collection preserves these verses as an independent work,²³ and a similar list is found in the *pratiṣṭhā* chapter of the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, as well as in the AS.²⁴ It is thus a list of great importance for the tradition; some of its members go back to early Buddhism, but several show a characteristically Yogācāra emphasis. I shall make occasional use of this list of Buddha properties in what follows. A full study of ideas about Buddhahood in classical Indian Yogācāra would, naturally, require a detailed analysis of all these epithets, but I shall not be able to undertake that here.

In addition to both the systematic analysis of Buddhahood through the application of the six categories, and the descriptive analysis preserved in the lists of Buddha's good qualities, the texts are replete with images, similes, and metaphors used to give an impressionistic description of what Buddha is like. Many of these are very suggestive, and I shall draw upon them in what follows, especially upon those preserved in the ninth chapter of the MSA.

BUDDHA'S ESSENTIAL NATURE

The terms used to define and expound what Buddha essentially is cluster around two related but conceptually distinct centers of meaning. The first has to do with the macrocosm, with everything there is just as it is. The key terms here are "Suchness" (*tathatā*) and "pure Dharma Realm" (*dharmadhātuvīśuddhi*).²⁵ The second has to do with the microcosm, with

²¹ I shall, from this point onwards, drop the use of either a definite or an indefinite article when referring to Buddha, since the texts are not, for the most part, speaking of "the" historical Buddha (i.e., Śākyamuni), nor of any other specific Buddha, but rather of the category in general. I shall also use the neuter rather than a gender-specific pronoun. For a somewhat similar usage see Frank E. Reynolds and Charles Hallisey, "Buddha," in *Encyclopaedia of Religion*, 15 vols., ed. Mircea Eliade (New York: Macmillan, 1987), 2:219–32.

²² See Lévi, *Exposé*, 1: 184–89; Lamotte, *La somme*, 1:88–90. Hakamaya Noriaki has translated Asvabhāva's commentary on MSA 21:1–17 into Japanese: "Mahāyānasūtrālamkāraṭīkā saishū shō wayaku" [A Japanese translation of the final chapter of the MSA], *Komazawa Daigaku Bukkyōgakubu Kenkyū Kiyō* 41 (1983): 452–417.

²³ Tōhoku catalog no. 2007, attributed to Asaṅga. See Hakamaya Noriaki, "Chos kyi sku la gnas pa'i yon tan la bstod pa to sono kanren bunken" [Documents relating to a hymn of praise to the good qualities based on the Dharmakaya], *Komazawa Daigaku Bukkyōgakubu Ronshū* 14 (1983): 342–24.

²⁴ For the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* see Nalinaksha Dutt, ed., *Bodhisattvabhūmi* (Patna: Kashi Prasad Jayaswal Research Institute, 1978), pp. 259–82. For the AS see Gokhale (n. 10 above), pp. 37–38; Pradhan (n. 10 above), pp. 94–101; Taita (n. 12 above), pp. 124–33.

²⁵ Buddhahood is defined in the MSABh on MSA 9:4 as "constituted by the purification of the Dharma Realm" (*tadvīśuddhiprabhāvitatvāt*, where the pronoun's referent is *dharmadhātu*).

a certain kind of spontaneous, precise, unmediated awareness, located in an apparently individuated continuum of mental events but universal in scope and free from all obstructions, unhindered by deliberation or volition. The key term here is "*Jñāna*" and its derivatives, a term which, in the contexts relevant to this investigation, spans in semantic range the English words "knowledge" and "awareness."²⁶

Buddhist thought has always homologized the macrocosm and the microcosm, the cosmos and the psyche. Altered states of consciousness, usually seen as the products of meditational practices of various kinds, are identified with places, cosmic realms in which a religious virtuoso may be reborn as a direct result of her meditational attainments. It is thus not surprising to find an intimate connection in Yogācāra thought between Buddhahood understood as cosmic fact and Buddhahood understood as particular cognitive condition. The one mirrors the other and is not distinct from it. Suchness and the pure Dharma Realm, terms denoting the totality of things as they are, therefore also denote the "awareness of all modes of appearance" (*sarvākārajñatā*) and "mirror-like awareness" (*ādarśajñāna*), technical terms to which I shall return. This is so since any cognitive event which is genuinely free from obstruction and which is genuinely an instance of direct unmediated awareness makes no separation between itself and its objects. The totality of such events is thus nothing other than the totality of all that there is: Suchness. So Buddhahood in its essential nature is first identified with the macrocosm, with everything there is. It is then identified with the microcosm, with the purified awareness that occurs within a specific mental continuum at a particular time, the time of awakening (*bodhi*) to Buddhahood (*buddhatā*) through a radical transformation (*parāvṛtti*)/(*parivṛtti*) of the discriminatory and imaginative basis (*āśraya*) of consciousness, a transformation which permits

Lambert Schmithausen has devoted a good deal of attention to the meaning of both *prabhāṣita* and *viśuddhi* in this compound. He translates it "durch die Reinigung der Soheit konstituiert ist" (*Der Nirvāṇa-Abschnitt in der Vinīścayasamgrahaṇī der Yogācārabhūmiḥ* [Vienna: Hermann Böhlaus, 1969], pp. 44, 109–13). Compare Lévi's translation ([n. 14 above] *Exposé*, 2:69) of the same compound: "[la Bouddhaté est produite] par le nettoyage de la Quiddité"; and Lamotte's translation ([n. 15 above] *La somme*, 2:273–74) of *de bzhin nyid rnam par dag pa* (= *tathatāviśuddhi*) as "la purification de la vraie nature." All these translations stress the *process* of purification. It might, however, also be possible to translate *viśuddhi* as a straightforward substantive and to render the compound "[Buddhahood] consists in the purity of Suchness." The emphasis would thus be transferred from the process to the condition. It seems clear that some treatments of *tathatāviśuddhi* treat *viśuddhi* in this way. For example, in the MSU Asvabhāva says that the purity of Suchness is eternal since, if it should change, Suchness could not exist at all (MSU, DT, sems-tsam RI 277a2–3). Compare MSU (in DT, sems-tsam RI 286a7) and MSA 21:18a (in Lévi, *Exposé*, 1:188). See also MSA 9:22 (Lévi, *Exposé*, 1:37), on the sense in which *bodhi* is neither pure (*śuddha*) nor impure (*asuddha*).

²⁶ Karl Potter ("Does Indian Epistemology Concern Justified True Belief?" *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 12 [1984]: 307–27) provides some useful discussion of this in purely epistemological contexts.

direct undiscriminating awareness (*nirvikalpajñāna*) to occur. Buddhahood is thus identical with everything, as the MSA explicitly says,²⁷ and this is understood to mean that Buddhahood is the awareness of everything, as the MSA also says.²⁸ This in turn makes sense if and only if there is no ontological distinction between knowledge and its objects.

The essential nature of pure Dharma Realm (here a synonym for Buddha) is defined, in the first of the four verses that apply the above-mentioned sixfold analysis to that concept, in the following manner:

It is defined by the purification of the Suchness of all things from the two obstacles. It is defined by imperishable mastery over the awareness of things and the awareness which has that as its object.²⁹

This verse makes the connection between the cosmic and the psychological quite clear: Buddha is both "the purification of the Suchness of all things" (cosmic dimension) and "awareness of things and . . . awareness which has that as its object" (psychological dimension). This reference of two kinds of awareness (*vastujñāna* and *tadālbajñāna*) as constitutive of Buddhahood introduces an important Yogācāra theme: the distinction between the awareness which occurs at the moment of awakening to Buddhahood, and the awareness which makes it possible for Buddha to function in the world after this awakening has occurred. Sthiramati and Asvabhāva, in their comments upon this verse as it occurs in the MSA, identify "awareness of things" with "subsequently attained awareness" (*prsthālabdhajñāna*), a kind of awareness which is variegated in that it has a rich and complex phenomenological content but still does not discriminate or imaginatively construct any differentiation between subject and object. The "object" of this kind of awareness, insofar as it can be said to have one that is other than its occurrence, is simply the appearance of things as they really are—that is, as radically interdependent (*paratantra*) one upon another.³⁰ The commentators then interpret the "awareness which has that as its object" as an awareness turned directly towards Dharma Realm, free from all obstacles (*āvaraṇa*) and constructive imagin-

²⁷ Lévi, *Exposé*, 1:34.

²⁸ See the discussion of *buddhatā* as *sarvākārajñatā* in MSA 9:1–3 and MSABh théreto (Lévi, *Exposé*, 1:33–34).

²⁹ MSA 9:56 (Lévi, *Exposé*, 1:44).

³⁰ MSAṬ, DT, sems-tsam BI 72b5–6; MSAVBh, DT, sems-tsam MI 134a2–4. Both Sthiramati and Asvabhāva mention the "transformation of the basis of the depravities" in this context (*daw-thu lyāśraya parāvṛtti* = *ngan len gyi gnas yongs su gyur pa*); there is relevant material on this in the *Ch'eng Wei-shih Lun*. See Louis de La Vallée Poussin, *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi: La Siddhi de Huan Tsang* (Paris: Geuthner, 1928–48), pp. 610–11, 665–66. The meaning is that the "depravities" (which are usually said to be twenty-four in number [AS, DT, sems-tsam RI 99b7–100a3; Pradhan, p. 76; Tatia, pp. 92–93]) are removed from the *ālayavijñāna* and pure dharmas are added thereto. See also MS 10.3.1 (Lamotte, *La somme*, 1:84).

ings.³¹ It is this awareness which, traditionally in Yogācāra, is called simply *nirvikalpa-jñāna*, an awareness free from all constructed imaginings. It is usually described apophatically,³² when anything positive is said about it, it is often that it consists in the concentration of the practitioner's mind upon Suchness, the real nature of all things, without any conceptual or verbal proliferation (*prapañca*) of any kind and without any active application (*abhisamskr-*) of the mind to any object.³³ Such an awareness, it would seem, is without intentional objects and without any of the language-based activities of classification and categorization that are so important to, indeed constitutive of, everyday awareness.

Partakers of Buddhahood obviously continue to function in the world after becoming Buddha. Buddha continues to act as if experiencing the variegated world in much the same way that I do: it responds to sensory input, appears to initiate actions, preaches sermons and so forth. And yet Buddha cannot be experiencing the variegated world in every respect as I do since it does not engage in the imaginative construction of a lifeworld (*Lebenswelt*) through the categories of "person" and "thing," whereas imaginative construction of just these categories colors, phenomenologically, all of my experience.³⁴ It is subsequently attained awareness that enables Buddha to function in the world without constructing these categories, without allowing the least tincture of imagination in its awareness. Asaṅga, in the MS, uses some images which clarify the relationship between that fundamental unconstructed awareness (*maulanirvikalpa-jñāna*) whose object is simply pure Dharma Realm, and the subsequently attained awareness which follows it.³⁵ The former, he says, is like

³¹ MSAT, DT, sems-tsam BI 72b6–7; MSAVBh, DT, sems-tsam MI 134b4–7. Here both commentators mention the "transformation of the basis of the path" (*margāśrayaparāvṛtti* = *lam gyi gnas yongs su gyur pa*). On this, see La Vallée Poussin, p. 665; Hakamaya, "The Realm of Enlightenment in Vijñaptimātratā: The Formulation of the 'Four Kinds of Pure Dharmas,'" *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 3 (1980): 34, n. 67, "Sanshu Tenne Kō," [Research on the threefold *Āśraya-parivṛtti*] *Bukkyōgaku* 2 (1976): 57–58. Connections can be made here with the third of the four purities (*mārgavyavādana*) treated in the second chapter of the MS.

³² As, e.g., in the MS (in Lamotte, *La somme*, 2:283–85) and the AS (DT, sems-tsam RI 117a4–5; Pradhan, p. 102).

³³ On this see ASBh (Tatia, p. 139), and Hakamaya, "Yuishiki bunken ni okeru mufunbet-sushi" [*Nirvikalpa-jñāna* according to *Vijñaptimātra* literature], *Komazawa Daigaku Bukkyōgakubu Kenkyū Kijō* 43 (1985): 252–215. Hakamaya's article discusses this text from the ASBh and several other key discussions of *nirvikalpa-jñāna*.

³⁴ For a classic statement of the importance of freedom from experience colored by the concepts of *pudgala* and *dharma*, see the opening sentences of the *Triṃśikābhāṣyam* (Sylvain Lévi, *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi: Deux traités de Vasubandhu* [Paris: Librairie Ancienne Honoré Champion, 1925], p. 15). (Hereafter referred to as *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi*).

³⁵ Asaṅga actually distinguishes three kinds of *nirvikalpa-jñāna*: preparatory (*prāyogika*), fundamental (*maula*), and subsequently attained (*prsthālabdha*). The distinctions between the first two are not of great importance for the purposes of this study. See MS, 8.15–16 (Lamotte, *La somme*, 2:243).

a dumb person who finds something she has been looking for; the latter is like that person with the faculty of speech. Communication is not possible in the former condition; it becomes possible in the latter. Alternatively, fundamental unconstructed awareness is like a person with his eyes shut; subsequently attained awareness is like that person with opened eyes. And, finally, fundamental unconstructed awareness is like empty space, while subsequently attained awareness is like that space filled with colors and forms.³⁶

Subsequently attained awareness, then, is that which makes possible all of Buddha's prescribed actions aiming at the salvation of others; it makes, above all else, discourse and communication possible, the *sine qua non* of everything else. Both kinds of awareness are free from improper imaginative construction, but fundamental unconstructed awareness appears also to be empty of all phenomenological content, while subsequently attained awareness is rich and variegated in content even though none of the "objects" that appear in it do so as substantive and independent existents. Rather, subsequently attained awareness consists in a series of causally connected images of representations (*viññapti*), none of which is characterized phenomenologically by a dualistic subject-object structure.

Śīlabhadra, in his comments upon the verse cited above, agrees in substance with what Asvabhāva and Sthiramati say in their commentaries upon the MSA. He adds, though, the term "mirror-like awareness" (*ādarśajñāna*) as a label for both kinds of awareness mentioned in the verse.³⁷ He says, as do Asvabhāva and Sthiramati, that the proper object of mirror-like awareness is things experienced in their aspect of radical interdependence; but he also stresses that, because mirror-like awareness is coextensive with everything that exists (with, as he puts it, the limits of *saṃsāra*), and because all of its awareness is direct and unmediated, one must also say that its object is Dharma Realm.³⁸ Śīlabhadra's use of the term "mirror-like awareness" here thus brings together fundamental unconstructed awareness and subsequently attained awareness and shows that they are not, finally, distinct. The mirror of mirror-like awareness reflects pure Dharma Realm when empty of content and the multitude of interdependent representations or images when full of content.

Mirror-like awareness in turn is identical with the "awareness of all

³⁶ See MS 8.16 (Lamotte, *La somme*, 2:245). Compare MSA'ī on MSA 9:62 (D'T, *sems-tsam* B1 73b4–5) on the five aspects of *tatprsthālabdhajñāna*. At least some Yogācāra thinkers clearly felt that subsequently attained awareness must be *savikalpa*, as some of these images suggest.

³⁷ In the use of mirror imagery in this and similar contexts see Paul Demiéville, "Le miroir spirituel," *Sinologica* 1/2 (1947): 112–37; Alex Wayman, "The Mirror-like Knowledge in Mahāyāna Buddhist Literature," *Asiatische Studien* 25 (1971): 353–63; "The Mirror as a Pan-Buddhist Metaphor-Simile," *History of Religions* 13 (1974): 264–81.

³⁸ Nishio (n. 14 above), 1:119–20.

modes of appearance" (*sarvākārajñatā*).³⁹ This is a special kind of omniscience available only to Buddha; its object is all the "modes of appearance" (*ākāra*) there are. "Modes of appearance" is a technical term in Buddhist epistemology, psychology, and theory of perception. Briefly, it stands for something like a particular mental event's phenomenological content, the way in which that event appears to its subject. The *Abhidharmakośabhāṣyam* says that the mode of appearance belonging to any mental event is simply the mode under which that event grasps its object.⁴⁰ So, for example, when I have the (perceptual) mental event of apprehending a maple tree visible from my study window, that mental event will have the complex mode of appearance "appearing maple-tree-in-the-autumn-ly" (to borrow Chisholmian terminology). Such a complex mode of appearance could, of course, be further analyzed, for example, into the modes of appearance "appearing red-and-yellow-leaf-ly" and so forth. It is important to realize that, both for Buddhist cognitive theory and for common sense, the occurrence and kind of a specific mode of appearance is not determined solely by the presence and kind of an object (*artha* or *viṣaya*), but also by the presence and condition of the subject for whom the appearance occurs. When I see a maple tree and when Buddha sees one, or rather when Buddha's mirror-like awareness reflects one, the phenomenology of the two experiences differs dramatically. Mine is dualistic: the maple tree appears to me as if it were an external object, ontologically other than me, its perceiver. Further, my awareness of myself as an enduring, perceiving subject will also be an important element in the phenomenology of my experience. None of this is so for Buddha's unconstructed awareness. This is illustrated by the following extract from the *Madhyāntavibhagabhāṣyam*: "[An object] appears dualistically, [split

³⁹ The witness of classical Yogācāra texts as to the use of *ādarśajñāna* and *sarvākārajñāna* to refer to both fundamental *nirvikalpa*jñāna and *tatprajñālabdhajñāna* is not entirely unambiguous. The MSABh, e.g., in commenting upon MSA 9:68, says that *ādarśajñāna* is *anākāratva* without modes of appearance. This, if taken seriously, suggests that *ādarśajñāna* can be identified only with *maulanirvikalpa*jñāna. The commentators have a good deal to say about this (MSAVBh, DT, sems-tsam MI 139a4 ff.; MSAṬ, DT, sems-tsam BI 74a5–74b1; cf. BBhS, Nishio, 1:9). I cannot explore the issue further here, although I do so in another work on *sarvākārajñatā* in the *Indo-Iranian Journal* (1990), in press.

⁴⁰ See *Abhidharmakośabhāṣyam* on *Abhidharmakośakārikā* 7.13 (Dwārikādās Śāstrī, ed., *Abhidharmakośa and Bhāṣya of ācārya Vasubandhu with Sphūṭārthā commentary of ācārya Yaśomitra* [Varanasi: Bauddha Bharati, 1981], p. 1062). The *bhāṣya* on *Abhidharmakośakārikā* 2:34bc discusses the sense in which three important words for the mental (*citta*, *manas*, *vijñāna*) all have the same sense and referent (*eko'rthaḥ*). It explains that all mental events have the same basic characteristics and links the fact that they "possess an object" (*sālabhāna*) with the fact that they "have an *ākāra*," both essential to any member of the class-category mental event (Śāstrī, *Abhidharmakośa*, pp. 208–9). This necessary coexistence of *ālabhāna* and *ākāra* is also made clear by Asvabhāva in the MSU (DT, sems-tsam RI 267b2). Compare also the denial in the *Trisikābhāṣyam* that consciousness without *ākāra* and *ālabhāna* is possible (Lévi, *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi*, p. 19).

into] subject and object, because it arises [in awareness] with that mode of appearance (*ākāra*). Seeing that [the object] does not exist in the way that it appears [i.e., dualistically] is what not being under a misapprehension about it means."⁴¹ "Not being under a misapprehension about" objects of experience is a condition Buddha never leaves. The phenomenology of its experience is not tainted by improper imagination or constructive activity, and the scope of its awareness is universal, as the use of the modifier "all" in the phrase "the awareness of all modes of appearance" suggests.

There are real and complex problems involved in sorting out exactly what is meant by saying that Buddha is aware of *all* modes of appearance. If modes of appearance occur to normal experiences in temporal sequence, and if temporality is constituted by the causal process which links these modes of appearance into sequence (as I think Yogācāra theorists would have to assert), then it would seem that *sarvākārajñatā* must be an atemporal cognitive event. This is so because its phenomenological content is not characterized by causal succession. Rather, it must be the case that the entire interdependent web of representations (which constitutes Suchness) is changelessly present in a single atemporal event. On this reading, the category of Buddhahood denotes the most radical imaginable homologization of the microcosm to the macrocosm. The individuated continuum of mental events which constitutes a "person" prior to the attainment of Buddhahood (the microcosm) ceases to be individuated and becomes what it really is: that "thingness of all things" (*sarvadharmānām dharmatā*) which is the macrocosm. This in turn explains why Buddha is one and undifferentiated when considered as it is in its Dharma Body (*dharmakāya*), and also why this Dharma Body must be regarded as eternally the same, not subject to any kind of change.⁴²

This view of Buddha's essential nature as the changeless totality of a web of interconnected and interdependent representations is often expressed in these texts through the language of paradox. This appears to be, at least in part, because of a desire to avoid imputations of the heresy of "eternalism" (*śāsvatavāda*), a basic Buddhist error. Buddha, understood as the changeless, eternal, pure Dharma Realm, does not exist eternally as some specific existent might exist. When the texts say (as they frequently do) that, given contradictory pairs of predicates such as "existence"

⁴¹ *Madhyāntavibhāga* on *Madhyāntavibhāga* 5:15. See R.C. Pandeya, *Madhyānta-Vibhāga-Śāstra: Containing the Kārikā-s of Maitreya, Bhāṣya of Vasubandhu and Tīkā by Sthiramati* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1971), p. 162.

⁴² The tenth chapter of the MS (Lamotte, *La somme*, 1:98) contains a section on the eternality (*nityatā*) of the *dharmakāya* in which this matter is discussed in detail. See MSBh, DT, *sems-tsam* RI 231b7–232a5; MSU, DT, *sems-tsam* RI 295a3–295b2.

(*bhāva*) and “nonexistence” (*abhāva*), neither applies to Buddha,⁴³ the intention is not to reject the principle of noncontradiction in favor of some “mystical” transcendence of opposites.⁴⁴ Rather, the intention is to show that the kind of existence properly to be predicated of Buddha is not the kind that be predicated of any other existent. The “method of indeterminacy” (*avyākṛtanaya*) to be applied to such questions frequently means, in the hands of the Yogācāra theorists, a use of the theory of the three aspects (*trisvabhāva*) under which experience may occur.⁴⁵ So, in his comments upon MSA 9.24, in which the predication of both existence and nonexistence is denied in the case of Buddhahood, Sthiramati explains that the kind of existence denied is that which belongs to constructed or imaginary (*parikalpita*) entities, while that which is affirmed is that which belongs to the perfected (*pariniṣpanna*) aspect of experience which is, in the end, identical with Suchness.⁴⁶

The overall picture of Buddha’s essential nature is then the following: awakening (*bodhi*) can occur in a specific mental continuum at a particular moment. When this happens, unconstructed awareness results; this is a moment of pure empty consciousness in which the mirror of awareness reflects nothing.⁴⁷ It is followed—perhaps immediately—by subsequently attained awareness, which consists in a seamless interconnected web of representations or images. This condition does not change. It is a complex atemporal event, characterized by the complete absence of dualistic awareness; it is nonverbal and nonconceptual, and since no change occurs therein, no volition belongs to this condition. How, given that this is what Buddha essentially is, can Buddha act for the benefit of sentient beings? To this I now turn.

⁴³ For example, MSA 9:2ab (Lévi [n. 14 above], *Exposé*, 1:38). For denials of other matched pairs of contradictory predicates see MS 10.3a (Lamotte, *La somme*, 1:84); MS 10.33 (Lamotte, *La somme*, 1:96); cf. MSA 6:1 (Lévi, *Exposé*, 1:22) on the proper definition of *paramārtha*.

⁴⁴ On this see J. F. Staal, “Negation and the Law of Contradiction in Indian Thought: A Comparative Study,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 25 (1962): 52–71; Roy W. Perrett, “Self-Refutation in Indian Philosophy,” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 12 (1984): 237–63.

⁴⁵ MSA 9.24–25 (Lévi, *Exposé*, 1:38).

⁴⁶ MSAVBh, DT, *sems-tsam* MI 130a3–5.

⁴⁷ Nishitani Keiji, in describing the process of “self-reflection” integral to the practice of Zen, uses the process of examining one’s face in a mirror as an extended metaphor for what goes on when awakening occurs. One progresses, he says, from a disinterested examination of one’s face as an object; thence to a nondualistic awareness that the eyes looking and those being looked at are not different from each other; finally to a situation which “is comparable to two mirrors mutually reflecting one another with nothing in between to produce an image” (Nishitani, “The Standpoint of Zen,” *Eastern Buddhist* 17 [1984]: 5–6). Nishitani captures in this piece a good deal of what our texts are talking about, even though there is little evidence in his works that he was familiar with Indian Yogācāra literature.

BUDDHA'S ACTION

The principle conceptual problem involved in explaining how Buddha acts concerns the proper relation between the temporal and the atemporal, the changing and the changeless. With the temporal goes volition (the free decision to undertake a particular course of action at a particular time), deliberation (the process of choice between alternative possible courses of action), responsiveness to changing circumstances, and, finally, the temporally located event of action itself. With the atemporal goes the absence of all this. And if, as I have suggested, Buddha is seen by the Yogācāra tradition as essentially changeless and so atemporal, and as not being capable of spatial location,⁴⁸ the problem of accounting for its apparent action in time and space becomes pressing.

The first half of the third of the four verses applying the sixfold analysis to Buddhahood (mentioned above) describes its action (*karman*) in the following terms: "Its action consists in proper methods, using magical transformations of body, speech, and mind."⁴⁹ Of key importance here is the concept of "proper methods" (*upāya*), a concept further specified by the phrase "magical transformations" (*nirmāṇa*) of body, speech, and mind." All the commentators on this verse give numerous examples of such magical transformations. Buddha might, for example, transform its body to look like that of Indra or Brahma, or it might transform the minds of fools so that they are able to understand Buddhist teaching or even to teach it themselves.⁵⁰ Śīlabhadra is the most systematic and detailed in his exposition of these magical transformations. He divides the transformations of body and speech into three kinds—those transformations that pertain to oneself, those that pertain to others, and those that do not pertain to any person but instead use some other object as their basis.⁵¹ In the case of

⁴⁸ See MSA 9:15 (Lévi, *Exposé*, 1:36) on Buddhahood's omnipresence (*sarvagatatva*). Here Buddhahood is likened to space, and the MSABh comments that this is because of its perfection in commitment towards all sentient beings. Asvabhāva (MSAṬ, DT, sems-tsam BI 67b7–68a1) comments that Buddha's omnipresence results from the identity of all beings with itself—which is just what one would expect given the delineation of Buddha's essence provided above. See also MSAṬ (DT, sems-tsam BI 69a6–69b1) on the absence of distinction among Buddhas (commenting on MSA 9:26).

⁴⁹ MSA 9:58a (Lévi, *Exposé*, 1:44). Compare Nishio (n. 14 above), 1:23.

⁵⁰ MSAṬ, DT, sems-tsam BI 73a4–5; MSAVBh, DT, sems-tsam MI 134b6–135a7; Nishio, 1:123–24.

⁵¹ Asvabhāva does not use this method of classifying transformations. Sthiramati mentions the first two (*svātmasambaddhanirmāṇa* and *parātmasambaddhanirmāṇa*), but not the third. Śīlabhadra applies both of these, together with the category *niḥsaṃbaddhanirmāṇa*, to *kāyanirmāṇa* and *vākīnirmāṇa*, but only the first two to *cittanirmāṇa*. This, presumably, is because to fill the third category one needs something other than a sentient being to transform, and there is no instance of a mind which does not belong to a sentient being of some kind. There are, of course, plenty of physical objects and vibrating sound producers which are not connected with any sentient being.

magical transformations of the body, an example of the first kind is the transformation of one's own body into that of a wheel-rolling monarch (*cakravartin*); an example of the second kind is the transformation of a demon's body into a Buddha's for the purpose of encouraging others to act correctly; and an example of the third kind is the transformation of plain earth into a radiant Buddha field. The key point is that, according to the half-verse quoted, Buddha's action simply consists in magical transformations of these kinds and that these transformations are its *upāya*, its "proper method." They occur entirely in accordance with the needs of as-yet-unawakened sentient beings.

The exposition given so far makes it sound as though the magical transformations are volitional: that Buddha looks around at the needs of sentient beings and decides to meet those needs at particular times and in particular places by magically transforming itself. Given the picture presented earlier of what Buddha essentially is, this cannot be the correct interpretation, and there is much in the texts to suggest that it is not. First, the use of the word *nirmāṇa* in the verse cited indicates that these transformations are not real. Their occurrence does not constitute any real modification in Buddha, much less any temporally indexed volitions occurring therein. The necessary and sufficient conditions for the occurrence of any one of these transformations are not located in Buddha but in the (apparently) changing conditions of sentient beings. The way in which Buddha's soteriological actions appear (the kind and apparent spatiotemporal location of its magical transformations) is thus determined solely by the condition of the recipients of these (apparent) transformations. This is suggested, for example, by the simile (*upamā*) of the moon and the broken waterpots:

Just as the moon's image is not visible in a broken waterpot,
So Buddha's image is not visible among defective beings.⁵²

Sthiramati's comments make explicit what is intended here:⁵³ a particular continuum of mental events, defined by such things as anger and desire and the actions that are their concomitants, is likened to a broken waterpot. The continuum in question is "defective" in that it does not perceive that it is itself essentially the same as Buddha, and it is this misperception, coupled with the relevant defilements, that causes Buddha's proper image not to appear in it.⁵⁴ Naturally, if a perception of

⁵² MSA 9:16 (Lévi, *Exposé*, 1:36).

⁵³ MSAVBh, DT, sems-tsam MI 116b5–117a2.

⁵⁴ For the discussion of a similar image, see MS 10.28.7 (Lamotte [n. 15 above], *La somme*, 1:91); MSBh, DT, sems-tsam RI 183b2–5; MSU DT, sems-tsam RI 288a3–6.

itself as essentially identical with Buddha were to occur in the continuum in question, this would constitute awakening. The continuum in question would become Buddha. But this is not dependent in any way upon anything that Buddha does.

The nonvolitional nature of Buddha's apparent actions for the benefit of sentient beings is further clarified in the MSA:

Buddhas do not say "I have brought this one to maturity" or "This embodied being should be brought to maturity" or "I am now bringing this one to maturity." Instead, creatures approach maturity without effort.⁵⁵

Šthiramati explains that the verse shows Buddha to be without any intention or calculation in regard to bringing beings to maturity. It is not that at one time Buddha shows no concern for a particular being and then later decides to help that being on towards realizing its Buddhahood. Buddha, in apparently acting for the benefit of other things, does so without moving from the pure Dharma Realm with which it (in its pure Dharma Body) is identical.⁵⁶

The similes used to impressionistically describe the activity of Buddha, in the MSA and elsewhere, also stress this effortless (*ayatna*) and spontaneous (*anābhoga*) action.⁵⁷ It is likened, among many other things, to the sun's effortless ripening of a field of grain,⁵⁸ to a gong from which sound comes without anyone striking it,⁵⁹ and to a radiant jewel which gives out its light naturally, spontaneously, and effortlessly.⁶⁰ The magical transformations in which Buddha's actions consist are therefore not indicative of any changes or volitions in Buddha. They are produced solely by the (ultimately illusory) changes in the defiled and obstructed condition of sentient beings and so belong to the realm of the imaginary (*parikalpita*). Buddha actually, changelessly, does one and the same thing without variation; variation in Buddha's action is apparent only from the perspective of the recipients of such actions.⁶¹ A final illustration of this point:

⁵⁵ MSA 9:52ac (Lévi [n. 14 above], *Exposé*, 1:43). There is a textual problem here. Both Lévi and Bagchi [n. 16 above] read *cāprapācyo* in the second *pāda*, but I follow the Tibetan (*rab tu sman bya*) in rejecting the negative.

⁵⁶ MSAVBh, DT, *sems-tsam* MI 131b4–6. See also MSA 9:51 (Lévi, *Exposé*, 1:43); MSAT, DT, *sems-tsam* BI 72a3–4.

⁵⁷ The term *ayatna* is used in MSA 9:53a and glossed with *anabhisamskāra* in the MSABh (Lévi, *Exposé*, 1:43). Compare MSA 9:20–21 (Lévi, *Exposé*, 1:37); *Ratnagotravibhāga*, chap. 4. E. H. Johnston, ed., *The Ratnagotravibhāga Mahāyānuvārtantraśāstra* (Patna: Bihar Research Society, 1950), p. 99; MSA 9:4 (Lévi, *Exposé*, 1:33).

⁵⁸ MSA 9:52 (Lévi, *Exposé*, 1:44).

⁵⁹ MSA 9:18 (Lévi, *Exposé*, 1:37); MS 8.17 (Lamotte, *La somme*, 2:245–46); *Ratnagotravibhāga* 4:15 (Johnston, *Ratnagotravibhāga*, 99).

⁶⁰ MSA 9:3 (Lévi, *Exposé*, 1:33); MS 8.17 (Lamotte, *La somme*, 2:245–246).

⁶¹ MSA 9:27–35 (Lévi, *Exposé*, 1:38–39).

Just as when one ray is emitted all rays are emitted
In the case of the sun, so also in the case of the emission of
Buddha's awareness.⁶²

The point of this verse is that Buddha's awareness (*jñāna*) cannot be chopped up, divided, or located in one place or time over against another. Wherever and whenever any of it is, all of it is, identically. And since, as I have suggested, Buddha's awareness is coextensive with everything that exists, this is not surprising. The commentaries to this verse make the point abundantly clear: whenever and wherever Buddha acts, it acts fully, completely, and identically.⁶³

Technically, Buddha's actions are made possible by a special apparent modification of that mirror-like awareness in which it essentially consists. This modification is given the label "awareness which does what needs to be done" (*krtyānuṣṭhānajñāna*).⁶⁴ This apparent modification of Buddha's changeless mirror-like awareness is produced by the needs of sentient beings (*sarvasattvārthakr-*); it does not, of course, reflect any real change in that awareness which constitutes Buddha, just as the magical transformations in and through which Buddha seems to act are not alterations of Buddha's single, unique, atemporal act. The awareness which does what needs to be done functions through its connection with Buddha's body of magical transformation—it is this body which allows the changelessly shining moon of Buddha's Dharma Body to appear reflected in various ways in the water of the variously shattered, cracked, and disturbed water-pots that are sentient beings.⁶⁵

The radical singularity and undifferentiatedness of Buddha's actions is given trenchant expression by Asaṅga in the MS. There, the activity (*karman*) of the "Dharma Realm of Buddhas" (*buddhānāṃ dharmadhātuḥ*) is divided into five categories, all of which can be subsumed under the general heading of "proper method" (*upāya*). It is this proper method which causes Buddha's action to appear differently at different times,

⁶² MSA 9:31 (Lévi, *Exposé*, 1:39).

⁶³ The MSABh explicitly says that all of Buddha's awareness functions or gets under way (*pravṛtti*) at a single moment (*ekakāle*). See also MSAṬ, DT, *sems-tsam* BI 69b4–6.

⁶⁴ Śīlabhadra makes the connection between Buddha's *karman* and its *krtyānuṣṭhānajñāna* explicit in his comments upon the verses that apply the sixfold analysis to Buddhahood (Nishio [n. 14 above], 1:123–24). It is one of the interesting features of Śīlabhadra's comments on these verses that he attempts to harmonize and bring together Buddha's four knowledges with the sixfold analysis. None of the other commentators on these verses attempt this. For more on the *krtyānuṣṭhānajñāna* see MSA 9:74–75 (Lévi, *Exposé*, 1:47).

⁶⁵ Sthiramati makes the connection between *krtyānuṣṭhānajñāna* and *nirmāṇa* quite clear in his comments on MSA 9:74–75. See MSAVBh, DT, *sems-tsam* MI 142a3–142b5. Compare MSU, DT, *sems-tsam* RI 278a6.

even though in reality it is always the same. Asaṅga explains why this is in the following verse:⁶⁶

Actions in the world are differentiated according to differences in cause, basis, what needs to be done, aspiration, and application.

Since there are no such differences for the protectors of the world, [their actions] are also [not differentiated].⁶⁷

Both Vasubandhu and Asvabhāva give detailed explanations of this verse;⁶⁸ they both stress that since none of the usual criteria by which one action is differentiated from another apply in the case of Buddha, and since all Buddha's actions are spontaneous (*anābhoga*) and effortless (*ayaṭna*), it therefore follows that there can be no differentiation of one Buddha's actions from another, much less an individuation of one particular action from another.

The conceptual problem with which this section began, that of relating an apparently atemporal, changeless Buddha to a set of temporal and (apparently) changing sentient beings and their needs, is thus solved by denying that there is such a relation. Buddha does not act in time; Suchness is always (atemporally) pure, and so there really are no impurities requiring removal. The apparent temporal appearances of Buddha in its bodies of magical transformation are just that—apparent and magical. The objects of such magical transformations (sentient beings and their needs) are also apparent, belonging to the imagined (*parikalpita*) realm of *māyā*, of illusion and change. The reality is that all beings are Buddhas-in-embryo and so do not need saving.

It may perhaps be doubted whether this is an altogether satisfactory resolution of the issue, even on the purely conceptual level. Sufficient connection between the temporal and the atemporal must be allowed to permit the (apparent) defilement of the (really) pure Dharma Realm to occur, as well as to allow the (apparent) removal of these defilements at the moment of awakening. In so far as the Yogācāra theorists explain how this connection operates, they do so by using the three-aspect theory, a theory which classifies experience into three possible modalities.⁶⁹ The process of imaginary construction which constitutes the imagined aspect of experience (*parikalpitasvabhāva*) is seen as beginningless and fundamentally

⁶⁶ That *buddhānām dharmadhātuh* is a periphrasis for *dharmakāya* is made clear by both Vasubandhu (MSBh, DT, sems-tsam RI 186b1–2) and Asvabhāva (MSU, DT, sems-tsam RI 292a1).

⁶⁷ MS 10.31 (Lamotte, *La somme*, 1:95).

⁶⁸ MSBh, DT, sems-tsam RI 186b3–187a1; MSU, DT, sems-tsam RI 292a7–292b6.

⁶⁹ For a concise analysis of the *trisvabhāva* theory see my own *On Being Mindless: Buddhist Meditation and the Mind-Body Problem* (LaSalle, Ill.: Open Court, 1986), pp. 80–96; Nagao Gadjin, "The Buddhist World-View as Elucidated in the Three-Nature Theory and Its Similes," *Eastern Buddhist* 16 (1983): 1–18.

unreal,⁷⁰ and the question of the origin of that "concern with what does not exist,"⁷¹ which marks the *parikalpita*, is, when asked, answered only with a series of similes in which it is likened to various kinds of magical illusion (*māyā*).⁷² Among these magical illusions are counted the "remedial practices" (*dharmāḥ prātipākṣikāḥ*) of Buddha—a category that includes all Buddha's actions for the benefit of sentient beings.⁷³ The operation of the constructive imagination is thus a fundamentally unreal process, a process that carries within itself the seeds of its own destruction. These seeds mature and bear fruit only at the moment of fundamental transformation, when Suchness appears as it really is. Even this transformation, though, really transforms nothing; like one magical man destroying another,⁷⁴ the unreal is removed by the unreal. The real (atemporal) thus does not contact the unreal (the atemporal).

This position was often taken by Madhyamaka critics of Yogācāra to reveal a fundamental weakness in the Yogācāra conceptual scheme. The dilemma is this: mirror-like awareness is, according to Yogācāra theory, genuinely nondualistic; either it has no connection of any kind with the dualism of ordinary cognition, in which case it is impossible to account for the occurrence of such dualism, or it does have such a connection, in which case one cannot assert that mirror-like awareness is genuinely nondualistic.⁷⁵ Whether the objection can be answered depends on one's reading of the *trisabhāva* theory in all its ramifications, a complex issue that goes far beyond the scope of this article. Here I can only note the difficulty.

⁷⁰ See MSA 11.38-39 (Lévi [n. 14 above], *Exposé*, 1:64) for a discussion of *parikalpita* in these terms. It should be noted that the presentation of the *trisabhāva* theory given in the eleventh chapter of the MSA is interestingly different in its details from the "classical" theory as found in the *Trisabhāvanirdeśa* and *Madhyāntavibhāga*.

⁷¹ MSA 11:14d (Lévi, *Exposé*, 1:58).

⁷² Fifteen verses are devoted to these similes in MSA 11:15-29 (Lévi, *Exposé*, 1:59-62).

⁷³ MSA 11:28-29 (Lévi, *Exposé*, 1:61-62).

⁷⁴ This image occurs frequently in Indian Buddhist texts. See, inter alia, MSA 11:29 (Lévi, *Exposé*, 1:62); *Vigrahavyāvartanī*, in E. H. Johnston and Arnold Kunst, eds., "The *Vigrahavyāvartanī* of Nāgārjuna," *Mélanges chinois et bouddhiques* 9 (1948): 123.

⁷⁵ Such criticisms are suggested by Bhāvaviveka in the *Madhyamakahrdayakārikā*, chap. 5; in the *Prajñāpradīpa* (*nirvāṇaparīkṣā*); and in the *Madhyamakaratnapradīpa*, chap. 4. See Chr. Lindtner, "Bhavya's Critique of Yogācāra in the *Madhyamakaratnapradīpa*, Chapter IV," in *Buddhist Logic and Epistemology: Studies in the Buddhist Analysis of Inference and Language*, ed. Bimal Krishna Matilal and Robert D. Evans (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1986), chap. 4, pp. 239-63, "Materials for the Study of Bhavya," in *Kalyāṇamitrārāgaṇam: Essays in Honour of Nils Simonsson*, ed. Eivind Kahrs (Oslo: Norwegian University Press, 1986), pp. 179-202. A more developed critique is offered by Jñānagarbha in the *Satyadvayavibhaṅgākārikā* and *vṛtti*, verses 23-24. See Malcolm David Eckel, *Jñānagarbha's Commentary on the Distinction between the Two Truths: An Eighth Century Handbook of Madhyamaka Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), pp. 90-92, 141.

To return to the terminology and goals set forth at the beginning of this study: what has been learned about the properties regarded as self-evidently great-making (and thus self-evidently to be predicated of Buddha) by the Yogācāra tradition? Using the language of the texts, something like the following list seems appropriate: first, purity (*viśuddhi*, applied universally as *dharmādhātuviśuddhi*); second, omnipresence (*sarvagatatva*); third, universal awareness (*jñāna*, especially *ādarśajñāna* and *sarvākārajñāna*); fourth, identity with everything that exists, and non-existence as a separable entity (*advayalakṣaṇa* as interpreted through the *trīsvabhāva* system); fifth, absence of volition, decision, effort, choice (*anābhogatva*, *āyatna*, especially *ekatva* and *apratiprasrabdhatva* as applied to Buddha's *karman*). More freely stated: the texts studied here regard as great-making properties those that reduce individuality and all that goes with it, including especially agency, temporality, and volition. Such properties reduce the sense of separateness from other (apparent) entities, the sense of existence in time, and the need for (and ability to) make free decisions, to react to (apparently) changing stimuli. Increased is the sense of unity, the scope of awareness (which ideally becomes coextensive with everything that exists), and freedom from changing emotional states. Presupposing a certain metaphysic, discussed already in sufficient detail, this means in effect that the texts regard freedom from intellectual error as the basic great-making property: Buddha does not experience itself as an agent (and is not an agent) because there are, ultimately, no agents. Buddha has no volition because, ultimately, the (apparent) occurrence of volitions belongs only to the unreal, imagined (*parikalpita*) realm. Buddha's awareness (*jñāna*) is universal in scope because there is nothing (no obstacles, neither *kleśa*- nor *jñeyāvaraṇa*) to prevent it from functioning as it should, which is to be nondualistically directly aware of everything. Such awareness is seen by the tradition as simply identical with everything there is just as it is—with Suchness, pure Dharma Realm, and the perfected aspect of experience (*pariniṣpannasvabhāva*). Further, Buddha exists atemporally and has no volitions just because both time and that which has temporal location are constituted by the causal process, and the causal process is itself a part of the imagined realm and thus has no reality.

All that has been said about Buddha moves at a high level of generality; refinement and precision both could and should be added to the picture. This could be done both by differentiating more carefully than I have done here among the different strands and emphases present in preclassical and classical Yogācāra and by formulating more precisely and criticizing more thoroughly some of the conceptual connections present on and beneath the surface of the texts. But these are tasks for further

research, and for the purposes of this study there are virtues in keeping things on a fairly abstract and general level. Not least among these virtues is that I want to conclude this study with some comparative remarks. My object of comparison here will be the sketch of Christian theism given by Thomas V. Morris, a Christian philosophical theologian, in what I judge to be a methodologically important and very suggestive piece.⁷⁶ In this piece, Morris sets forth some of the terminology used in this study ("great-making properties," "maximal greatness," and so forth) and gives a brief outline of those great-making properties which he thinks "would accord with the intuitions of most perfect being theologians."⁷⁷ The outline follows; the great-making properties are listed in ascending order of greatness:

God is conceived of as: (1) conscious (a minded being capable of thought and awareness); (2) a conscious agent (capable of free action); (3) a thoroughly benevolent conscious agent; (4) a thoroughly benevolent conscious agent with significant knowledge; (5) a thoroughly benevolent conscious agent with significant knowledge and power; (6) a thoroughly benevolent conscious agent with unlimited knowledge and power who is the creative source of all else; (7) a thoroughly benevolent, necessarily existent conscious agent with unlimited knowledge and power who is the ontologically independent creative source of all else.⁷⁸

Morris's hope that most perfect being theologians (those whose governing motive in thinking about God is to ascribe to him all and only those properties taken to be great-making and to ascribe them in the greatest possible degree consonant with coherence) will find their intuitions in accord with his sketch is unlikely to be fulfilled, even if attention is restricted to theologians shaped by the Christian tradition. Intuitions simply vary too much and are too difficult to ground, as Wainwright has already pointed out.⁷⁹ And if we include our Buddhist Yogācāra theorists under this rubric, then Morris's hope is quite certain to be disappointed. His sketch, like all such sketches, represents a partial and tendentious abstraction from the widely varied traditions of thought about God found in the Christian tradition.⁸⁰ I choose it because its *Tendenz* is one with which I am very much in sympathy: if it is understood as a prescriptive reading of the Christian tradition of the form "this is what Christians should believe

⁷⁶ See Morris (n. 8 above).

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 26.

⁷⁸ Ibid. Compare the delineation of classical Christian theism given by Richard Swinburne, *The Coherence of Theism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), p. 2.

⁷⁹ Wainwright (n. 8 above).

⁸⁰ The tradition of process theology that has grown out of Whitehead's thought, e.g., although it can certainly be understood as an instance of perfect being theology in Morris's sense, equally obviously has significantly different intuitions about which properties are great-making. See, e.g., Charles Hartshorne, "Six Theistic Proofs," *Monist* 54 (1970): 159–80.

about God if they interpret their tradition aright," then it seems to me that its prescriptions are, in essentials, correct (though I cannot, of course, argue for this here). But even leaving aside this question of *Tendenz*, Morris's sketch operates at just about the right level of generality for my comparative purposes and makes the key points of metaphysical disagreement between (this reading of) Christian theism and the (Yogācāra) Buddhist view of Buddhahood very clear.

The first and most obvious point of disagreement as to which properties should properly be seen as great-making has to do with the question of free agency. Suppose we understand the concept of free agency to include the idea that there is something other than the agent to be acted upon; that actions are spatiotemporally located; and that, in the case of any particular action of a given free agent, the action could have been other than it was. Something like this may be what Morris has in mind in his ascription to God of the great-making properties of freedom and agency (elements 1 and 2 in his list). There are, of course, other and more *recherche* concepts of agency used by Christian theologians in thinking about God's actions, especially by those for whom atemporality and immutability are great-making properties. Many of these are fraught with severe and complex conceptual problems: How, for example, if God is truly immutable and atemporal, can he properly be said to enter into relationship with time-bound and mutable existents such as human persons? How, if God is truly immutable and atemporal, can he know certain things that the doctrine of his omniscience (see Morris's list, points 6 and 7) seems to require that he should know—for example, the truth of any temporally indexed proposition? And so forth. It is not my purpose to enter into, much less to adjudicate, these debates; they are complex and have generated an enormous literature.⁸¹ For the purposes of this study, the main point is the following: if the idea of agency outlined above is accepted as a great-making property proper to God (and perhaps Morris would accept it), we have a splendid example of a property that is clearly great-making for one tradition and equally clearly not great-making for another. If, on the other hand, agency in this sense is rejected or modified by attempts to combine it with doctrines of immutability and atemporality, with distinctions between God's essential and accidental properties, and so forth—as

⁸¹ On atemporality, eternity, and the problems such doctrines entail, see Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann, "Eternity," *Journal of Philosophy* 78 (1981): 428–58; Delmas Léves, "Eternity Again: A Reply to Stump and Kretzmann," *International Journal for the Philosophy of Religion* 15 (1984): 73–79; "Persons, Morality, and Tenselessness," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 47 (1986): 305–9; "Timelessness and Divine Agency," *International Journal for the Philosophy of Religion* 21 (1987): 143–59; I. M. Crombie, "Eternity and Omnitemporality," in *The Rationality of Religious Belief: Essays in Honour of Basil Mitchell*, ed. William J. Abraham and Steven W. Holtzer (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), pp. 169–88.

would be done, perhaps, by many Thomistic thinkers—this seems always to be done in a way that preserves both God's transcendence (the idea that he is not just one more existent in the world and that there are existents which he transcends) and God's genuine salvific interactions with temporally bound existents in a historical process that has independent reality. Here, of course, the doctrine of the incarnation is paradigmatic, but it is not the only constraint on Christian thought in this area. So even if the concept of agency is modified by combining it with doctrines of atemporality and immutability, certain key contrasts with the Yogācāra view of maximal greatness are still preserved. For a Yogācāra theorist, if Buddha's agency were conceived in either the strong sense (in accord with my outline thereof) or in a modified sense (in accord with an atemporalist view of God), Buddha could not be Buddha. Agency, in either sense, is simply not a great-making property for the tradition.

This difference in intuitions concerning the status of the properties of agency, freedom, and temporality is based upon and grows naturally out of fundamental metaphysical differences between Buddhists and Christians. It is surely just because Christian metaphysicians tend to conceive of human beings as *imago dei* and to think of them as independent and real agents, possessors of—indeed defined by—an eternal essence, a soul which exists independently (which has *svatantratva*) of all other existents except its creator, and just because Christian metaphysicians have, as a general rule, not seriously called into question the reality of the historical process and of the (temporally located) creative event which began it, that they naturally, intuitively, regard as great-making those properties which exemplify and magnify to the greatest possible extent (within the bounds of coherence) the values of agency-in-time, of creation, and of loving concern for the inherently valuable other (see points 3–5 of Morris's definition). Likewise, it is just because Buddhist metaphysicians have always regarded agency as a particular species of event rather than as a property of persons,⁸² have always judged that persons, conceived as independent entities, have only imaginary status, and have always judged that the processes of concept formation, analysis, and categorization (*prapañca*, *vikalpa*, etc.) are inherently productive of error and necessarily inferior to direct unmediated awareness, that they naturally, intuitively, regard as great-making those properties which exemplify and magnify to the greatest possible extent (within the bounds of coherence) the values of agentless spontaneity, universal and concept-free direct awareness.

⁸² Technically, *karman* is *cetanā*, *cetanā* is part of the *cittacaitta* complex, and that complex is exhaustively defined as a continuum (*saṃlāna*) of momentary events. There is no "person" who possesses that series of events, no "person" to whom it is proper to say that a particular instance of volitional action (= agency) belongs.

These two sets of intuitions about what makes for maximal greatness are obviously not reconcilable. This is precisely because they are intimately, symbiotically, linked with irreconcilable metaphysical systems. A Yogācāra thinker, faced with Morris's list of great-making properties, would judge their stress on agency, freedom, benevolence, and ontological independence (for this last see item 7 in Morris's definition) to be hopelessly, perhaps even laughably, in error. Even if, from the Yogācāra perspective, there could be an existent in possession of the properties listed by Morris, such an existent would not be very great. It would be deceived about its own ontological status and that of others to precisely the extent that it thought of itself as other than them and as independent of them. It would be deceived if it thought that the constructed product of its own awareness reflected Suchness, things as they really are. It might nevertheless exist, at least in the same way that ordinary human agents seem to themselves to exist, and might seem, both to itself and to those human agents who receive its acts, to be of great salvific significance. But it could not be, in Morris's words, "the ontologically independent creative source of all else" since, to a Yogācāra thinker (and to most Buddhists), the description is oxymoronic. It is axiomatic for the Yogācāra tradition that radical interdependence (*parantantratva*) is a defining characteristic of all existents. Ontologically independent creativity is an unexemplified property, and if, *per impossibile*, it should be exemplified, it would certainly not be great-making. It is a commonplace of Buddhist antitheistic arguments that God, if he exists, is deluded about his own properties and status. Buddha, by contrast, since it is defined by universal direct awareness, and since that awareness is identical with the sum of all members of the set of interdependent existents (which is itself co-existent with the set of all existents), both exists (as *pariniṣpannasvabhāva* and *dharmadhātuviśuddhi*) and cannot, *per definiens*, be deluded.

A final question: how can such radical differences in intuitions about what constitutes maximal greatness be resolved? Since these differences in many cases rest upon differences in metaphysical views, some of them may be resolved by the usual methods of argument and debate. If a particular metaphysical position should turn out to be among the truth- or coherence-conditions of a particular intuition about great-making properties, and if the metaphysical position in question should turn out to be flawed, internally incoherent, or otherwise undesirable, then, presumably, the intuition will have to go (or at least be significantly modified). For instance: suppose it should turn out to be the case (as in fact I think it does) that some of the great-making properties listed by Morris require, in order that they may be coherently though exemplifiable, the truth of some such proposition as *one can meaningfully draw a distinction between the essential and accidental properties of some existents*, and suppose further that

the standard Buddhist arguments against the separability of property and property possessor (of *dharma* and *dharmin*) should turn out to be good (though I think they do not); it would then follow that (some of) Morris's intuitions about great-making properties would need correction. For, presumably, an unexemplifiable property cannot meaningfully be thought of as a great-making property. The same would apply, *mutatis mutandis*, to Buddhist intuitions about great-making properties and the propositions whose truth is required for their exemplifiability. But I doubt whether all disagreements about what is and what is not a great-making property can be resolved in this way. It is perhaps not inconceivable that all the propositions (together with their entailments) whose truth is required in order that a particular candidate for great-making-property status be exemplifiable should turn out to be true (or at least not demonstrably false), and that this be agreed by two people who still differ as to whether the property in question is in fact great-making. In such a case there would seem to be simply an irreducible difference in intuition, not capable of resolution by argument.

The exploration of this possibility, together with some fine-tuning of the presentation given here of the Yogācāra Buddhist view of what makes for maximal greatness, are important tasks for the future. These tasks should include an attempt to isolate and critically analyze the metaphysical presuppositions underlying the Yogācāra Buddhist intuitions, especially in cases where these differ drastically from typically Christian presuppositions, and to assess the relative merits of each. Finally (and this last task is likely to be of more interest to the intellectual historian than to the philosopher), an attempt needs to be made to show how and (nonphilosophically) why Yogācāra intuitions about maximal greatness differ from others within the Buddhist traditions. In this study I have tried only to show that Yogācāra views on Buddhahood can be usefully explored and expounded using the terminology of maximal greatness, and that Yogācāra Buddhist intuitions about what makes for such are, on almost every level, radically incompatible with (most) Christian intuitions on the same question.