

# As the Wheel Turns

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How was dependent coarising eclipsed by less adequate interpretations, and why was the early intent never recovered by advanced practitioners and *arahants*? How did the twelvefold formula equated with the entirety of the *Dhamma*, become marginalized as the basis of practice, so that Ñāṇānanda would write,

At present what is called *Paṭicca Samuppāda* is a formula to be by-heart and recited up and down. It has no other significance. But it is with this formula that the Buddha ... solved the entire *Saṃsāric* puzzle. ... This confusion is not of recent origin. It has gone on for quite a long time. ... But what has been happening all this time? A basket was simply handed down without examining what is in it. “Our teacher has said this. We must not go beyond it. Our commentators have explained like this. We must not think beyond their explanations.” A vast delusion has gone on for a long, long period getting hold of the brains – lay and monk alike.<sup>1</sup>

One would indeed expect faulty interpretations to arise historically in many aspects of something as sophisticated as the *Dhamma*. However, Buddhism, as a *practice* tradition, should also have a significant capacity for recovery: If a deficient recipe were to arise in *The Joy of Cooking* – say, fruitcake cockaigne in spicy port marinade – gastronomic disapproval would quickly ensure prompt correction of that misstep.

I think we can discover what happened if we look at the early centuries of Buddhism in South Asia. What I suggest here is somewhat sketchy, but would be a great topic for a dissertation by some young enterprising doctoral candidate who would like to explore this topic further. To begin with, these early centuries witnessed three great paradigm shifts in the Dhammic understanding following the early period, each developing over many centuries, overlapping in time, but influenced by the one preceding:

- the *Abhidharma* (formalized 3<sup>rd</sup> cent. BCE),
- the *Madhyamaka* (origins 1st cent. BCE, formalized 2<sup>nd</sup> cent. CE),
- the *Yogācāra*, (origins 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE, formalized 4<sup>th</sup> cent. CE).

Through these three paradigm shifts we can trace how two of the factors of the Buddha’s method evolved, each of which effected the potential for properly interpreting the early intent of the twelve links. In broad outline (since each of these movements is heterogeneous):

- the *Abhidharma* compromised subjectivity and insubstantiality, and with those the epistemic teachings.
- the *Madhyamaka* restored insubstantiality, but not the epistemic teachings.
- the *Yogācāra* restored the epistemic teachings and to a significant degree subjectivity.

Kalupahana<sup>2</sup> has been the primary advocate for the view of this ebb and flow of Buddhist history through the rise of these three paradigms, whereby many of the Buddha’s early teachings became obscured in the rise of the *Abhidharma*, and whereby *Madhyamaka* and *Yogācāra* marked the return to an earlier *Dhamma*.

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1 Ñāṇānanda (2015, v. 4, 108-15 – sermon 20).

2 Kalupahana 1992, 2015.

## 1. The Abhidharma.

The *Abhidharma* paradigm took root in the early centuries of Buddhism as a systematization of the Buddha's orally transmitted teachings. Just as a serious student of Shakespeare will find the *Oxford Companion to Shakespeare* a handy resource, and the serious reader of the present book will find its glossary useful, the serious student of the *Buddhavadana* was undoubtedly hungry for summaries, indices and glossaries. These resources began as a set of tables (*mātikā*, Skt *māṭrkā*), possibly even during the life of the Buddha, that provided clear definitions of terminology, precise and without figurative language. As these things go, the *Abhidharma* developed its own distinct scholarly method of analysis, distinguished from the Buddha's method, but which nonetheless has had much appeal for its preciseness, and among many modern people perhaps for its similarity to the scientific method. It has had an enormous influence on how the *Dharma* has been interpreted ever since.

**History of Abhidhamma.** This Abhidharma developed in the various geographically dispersed early Buddhist sects somewhat separately, but with a lot of crosstalk. These sects began to diversify, particularly under the influence of a number of non-Buddhist schools in South Asia. Many of these schools followed a pan-Indian trend toward scholasticism and debate in religious teachings. Notable among these were the Brahmanical Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika and Pūrvaṃīmśā schools, which were also undergoing a process of sophisticated philosophical elaboration over this period.<sup>3</sup> Debate was all the rage, and Buddhist teachers needed to be able to talk to practitioners of other schools from a common perspective.<sup>4</sup>

It is significant that an early local snapshot of evolving Abhidharma thought was included in the canonical corpus of many a sect, but that Abhidharma continued to develop through application of its method in each active case beyond its canonical form for many centuries, producing a rich commentarial literature. In the Theravāda case, the canonical *Abhidharma*,<sup>5</sup> still very faithful to the perspective of the discourses,<sup>6</sup> gave rise to the much more metaphysically laden commentarial literature in fifth-century CE Sri Lanka,<sup>7</sup> of which Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhimagga* is the best known example. The Abhidharma as studied and practiced to this day in the Theravāda relies significantly on Anuruddha's eighth to twelfth century handbook the *Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha*, which represents an even further stage of development.

A widespread criticism of the *Abhidharma* is that its resultant scholastic aims tended to lose sight of soteriological concerns in favor of intellectual speculation.<sup>8</sup> Ronkin documents in detail the process by which the Abhidharma transitioned from an epistemically oriented framework to a metaphysical theory.<sup>9</sup> This was accompanied by a substantial weakening of the Buddha's method in the parameters of practicality, subjectivity and insubstantiality.

**Notable features of Abhidharma.** The Abhidharma took to heart that how the world appears to us is largely a matter a human cognition. For most Abhidharmikas, if something consists of parts, it does not exist in itself. A chariot, for instance, is constructed from axle, yoke, wheels and so on, and so does not enjoy independent existence from its own side. It is a thing by virtue of conceptualizing it as such, from our side. Similarly, the self, "me," is constructed from more basic parts and does not exist in itself. The Abhidharma became largely a reductionist project with the assumption that this kind of reduction will bottom out at a set of objects that cannot be further reduced, and therefore exist in themselves without conceptual overlay.

This is *dharma theory* (*dhammavāda*), a postulation that divides the world into two realities: *ultimate reality*, in which *dhammas* dwell, and *conventional reality*, which are conceptual overlays on the independent *dharmic* reality.<sup>10</sup> The word *dharma* or *dhamma* came to be reserved for these irreducible elements that exist in themselves, *ontologically*, and possess *self-existence*, (*svabhāva* in Sanskrit). Ronkin writes, "While in the *Sutta* period the dhammas served as guidelines for constituting sentient experience based on a insubstantialist conceptual schema, within the Abhidharma framework the

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3 Ronkin (2005, 50).

4 Westerhoff (2018, 41).

5 I will use the Sanskrit *Abhidharma* for uniformity in this chapter, even when the Pali *Abhidhamma* is meant.

6 Kalupahana (1992, 108) states that the canonical *Abhidhamma* is untouched by metaphysical speculation. The canonical *Abhidharma* of *Sarvāstivādin* sect in northern India is considered in this regard much more radical.

7 For Ronkin (2005, 76), this represents was the beginning of a significant shift from an epistemic model.

8 Westerhoff (2018, 39).

9 Ronkin (2005).

10 Westerhoff (2018, 53).

*dhammas* emerged as discrete entities – distinct, evanescent constituents of experience – and were gradually assigned a growing metaphysical dimension in the form of their *svabhāva*.<sup>11</sup>

A prominent extension of the metaphysical *dharma* theory is the theory of *momentariness*, which arose from the analysis of impermanence (*anicca*), much as *dharma* theory arose from the analysis of non-self (*anatta*). According to this theory ultimate reality is a temporal series of discrete momentary events, such that each *dhamma* flashes briefly and then is gone within a moment. However, each moment gives rise to the next with its own *dhammas*, much like frames on a movie reel. Through the conditioning of similar succeeding *dhammas*, the impression is produced conventionally of temporally extended objects and events.<sup>12</sup> In the later Theravāda tradition discrete mental moments are each structured as an instance of consciousness (*citta*) accompanied by a group of mental factors (*cetasikas*) of varying types. The life span of a *citta* is so short that billions arise and fall in an eye blink or in a lightning flash.<sup>13</sup> In the realm of material phenomena (*rūpa*) this process is much slower than in the mental realm: seventeen mind moments equal one material moment,<sup>14</sup> a speed differential apparently unique to the Theravāda Abhidharma tradition.<sup>15</sup>

The Abhidharma seems to have fallen into the pitfall of developing a complete and consistent metaphysical system through speculative means. This would have been avoided, had the Abhidharmikas adhered to the subjectivity of the Buddha's method. As these things go, to produce consistency here, an inconsistency would be introduced there, so, like Ptolemaic epicycles, new mechanisms were posited to account for the limits of the last, and so on. For instance:

(1) Karmic continuity in the *Buddhdhamma* is the process whereby a karmic action performed at one moment will bear fruits at some (possibly far-distant) later moment. In order to accommodate this within the framework of momentariness, it was posited that the moment of the karmic action is *perfumed* by a trace of the wholesome or unwholesome character of action, then the *karmic* scent passed along the series of psychological and physical moments, from one to the next, to finally bring about *karmic* fruit at later moment.<sup>16</sup>

(2) Since each mind moment gave rise to the next, a means was required to account for returning from lapses in mental activity as in deep meditative states or in sleep. A subconscious *bhavanga* ('existence-factor' or 'life-continuum'), was posited to preserve the continuity of the individual from birth to death, mind states that arise and pass away every moment when there is no active cognition.<sup>17</sup>

(3) The Sarvāstivādins struggled with the observation that words and sounds extend in time and therefore cannot have real existence in terms of momentariness. Therefore, they posited separate "linguistic" *dhammas* to account for this.<sup>18</sup>

(4) A detailed theory of causality is prominent in the Abhidharma. However, squeezing reality into the a single moment, created problems for the generally serial nature of causality that required complex mechanisms to solve.<sup>19</sup> Many readers of the Pali *Suttas* are surprised to learn in the commentaries, for instance, that the entire path to becoming a stream enter lasts only one mind moment!

**Dependent Coarising in the Abhidharma.** The detailed analysis of conditional relations had a great influence on how dependent coarising was interpreted. In the Theravāda tradition, a conditioning factor acquired an inherent conditioning force (*paccaya-satti*), that has the power to bring about an effect.<sup>20</sup> Recall that in the present account this-that conditionality is not a theory, but is rather a technique of analysis within the Buddha's method based on observable or implied co-occurrences of phenomena, the intent of which (if I am right about this) is to *avoid* resort to underlying mechanisms in discovering the structure of the experiential world.

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11 Ronkin (2005, 132).

12 Westerhoff (2018, 61).

13 Bodhi (2000, 156).

14 Bodhi (2000, 14).

15 Westerhoff (2018, 67).

16 Westerhoff (2018, 81).

17 Bodhi (2000, 122-3).

18 Ronkin (2005, 159).

19 Westerhoff (2018, 110).

20 Bodhi (2000, 293-4).

Permitting underlying mechanisms naturally permitted new interpretations of the twelvefold chain. What Cox calls an “unprecedented reinterpretation” of the traditional twelve-link chain is found in the *Jñānaprasthāna* chapter Sarvāstivādin *Abhidharma*, which claims that the twelve links “are to be interpreted as extending over three lifetimes: the first two members operate in the previous lifetime to produce the middle eight members in the present lifetime; these present members then produce the last two members in the subsequent lifetime.”<sup>21</sup> This suggests that the three-lives had not been traditional among the Sarvāstivādins. The three lives seems also to have first appeared among the Theravādins in the commentarial period.

Causal theory seems to have emerged as a separate topic in the *Abhidharma* exposition of dependent coarising, at least within the Sarvāstivādin school, sidelining the twelvefold formula. The *Vijñānakāya* chapter of the *Sarvāstivādin Abhidharma* provides two alternate interpretations of the twelvefold chain, with no reference to the discourses, but makes these subordinate to the development of a theory of causal relations “for their own sake.”<sup>22</sup> In the *Prakaraṇapāda* chapter, dependent origination is discussed with no reference to the twelvefold chain at all. Cox calls this an “abstract redefinition and radical extension of the meaning of dependent originated factors to include all conditioned factors,” which would play an important role in later Abhidharmic and post-Abhidharmic thought.<sup>23</sup>

In summary, the *Abhidharma* largely abandoned the Buddha’s method. It weakened practicality and subjectivity in introducing underlying mechanisms in a rather speculative and sometimes arbitrary way that were beyond experiential verification. It weakened insubstantiality by developing a dharma theory that posited self-existing objects independent of human conceptualization. This created a context in which the epistemic nature of the chain might have been neglected. This permitted substantialist alternatives to take root, in particular the three-lives interpretation.

**Hybrid orthodoxy.** Over time the distinction between *Buddhavacana* and *Abhidharma* tended to become obscured. This should not be surprising: The *Abhidharma* purported to properly interpret the early texts. An early snapshot in its development was given canonical status in many a sect, and it did not claim to be a revolutionary movement. Rather, the *Abhidharma* developed slowly and may have diverged for the most part imperceptibly from what came before it. Elements introduced at different times were folded together into a coherent whole. We can call the resulting mingling of the early *Dharma* with *Abhidharmic* innovations *hybrid orthodoxy*. The Theravāda tradition today might be viewed as a hybrid orthodoxy, in which *sutta* and *Abhidharma* are no longer clearly distinguished.

As a result, when explicitly revolutionary movements subsequently arose, they typically positioned themselves in opposition to the hybrid orthodoxy. Even the Sautāntika (*Sutta*-only) School, that explicitly rejected the *Abhidharma*, seems to have been confused about what was and was not *Abhidharma*; momentariness, for instance, lived on. The hybrid orthodoxy may have obscured many of the deeper teachings of the *Buddhavacana*, for when the progressive Mahāyāna (Greater Vehicle) movement arose, it called the orthodoxy that preceded it the *Hīnayāna* (Lower Vehicle). They probably had this hybrid orthodoxy in mind, particularly as it manifested in northern India. Nonetheless, there was a tendency to attribute innovations back to the Buddha as “secret teachings” to be revealed only when people were ready for it. The Buddha’s wisest disciple, Sāriputta, thereby became the standard fall guy, as the representative of the “deficient” orthodoxy.

## 2. Madhyamaka

The Madhyamaka teachings developed as a direct challenge to the substantialism of the *Abhidharma*, in fact it served to restore the insubstantiality of the Buddha’s method in a more forceful way than the Buddha himself had proposed.<sup>24</sup> Rather than simply bracketing or withholding common presumptions about natural reality, the Madhyamaka demonstrated that these presumptions were logically untenable as a description of natural reality. For any conceptual category that we try to overlay over natural reality (self-existence, *svabhāva*, is primary among them) any object of natural reality must be *empty*

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21 Cox (1993, 136).

22 Cox (1993, 133-4).

23 Cox (1993, 133-5).

24 Westerhoff (2018, 206).

(*suñña*, Skr *sūnya*) of that category. We can also say that concepts fail to *reach* or *verify* natural reality. For Ronkin, Madhyamaka was a watershed, proving the logical impossibility of *Abhidharmic* ontological realism.<sup>25</sup>

**History.** The origins of the Madhyamaka are found in the earliest of the first century BCE *Perfection of Wisdom in 8000 Lines*. There seem to have been about forty apocryphal *Perfection of Wisdom (Prajñāpāramitā) Sūtras*, composed over seven centuries (100 BCE – 600 CE). The best known of these are the *Diamond Sūtra* and the very concise *Heart Sūtra*, in which the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara famously contends:

... Śāriputra,<sup>26</sup> all *dhammas* are marked by emptiness — they do not appear or disappear, are not tainted or pure, do not increase or decrease. Therefore in emptiness no form, no appearance, no feeling, no perception, formations, cognizance. No eyes, no ears, no nose, no tongue, no body, no mind, no color, no sound, no smell, no taste, no touch, no object of mind, no realm of eyes and so forth until no real of mind cognizance. No ignorance nor extinction of it, and so forth until no old age and death and no extinction of them. No suffering, no origination, no stopping, no path, no cognition, ... [you get the idea.]<sup>27</sup>

Basically, the Heart Sūtra negates all categories of Abhidharma ontology.<sup>28</sup>

The *Madhyamaka (Middle Way)* per se is a formal scholarly development based on the theme of emptiness, less formally articulated in the early *Prajñāpāramitā* literature. It began with the brilliant second-century CE scholar-monk Nāgārjuna, particularly in his treatise *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā (Root Verses of the Middle Way)*. Nāgārjuna's task was to establish that natural reality cannot be as we presume, through the logical method of *reductio ad absurdum*, the demonstration that a given proposition leads to an absurdity.

The first of the *Root Verses* reads:

Neither from itself nor from another,  
Nor from both,  
Nor without a cause,  
Does anything whatever, anywhere arise. (MMK 1.1)

**Features of Madhyamaka.** Nāgārjuna demonstrated that a natural reality in which there are substantial objects as we conceive them, would be a frozen reality, in which change is impossible,<sup>29</sup> for such objects would be unaffected by conditionality. Kalupahana sees Nāgārjuna less as an innovator and more as a conservative influence, attempting “to clean up the weeds of the substantialist metaphysics that had grown around” the Buddha's teaching,<sup>30</sup> pointing out (as I have taken pains to argue in this book) that insubstantiality was not an innovation of the Mahāyāna as most people think.<sup>31</sup> Gomez similarly thinks it is not so absurd to see *Prajñāpāramitā* in general as protest against Abhidharma and attempt to return to earlier understanding,<sup>32</sup> putting aside its teachings around the bodhisattva ideal, which the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* nowhere refers to. In this regard, Conze once wrote, “There is in Buddhism really no innovation, but what seems so is in fact a subtle adaptation of pre-existing ideas.”<sup>33</sup> If the Buddha's original intent was obscured in the hybrid orthodoxy, then Nāgārjuna may have indeed considered himself an innovator while in the end having a conservative influence.

We generally think of Nāgārjuna as contributing primarily to ontology, or rather a kind of anti-ontology: “Natural reality is empty of self-existing objects.” However, emptiness is really about cognition, for it serves to correct a cognitive error: It is we who presume that the natural world contains self-existing objects; but this is a mistaken conceptual projection onto

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25 Ronkin (2005, 14).

26 The addressee, lectured by the Mahāyāna *bodhisattva*, is Śāriputta in his role as the fall guy. The Buddha is present in this discourse and nods his assent at its conclusion.

27 Mu Soeng (2010, 7).

28 Westerhoff (2018, 100).

29 Westerhof (2009, 38).

30 Kalupahana (1992, 3, 208).

31 Kalupahana (1992, 54).

32 Williams (2008, 39).

33 Quoted by Mu Soeng (2000, 20), who also sees the *Prajñāpāramitā* substantially as a backlash against the rigidity and scholasticism of the *Abhidharma*.

natural reality. Emptiness is introduced as a call to stop presuming; its real import is therefor epistemic.<sup>34</sup> Natural reality is the way it is; it has no idea whether it is empty or not. Analogously, Mabel in her veneration for the great Mahatma Gandhi might presume that he was taller than he was. But to say that Gandhi was not taller than Mabel presumes, corrects Mabel's mistake, it says nothing intrinsic about Gandhi; he was just as tall as he was. In fact, "emptiness" itself is therefore another conceptual projection onto natural reality, which is for that reason "empty of emptiness."

Madhyamaka enforces insubstantiality but leaves unanswered the critical epistemic question, "How do we come to presume that natural reality is the way we presume it to be (with self-existing objects and such)?" If we answer this we might learn to presume otherwise. The claim of the current account is that the Buddha had answered this question, but his answer has long been obscured in hybrid orthodoxy. It was up to Yogācāra to attempt to answer it anew.

**Dependent Coarising in Madhyamaka.** Interestingly Nāgārjuna devotes a chapter to the twelvefold chain, but notably presupposes without question the three-life interpretation.

Having formations as its conditions,  
Cognizance enters transmigration.  
Once cognizance has entered transmigration,  
Name and form come to be. (MMK 26.2)

He does this not to declare the emptiness of the chain – as he does for the four noble truths and repeatedly for other orthodox teachings – but rather zeros in on a single link: the whole chain can cease at ignorance.

With the cessation of ignorance,  
Action will not arise.  
The cessation of ignorance occurs through,  
Meditation and wisdom. (MMK 26.11)

Naturally meditation and wisdom lead to the deep realization as a matter of direct experience that all things really are empty of self-existence. (In contrast, recall that the Buddha attributed the cessation of ignorance to realization of the four noble truths.) After this nod to the twelvefold chain, Nāgārjuna follows the lead of some Abhidharmikas of generalizing dependent coarising to conditionality in general, rather than to the twelvefold formula, and then equates this redefinition with emptiness itself (recall that his arguments depend on the incompatibility of self-existence and conditional relations):

Whatever arises dependently is explained as empty.  
Thus dependent attribution is the middle way.  
Since there is nothing whatever that is not dependently existent,  
For that reason, there is nothing whatsoever that is not empty.  
(MMK 24.18-19)

Dependent coarising is generally understood in East Asia as generalized conditionality without reference to the chain to this day.

### 3. Yogācāra

The Yogācāra (Yoga practice) movement represents a renewed interest in epistemology, that is, in how we cognitively fabricate our outer world, or equivalently how we come to presume what we presume about natural reality. In a real sense, it takes over where Madhyamaka leaves off.

**History.** The recognized origin of the Yogācāra is the apocryphal *Samdhinirmocana* (*Explication of the Intent*) Sūtra, compiled in its final form probably in the second century CE.<sup>35</sup> Significantly, the *Samdhinirmocana* declares its own historical place in the evolution of Dharma, as the last of three successive turnings of the wheel, which are: (1) the teachings of the "hearers" (orthodoxy), (2) the teachings of emptiness (*Perfection of Wisdom*) and (3) the explication of the Buddha's

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<sup>34</sup> Westerhoff (2009, 221-222).

<sup>35</sup> Keenan (2000, 1).

intent (*Samdhinirmocana*). It declares that (3) unites (1) and (2). Note that the Abhidharma is not mentioned as a distinct development, which suggests the first turning is actually hybrid orthodoxy.

The Yogācāra as a matter of scholarly exposition began at the hands of three monks: Maitreya, Asanga and the latter's half-brother Vasubandhu in the fourth century CE. Vasubandhu is regarded as the most influential of the three. Although the early Yogācāra seems like the natural complement of the Madhyamaka, there would be a long history of contention between the two schools, as well as between factions within Yogācāra. Beginning with Vasubandhu Yogācāra became entwined with Abhidharma, and then later with "Buddha nature." However, its early features fit well with the epistemic project suggested by the Madhyamaka.

**Features of Yogācāra.** Yogācāra is practice-oriented, is fundamentally an epistemic project, takes seriously the Buddha's parameter of insubstantiality and the Madhyamaka doctrine of emptiness, and sees the realization of conditionality as central to presuming otherwise. Although it proposes a unique cognitive architecture albeit with many variants, its overall purpose and most general features seem very close to the present epistemic account of dependent co-arising, and I daresay represents a recovery of some aspects of the Buddha's original intent.

Early Yogācāra frames practice in terms of three perspectives in perceiving the world:<sup>36</sup>

(1) imputational, essentially taking what we experience as "out there" at face value, as reflecting natural reality, then clinging to it,

(2) dependent, seeing the mentally constructed nature of what we experience as "out there,"

(3) perfected, seeing the world in non-conceptual terms.

(1) is experience of the world in the manner of the common worldling. "We have our handy little imputation machine, and we zap an imputation on whatever we meet."<sup>37</sup> (3) is experience of the world in the manner of the fully awakened person, who "rests in *concept only*" (*viññaptimātratā*), fully aware that our concepts and language fail to reach anything that might be "out there,"<sup>38</sup> a perception "apart from names and words."<sup>39</sup> (2) is the seat of wisdom practice,<sup>40</sup> through study, contemplation and meditation, in order to experience otherwise, and eventually turns (1) into (3). (2) itself is provisional or conventional, since it is concept-laden, but serves a practical soteriological function. (2) also represents the epistemic aspect of the current account, whose main task it to understand how presumptions arise. Cognizance at this intermediate level sees the illusion (e.g., the bent pencil immersed in water) but will not be fooled by it.<sup>41</sup>

With this in mind, Yogācāra introduces a cognitive architecture, in order to model how the mind constructs our sense of reality. A key concept in this regard is store cognizance (*ālaya-vijñāna*), which is a stream of dispositional seeds produced through *kammic* choices<sup>42</sup> and ripening to mature into conscious awareness.<sup>43</sup> In this way, nothing cognized is ever independent of previous experience.<sup>44</sup> Store cognizance also accounts for transmigration and for the law of karmic causality.<sup>45</sup>

Store cognizance produces the conditions for sense-cognizance and is the source of appropriation. It is itself conditioned by a set of factors familiar from chapter nine: contact, attention, perception and intention, in the presence of interest.<sup>46</sup> Another form of cognizance, *manas*, is the reflective capacity of mind and is responsible for creating the sense of self and the subject/object duality; it is the mind of defilement.<sup>47</sup> "The idea that there is an aspect of consciousness that creates this sense of self is distinctly Yogacarīn."<sup>48</sup>

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36 *Samdhinirmocana Sūtra* (Keenan, 2000, 12), Connelly (2016, 137), Westerhoff (2018, 182), Anderson (2012, 78).

37 Anderson (2012, 83).

38 Connelly (2016, 182).

39 *Samdhinirmocana Sūtra*, Keenan (2000, 12).

40 Anderson (2012, 80).

41 Lusthaus (2002, 223).

42 Westerhoff (2018, 181).

43 Anderson (2012, 58).

44 Kalupahana (1992, 203).

45 Westerhoff (2018, 181).

46 Connelly (2016, 49), Kalupahana (1992, 138).

47 Anderson (2012, 64-6).

48 Connelly (2016, 57).

The reader will notice that this architecture is different from, but has striking correlations with, the upstream epistemic links of dependent coarising – **formations** → **cognizance** → **name and form** → **sixfold sphere** → **contact**. The dispositional nature of seeds within store cognizance clearly bears a relation to **formations**.<sup>49</sup> The conditions just mentioned for store cognizance – contact, attention, perception and volition – are components of **name and form**. Store cognizance also likewise gives rise to the **sixfold sphere**. The influence of *manas* in producing subject and object fully manifests in **contact**. There are clearly some reworking of responsibilities from the presentation in the twelvefold chain, but the intent and basic components are similarly concerned with an epistemic account of meaning construction.

Moreover, the Yogacara architecture seems to fold the conceptual factors of the twelvefold chain into the emotive factors, whereas they occupy separate segments of the chain. The term *ālaya* for store cognizance is a common equivalent of ‘appropriation’ in the early discourses, and *anālaya* ‘without appropriation’ a term for awakening. The words for subject and object in Sanskrit Yogācāra texts are actually ‘grasper’ (*grāhaka*) and ‘grasped’ (*grāhya*).<sup>50</sup>

Given cross-entanglements among factors of the twelvefold chain, there are many ways to reshuffle the snarl of cognition to highlight an alternative architecture. It would be interesting to trace all of the correspondences, and identify the differences, between the epistemic account of dependent coarising and the Yogacara system.

**Dependent Coarising in Yogācāra.** The *Samdhinirmocana* actually makes reference to the twelvefold chain of dependent coarising, notably as the basis for practicing from the dependent perspective.<sup>51</sup> Unfortunately, it does not tell us what interpretation it attaches to the chain, if any, or how its cognitive architecture is reflected in the chain. This leads to some interesting speculation. If it were to acknowledge the current, epistemic interpretation of the chain, much of what the sūtra has to say would be moot, or at least we would expect a greater attempt to accommodate the cognitive architecture it recommends to the cognitive links of the chain. If it were to recognize the three-lives interpretation or any biologically oriented alternative, it would be hard put to tell us in association with which links the epistemic project it envisions is implemented.

In conclusion, I’ve proposed that the current epistemic account was the original intent of the chain of dependent coarising. Three successive major paradigm shifts, spaced two to three centuries apart, induced changes in Buddhist doctrine, as a kind of ebb and flow, whereby faulty interpretations became associated with the chain of dependent coarising obscured the Buddha’s original method. Later on, much of the early Buddhist doctrine, including the Buddha’s method and the Buddha’s original epistemic intent, was restored in stages in the final two paradigm shifts. However, by that time the actual twelve links formula of dependent coarising had become disassociated from these concerns, marginalizing the teaching even while it was still held up as standing for the entirety of the *Dhamma*.

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49 Lusthaus (2002, 57) calls it a revaluated version of *saṅkhāra*.

50 Lusthaus (2002, 2).

51 Keenan (2000, 31).



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