

# Buddhist Yogācāra Philosophy and Ecology

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In the face of the alarming destruction and loss of diversity in our natural environment many are looking within their own religious traditions and asking difficult questions about the role of religions in the justification of environmental destruction and in fostering hostile attitudes to nature. More positively, they are also looking to see what their traditions may contribute to environmental ethics and to a vision which may help to redress the present situation. In this paper I hope to contribute something to this process by reflection on some aspects of Indian Buddhism and ecology, particularly in relation to Indian Yogācāra Buddhism and its understanding of the relationship of self and world.

Two different, yet related, approaches might be taken. Attitudes and modes of behaviour could be examined. One could see how a proper relationship with the environment is expressed, for example, through the rules of discipline for the monks and nuns (*vinaya*) and, in more general terms, in prescriptions concerning behaviour for the laity. Alternatively, one might address the more abstract philosophical ideas which underpin Buddhist metaphysics and explore the implications for a vision of the natural order and for environmental ethics. This paper is concentrated on the second.<sup>1</sup> It addresses issues which impact on our understanding of ourselves, our place in the world and our ultimate ends. In particular, the paper explores the relationship of self and world in Yogācāra Buddhism and its implications for ecology within the wider context of Buddhist metaphysics. Thus I hope to contribute in some way to what has become known as 'deep ecology'.<sup>2</sup>

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1 For the first approach see L. Schmithausen, *Buddhism and Nature: Proceedings of an International Symposium on the occasion of EXPO 1990*, Tokyo, 1991. For Schmithausen's reflections on responses to his paper and for an overview of writings on Buddhism and ecology see L. Schmithausen 'The Early Buddhist Tradition and Ecological Ethics', in *Journal of Buddhist Ethics*, vol. 4, 1997, <http://jbe.la.psu.edu/4/-schmi1.html> (on-line journal).

2 Deep ecology is contrasted with approaches that are primarily concerned with management within the current scientific and economic framework. Deep ecology attempts to fashion an environmental philosophy which asks fundamental questions about ourselves and our relationship to our world and which provides an adequate basis for countering our destructive relationship with nature. Buddhism, especially Mahāyāna Buddhism, has been one of the major influences

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Questions and difficulties are immediately encountered. A full treatment of these is beyond the scope of the present paper, however, a few words on some of the underlying assumptions are necessary in order to forestall misunderstanding. One question is whether there has been a consistent metaphysical perspective underpinning the different expressions of Buddhism and whether these result in a consistent view on the proper relationship between humanity and the natural environment. Undoubtedly a range of views is found within Buddhist traditions. Nonetheless, there has been a continuous pattern of Buddhist thinking which is compatible with ecological perspectives and which is a fruitful resource for developing a deeper understanding of the world and our place in it. Those wishing to develop an environmental philosophy drawing on the insights of Buddhism and those who wish to engage in a wider dialogue on ecological issues can profitably turn to these traditions.

The question has also been asked whether abstract religious ideas and the distinctions found in metaphysical doctrines can have any bearing on our current ecological problems, and whether they can influence people's everyday behaviour. Clearly they do. Apparently abstract ideas can have far-reaching consequences and wield an enormous power doubly difficult to see if they form part of the largely unconscious assumptions of a culture. The current ecological crises stem from certain ideas about ultimate reality, the world and humanity. The current application of technology is one consequence of these views. Conversely, if our thinking about ourselves and the world is awry, no amount of 'resource management' will rectify the situation.

As to individual behaviour, it has been observed that environmental damage is almost as extensive in ostensibly Buddhist countries of the East as it is in the West. It must be noted that, whatever the ultimate philosophical position of Buddhism (or any other religious tradition), ordinary unenlightened beings, in other words, the vast majority, will act out of desire for security and pleasure, and aversion to insecurity and pain. Of critical importance are the traditional restraints on behaviour and the inhibitions on unbridled greed. These restraints and inhibitions are ultimately based on a vision of the place of

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in the emergence of deep ecology. For the first use of the term 'deep ecology', see Arne Naess, 'The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movements: A Summary', in *Inquiry* 16, Oslo 1973, pp. 95-100.

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humanity in a wider totality. If these restraints are overthrown and an ideology that justifies and promotes rampant consumerism is backed by a technology apparently capable of satisfying human desires, the results are predictable whether one is in an ostensibly Buddhist culture or any other.

There are also difficulties in the application of Buddhist ideas to contemporary problems and questions and the use, or misuse, of Buddhist ideas through inadequate attention to, or ignorance of, the contexts in which they were formed and evolved. To represent, for example, the Bodhisattva, a being intent on the awakening of all beings, as a kind of enlightened environmental activist is one obvious distortion. Such a conception involves, at the very least, a new departure in the understanding of the function of compassion which the Bodhisattva embodies.<sup>1</sup> Informed scholarship has an obvious corrective role in this and similar situations. From another perspective, it is as well to remember that religious traditions everywhere grow and develop as they come into contact with different situations; the danger is that the emerging tradition betrays its own inheritance in fixating on immediate concerns.

The issue of the various meanings of 'nature' is a large one which we cannot enter into here, as is the question of possible Buddhist equivalents for some of these meanings.<sup>2</sup> But it is worth noting that a notion central to our modern idea of nature viz. a closed system whose relations are capable, at least in principle, of mathematical expression is one foreign to Buddhism. 'Nature', in Buddhist perspective, is not understood as a self-enclosed system nor as a thing in itself and so was neither understood as perfect in its untouched state (as some Romantics would have it) nor as something whose value derived from its utility to human beings. The question of the value of 'nature' was thus neither posed nor answered. Our starting point, on the simplest level (and leaving aside questions of equivalence) is the understanding of the sentient beings (*sattvaloka*) and their relationship with the container-like world (*bhājanaloka*) in which they live. In more existential terms, we are concerned with sentience, embodiment and engagement.

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<sup>1</sup> On some of problems in the presuppositions underlying Buddhist environmentalism see Ian Harris, 'How Environmentalist is Buddhism?', in *Religion*, vol. 21, 1991, pp. 101-14

<sup>2</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 105-7. For a study of the status of 'nature' see B. Foltz, *Inhabiting the Earth: Heidegger, Environmental Ethics, and the Metaphysics of Nature*, New Jersey, 1995.

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Let us turn now to the intellectual roots of our environmental predicament. Clearly there is insufficient space to explore these in depth but a preliminary sketch is essential to provide some background for the discussion of Buddhist perspectives.

Some have found the origins of the present crisis in the injunction found in Genesis 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it: and have dominion', which would appear to sanction a rapacious attitude toward the earth and encourage the idea that the only value of nature lies in its relation to human needs and desires. Humanity in the Judeo-Christian tradition, it is argued, is created in the image of God and is to be distinguished from nature which, not so created, can have only instrumental value.<sup>1</sup> Others point to the body-soul dualism in Greek thought; a dualism that emphasises the value of the soul over body, of spirit over matter, of man (as a psychic monad) over nature, with a consequent devaluing of the body and natural environment. This body-soul dualism was in turn inherited by Christianity and influenced the understanding of Biblical tradition.<sup>2</sup> Others point to aspects of Greek metaphysics that were to have tremendous impact on the development of Western views of the world and on the emergence of science and technology. They point to the atomism of Leucippus and Democritus, which was revived during the Scientific Revolution<sup>3</sup> and, furthermore, to the substantialist ontology of Aristotle which emphasises the separate existence of things and proposes the idea of individual substance as that which makes a thing what it is.<sup>4</sup> Atomism and the idea of individual substance emphasises separateness against organic unity. This

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1 Genesis 1:28. The indictment of Judaism and Christianity is commonplace in the environmental movement. It is usually based on a rather shallow understanding of Biblical tradition. For a more balanced appraisal of the Christian perspective see Wendell Berry, 'Christianity and the Survival of Creation', in *Sex, Economy, Freedom & Community*, New York, 1993, P. Sherrard, *The Eclipse of Man and Nature*, Colombo, 1987 and Paul Collins, *God's Earth: Religion as if matter really mattered*, Melbourne, 1995

2 See Paul Collins, *op. cit.*, pp. 96-110.

3 See J. Baird Callicott, 'The Metaphysical Implications of Ecology', in *Nature in Asian Traditions of Thought*, ed. J. Baird Callicott and Roger T. Ames, Albany, 1989, pp. 51-64, pp. 52 ff.

4 See Sherrard *op. cit.*, pp. 51 ff. where Sherrard contrasts the Platonic view and discusses the theological and anthropological implications of Aristotle's position. On the difference between the Aristotelian view and the holistic conceptions of the Eliatics and neo-Platonists see Guignon, *Heidegger and the Problem of Knowledge*, Indianapolis, 1983, p. 46.

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may result in a view in which mechanical inertness and individuality are favoured at the expense of relationship and organic interdependence. The full impact of such thinking was not felt until the emergence of the mechanistic world view in the 17th century.<sup>1</sup>

Related to substantialist ontology is an epistemological orientation present in much Western metaphysics (exemplified in Aristotelian thinking) which sees truth in terms of correspondence between an object and human perception or judgement. Objects are thus wrenched from a more basic embeddedness, as is the subject who assumes the status of disinterested spectator. In this lies the seed of the idea that things can be objectively known and, if correctly 'interrogated', can be forced to reveal their secrets to the knowing subject and to yield to human control.

These intellectual currents have a complex history in Western thought and it would require a great deal of space to fully treat them. Furthermore, many other related factors and ideas could be fruitfully explored: for example, the Protestant 'disenchantment of the world',<sup>2</sup> the idea of progress,<sup>3</sup> the change in the idea of work,<sup>4</sup> androcentrism and patriarchal attitudes.<sup>5</sup>

A critical confluence of factors occurred in the 16th century and underwent further development in the 17th century finding expression in influential philosophers such as René Descartes and Francis Bacon and in the world picture of Newton. The various philosophies of the Scientific Age may have differed in detail but behind them all lay a cleavage between spirit and matter, soul and body, humanity and nature. These philosophies were to find application in industrial technology, in what Descartes described as an 'infinity of devices'.<sup>6</sup>

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- 1 By which time certain compensating elements in Aristotelianism, such as, the idea of 'hidden powers' in things, had been jettisoned. See Guignon, *op. cit.*, p. 162.
  - 2 See P. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*, New York, 1969, ch. 5.
  - 3 For a discussion contrasting traditional and modern conceptions of time and progress see Lord Northbourne, 'Looking Back on Progress', in *The Unanimous Tradition*, ed. Ranjit Fernando, Colombo, 1991, pp. 159-68.
  - 4 See Roger Sworder, *Mining, Metallurgy and the Meaning of Life*, Quakers Hill, 1995, ch. 6.
  - 5 See Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution*, New York, 1980.
  - 6 *Discourse on Method*, vi. 62, cit. in Laurence Lampert, *Nietzsche and Modern Times: A Study of Bacon, Descartes and Nietzsche*, New Haven, 1993, p. 147.

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A radical dualism is at the very heart of Descartes' philosophy. In his search for philosophical certainty, for the grounds for the justification of knowledge, Descartes argued that there are two kinds of real things or substances, i.e., things which can exist independently without any other thing. The soul or mind according to Descartes is a thinking thing (*res cogitans*) whose essential nature is rationality while matter is an unthinking thing that can be measured (*res extensa*) and known objectively. There is thus a thoroughgoing dualism between mind and matter, between soul and body. The natural world, understood to be separate from mind, soul or consciousness, is, in accordance with Descartes' mathematical method, reduced to one homogenous type, subject to measurement or quantification. This new way of understanding does not involve the discovery of new facts but rather involves a new vision, a new blueprint. It involves what Guignon calls a 'mathematical projection' whereby 'entities come to be seen as interchangeable bits with no inner principles or internal relations to other components of nature'.<sup>1</sup> What counts as real has changed: all that cannot be quantified and mathematically represented is excluded. An important shift has taken place in how nature is understood. Everything spiritual, all sacred powers, all consciousness, all purpose, all meaning is excluded.<sup>2</sup> The material world is soulless, mechanical and devoid of any spiritual properties. The central metaphor is that of a machine, subject to mechanical forces and governed by mathematical laws.

Since the natural world is devoid of consciousness or meaning, if it is to have any value it can only be a utilitarian one: the value of the natural world must lie in its usefulness in enhancing man's power. The machine with all its separate parts can be known, controlled and mastered. With the new knowledge, Descartes (echoing Bacon) claims, 'we can employ these entities for all the purposes for which they are suited, and so make ourselves masters and possessors of nature'.<sup>3</sup> The world known objectively (quantifiably) becomes raw material, a resource to be exploited through technology. Evidently, Bacon and Descartes did not envisage that, finally, the human person too might become a resource; that technology might claim humanity.

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1 Guignon *op. cit.*, p. 163.

2 This was foreshadowed by the Protestant 'disenchantment of the world'. See Berger, *op. cit.*, ch. 5.

3 *Discourse on Method*, vi. 62. For a discussion of Descartes as a Baconian, see L. Lampert, *op. cit.*, ch. 6.

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The conceptual framework of Descartes was bequeathed to Newton and passed on with some modifications by Newton to the scientific world at large. Newton searched not for philosophical certitude as did Descartes but for a comprehensive explanation of the natural world. Newton proposed in place of Descartes' 'universal mathematics', a 'universal mechanics' that would explain the world system and which would 'derive the rest of the phenomena of Nature, by the same kind of reasoning from mechanical principles'.<sup>1</sup>

The dualistic epistemology which promised knowledge and control of the natural world to the knowing subject found confirmation in the proliferation and obvious power of technology. The mechanical picture of nature and the associated epistemological view, although increasingly questioned, has remained dominant until the present time.

Let us now turn to Buddhism. The Buddha was first and foremost concerned with the problem of *duḥkha* (suffering/unsatisfactoriness) and its end.<sup>2</sup> His basic teachings indicate the futility and impossibility of finding ultimate satisfaction in what is impermanent and without enduring essence. This is not to say that the world is evil, or that despair is a rational response to the situation, or that the world is valueless, as some have suggested. The world is not taken as a thing which could be rejected through aversion nor, in the final analysis, is it a thing to be grasped through desire. The Buddha's teaching does not aim to condemn the world but rather to enable us to recognise that it is not and never can be a domain that can satisfy the craving of the self or ego; a self mistakenly taken to be independent, autonomous, and enduring. The very attempt to turn the world to our own ends can only result in pain and further entanglement. Descartes' idea that we could become 'masters and possessors of nature', according to this understanding, contains a double error: it is mistaken both about the self and about the world.

The attitude of the Buddha as portrayed in the early texts seems to have been to eschew metaphysical speculation. Early Buddhism appears to adopt a purely pragmatic approach to the

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<sup>1</sup> *Principia*, preface to the first edition, cit. in M. Buckley, *At the Origins of Modern Atheism*, New Haven, 1987, p. 100. Newton was, nonetheless, aware of the shortcomings of a purely mechanical model and struggled to locate his world view within a larger spiritual universe.

<sup>2</sup> 'Two things I teach: suffering and the cessation of suffering'. *Majjhima Nikāya* I. 40. The Four Noble Truths are an elaboration of these two.

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realisation of its soteriological objective, the end of suffering. Yet, the Noble Eightfold Path begins with 'complete understanding'. It implies, at the very least, a critique of certain approaches to metaphysics. The philosophical force of 'complete understanding' is to effect a deconstruction of essentialist and substantialist errors. The central error is belief in a self or enduring ego (*ātmadrṣṭi satkāyadrṣṭi*), the precondition for the operation of greed and hatred. If the soteriological objective of nirvāṇa is to be realised this error must be rooted out.<sup>1</sup>

But the error of an enduring and separate self is by no means the end of the matter: it is simply the case of substantialist and essentialist thinking with the most pernicious consequences. When the philosophical implications are made more explicit, as they are in the teaching of the Abhidharma (Higher Doctrine) and in the philosophical schools, the anti-essentialism and anti-substantialism is seen to be far more wide reaching: *all* wholes or things are seen to be lacking any essence, substantial existence or individual being (*svabhāva*).<sup>2</sup> All arise in mutual dependence and, on analysis, will be found to 'disappear' into the causes and conditions of their arising and persistence.<sup>3</sup> The notion of a thing, of an individual being (*bhāva*), is an abstraction or thought construction (*kalpanā*) in which a 'thing' is made to appear different to and more than the sum total of its causes and conditions.

Early Buddhist philosophers attempted to express this insight within a framework that later Buddhist philosophy, especially that of the Mahāyāna, found to be inadequate. The early Buddhist philosophers rejected (as do all Buddhists) the distinction between substances and qualities in the sense of qualities *belonging* to a substance or qualities inhering in a substance, and of a substance enduring over time. Some early Buddhists nonetheless argued - and here, according to the later philosophers, they went astray - that all conventional 'things', all conditioned existence, both subjective and objective, could be analysed in terms of an irreducible number of momentary qualities or *dharma*s, which

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1 This does not involve 'elimination of the self': there is no self to eliminate!

2 The term *puḍgala* usually translated as 'person' is applied philosophically to all 'wholes' such as tables, chairs, mountains etc. The individual existence of all *puḍgala* is only conventionally valid, i.e., only valid from the point of view of everyday speech.

3 The more a thing is investigated the more it disappears: *yathā yathārthaś cintyante viśiryante tathā tathā*. Dharmakīrti, *Pramāṇavārttika* II, 209.

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might be regarded as the ultimate constituents of all 'wholes'. They were to be severely criticised for falling prey to a variety of essentialism contrary to the teaching of dependent arising (*pratītyasamutpāda*) which was accepted by all the schools. According to this doctrine all conditioned *dharma*s arise and perish in dependence on others. The critics of the views that *dharma*s are ultimate constituents argued as follows: that which arises in dependence on others, cannot have an essence or being of its own (i.e., independent of others) and thus cannot be an irreducible 'building block'. Those philosophers who maintained the ultimacy of *dharma*s were considered guilty of a subtle kind of clinging to 'things' under the guise of *dharma*s.

The most thoroughgoing critics were the Mādhyamika (Middle Way) philosophers headed by Nāgārjuna who argued that the true middle way must reject the notion of separateness and ultimateness of any 'thing' whatsoever, *dharma*s included. In reaffirming what they understood to be the true teaching of the Buddha and the essential meaning of dependent arising the Mādhyamika philosophers asserted that all things are empty (*śūnya*) in the sense that all things, including *dharma*s, are without self (*anātman*, *nairātmya*) and without independent existence (*niḥsvabhāva*). Not only are all wholes empty but so are all constituents.<sup>1</sup> The attempt to build an ontology - an account of what there is - in terms of existent things (*bhāva*) is futile.

One of the fallacies, to which the early philosophers had succumbed, the Mādhyamikas argued, was to set in opposition, on one side, the world of conditioned *dharma*s (*saṃsāra*), and on the other, the absolute (*nirvāṇa*).<sup>2</sup> Only if one accepts a substance-based ontology where different kinds of things can be set against each other is this possible. Once the notion of thingness breaks down and emptiness or no-thingness (*śūnyatā*) is realised this distinction can no longer be maintained. The realm of conditioned *dharma*s, the realm of birth and death, the realm of *saṃsāra*, has no separate existence to, cannot be set apart from, the world of *nirvāṇa*. Likewise the world of *nirvāṇa* does not stand apart from *saṃsāra*: the realm of *nirvāṇa* is not a self-existent reality beyond the everyday world. Immediate reality is not to be negated for a hypostatized ultimate. Ontologically there is no difference between them. The difference is one of existential realisation. As Nāgārjuna

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1 Two-fold non-self of wholes and constituents: *pudgalanairātmya*, *dharmanairātmya*.

2 Understood as an unconditioned (*asaṃskṛta*) *dharma*.

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clearly states: 'The realm of nirvāṇa is the realm of saṃsāra. Between the two there is not the slightest difference whatsoever'.<sup>1</sup>

Let us now turn to the Yogācāra school before looking at the ecological implications. The Yogācāra (Yoga Practice) school of Buddhism emerged beside the Mādhyamika (Middle Way) school as one of the main schools of Mahāyāna Buddhism in India during the Gupta period. Its early development is obscure. The great scholar-sages Asanga and Vasubandhu, who probably wrote during the fourth and fifth centuries, are the leading systematisers and exponents of Yogācāra thinking, marking its mature phase of development in India. Yogācāra agrees with other schools of Buddhism in its acceptance of the noble truths concerned with arising of *duḥkha* (suffering/unsatisfactoriness) and its cessation. It shares with the Mādhyamika school the teaching on emptiness (*śūnyatā*), the lack of independent existence of all phenomena and the consequent impossibility of building an ontology on the basis of existent 'things' (*bhāva*). Like other schools, Yogācāra understands the notion of a separate individual ego or self as the primary delusion which keeps beings bound in the cycle of suffering.

The Yogācāra represents a new articulation of the Buddha's teaching within the framework of the Mahāyāna and a new perspective on the import of those teachings. Whereas the Mādhyamika approach is analytical and critical, the Yogācāra perspective is existential and experiential and seems to have emerged out of reflection on meditative experience. The name of the school ('Yoga Practice') reflects this orientation. Yogācāra takes consciousness and the appearance of things to consciousness as its starting point.<sup>2</sup> The fundamental error, according to Yogācāra thinking, is the split that occurs in our experience which sees the elaboration of a world of graspable or apprehensible objects (*grāhya*) standing against the apprehending or grasping subject (*grāhaka*). The Sanskrit terms for the two aspects of false duality mean quite literally 'grasper' (*grāhaka*) and 'graspable' (*grāhya*).<sup>3</sup> False consciousness takes the two as independent realities. The sage overcomes this false duality, discerns that they are not two (*advaya*), and realises the nature of reality.

The Yogācārins rejected the 'common-sense' belief in an external world apart from our subjective world of experience realising that 'outside' and 'inside' relate to the symbolic activity of the mind, not

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1 *Madhyamakakārikā* XXV, 20.

2 Yogācāra is also known as Vijnānavāda, 'doctrine of consciousness'.

3 From the Sanskrit root *grah*, 'to seize, to grasp or take hold of'.

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to independently existing realities.<sup>1</sup> This does not mean as is often supposed that they contended that everything is 'mental'. The Yogācāra School is also known as Cittamātra (mind/experience only) and is sometimes interpreted as a kind of subjective idealism which refutes the existence of an external world. This understanding would suggest that Yogācārins maintain that mind alone is real while everything else is unreal; as if mind were understood as a kind of independent substance or thing in contradistinction to all others. If this interpretation were correct the Yogācārins would indeed be proposing a radically new substantialist and essentialist interpretation of reality and Buddhist doctrine.<sup>2</sup>

But this interpretation is inappropriate for understanding Indian Buddhist thinking. Mind does not exist as an independent substance. The early texts put it like this: 'Were a man to say: I shall show the coming, the going, the passing away, the rising... of consciousness apart from matter, sensation, perception and mental formations, he would be speaking of something that does not exist'.<sup>3</sup> Thus we can say that mind, experiencing (*citta*, *viññāna*) means embodied experiencing.<sup>4</sup> The Yogācārins do not repudiate this.<sup>5</sup> However the emphasis has shifted. Here what is emphasised is that knowable things, i.e., all things (*grāhya*), cannot be

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1 This conceptual elaboration is known as *prapañca* and relates to words (*nāma*) and what they signify (*artha*).

2 Walpola Rahula argues: 'It is unthinkable that great Buddhist masters like Asanga and Vasubandhu should have developed a philosophy to establish that *citta* (mind) or *viññāna* (consciousness) is the reality - quite contrary to the fundamental teachings of Buddhism'. 'Vijñaptimātratā Philosophy in the Yogācāra System- some wrong notions', in *Zen and the Taming of the Bull: Towards the definition of Buddhist Thought*, London, 1978, pp. 79-86, p. 84.

3 *Samyutta Nikāya* III, p. 58 (Pali Text Society Edition). Cit. in W. Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught*, New York, 1974, p. 25.

4 On this point see Kennard Lipman, 'Introduction' to Mañjuśrīmitra, *Primordial Experience*, Boston, 1987, pp. 15 ff.

5 As Rahula, *op. cit.* 1978, p. 84 has noted, Asanga includes *citta* among the conditioned *dharma*s. The Yogācārin arguments for the existence of a store-consciousness (*ālayaviññāna*) might have pushed them towards accepting consciousness without object but they resisted any acceptance of this position. Paul Griffiths argues that they implicitly accepted such a position in his study of the mind-body relation and Buddhist meditation, *On Being Mindless: Buddhist Meditation and the Mind-Body Problem*, La Salle, Illinois, 1986, pp. 91-6. However, Sthiramati in his commentary on verses 2-3 of Vasubandhu's *Triṃśika*, a key Yogācāra text, specifically rejects non-intentional consciousness as untenable. Griffiths seems to have overlooked this passage.

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explicated apart from their being known. Subject and object, or internality and externality, do not exist in themselves but only in a relation that has no meaning outside its perception. In the elaboration of duality 'things' and our perception of them are always given together as one fact. This appearance or presence (*ābhāsa*) is indubitable according to the Yogācāra but the attribution of independently existing objects (*grāhya*) apprehended by an independently existing subject (*grāhaka*) is delusion. The emphasis, rather than being analytic and objective, is existential or experiential. Just as in the earlier perspective mind cannot be said to exist apart from those conditions in which it arises, so in the latter perspective the objects of experience (including thoughts and emotions) cannot be said to exist apart from their being experienced, i.e., apart from mind or consciousness. Mind is an ineradicable aspect of any 'world'. The world must be understood existentially. The idea of 'pure matter' is an abstraction, albeit a powerful one. So too is the idea of a 'pure subject'. The root delusion involves a distortion which takes that which is apprehensible (*grāhya*) and that which apprehends (*grāhaka*) as separate - independently existing - realities. This - the starting point of the whole Cartesian enterprise - is, according to the Yogācāra, the fundamental delusion of the 'ordinary person'.<sup>1</sup> It is termed 'imagination of the unreal' (*abhūtaparikalpa*) since both subject and object are without ontological status.

A significant topic of Yogācāra analysis concerns the evolution or emergence (*pravṛtti*) of dualistic consciousness. Although most of

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<sup>1</sup> The elaboration (*prapañca*) of a falsely imagined world that proceeds from this is described in Yogācāra texts as being characterised by 'the appearance of an object in conformity with its name and the appearance of a name in conformity with its object'. *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra* XI, 39. Significantly, according to Guignon, Heidegger, in his critique of the Cartesian model, 'suggests that the subject/object picture of our ordinary epistemic predicament draws its plausibility from what we might call the "name-and-object" model of the workings of language... When the name-and object model of language is disarmed, the aura of self-evidence that surrounds the subject/object model also tends to dissolve'. Guignon, *op. cit.*, p. 32. On Heidegger's relation to Eastern thinking see Graham Parkes, ed., *Heidegger and Asian Thought*, Honolulu, 1987. More specifically, on connections between ecological thinking, Heidegger and Buddhism see Michael E. Zimmerman, 'Heidegger, Buddhism, and deep ecology', in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, Cambridge, 1993, pp. 240-69. On Heidegger's inadequately acknowledged debt to Buddhist and Daoist thought see Reinhard May, *Heidegger's hidden sources: East Asian influences on his work*, trans. with a complementary essay by G. Parkes, London, 1996.

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these discussions can be set to one side, it is important for our purposes to note that the emerging of the dualism of self and world is not understood as a neutral or disinterested process. It is accompanied by ignorance (*avidyā*) and emotional defilements (*kleśa*) and proceeds from a state of mind termed 'defiled' (*kliṣṭa*). This already deluded mind is conditioned by the forces of past actions (*saṃskāra*) and under the influence of greed and aversion cannot let reality be but grasps or appropriates 'things' in order to turn them to the ends of the ego. Things are wrenched out of the nexus of conditions which make them what they are in order to take hold of or possess them. The self determines or defines itself as one pole in this process. The self or ego and things 'emerge' together. This appropriation (*upādāna*) is a link in a process that necessarily involves a further becoming, a further entanglement.<sup>1</sup> It is a futile process because 'things' can never really be grasped and the one who would grasp them is ultimately as insubstantial as the things he/she would grasp. The notion that things could be grasped or apprehended by a neutral observer is nonsensical according to the Yogācāra analysis. This subject-object mode of knowledge is ultimately a false and distorted one; furthermore, its apparent possibility discloses human interest, not a disinterested and independent subject.

It requires but a few words to make the connection between our early comments on the intellectual roots of the environmental crisis and the light Buddhist analysis might throw on them and the part it might play in providing a vision to redress the present situation.

The preceding analysis suggests that the roots of the environmental crisis lie in a dualism between self and world that finds expression in several spheres. This dualism is elaborated through ontologies based on the notion of separate substances and things (including selves) and epistemologies that take knowledge to involve the correct apprehension of things by a knowing subject. This dualism finds its extreme expression in the idea of a objectively knowable, quantifiable, inert and unconscious world whose value lies in its utility to a knowing subject. All schools of Buddhism reject this dualism. The Yogācārins are the most explicit: the apparent dualism of an independently existing subject able to apprehend an independently existing world of objects is, according to them, the fundamental delusion of human beings. The

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<sup>1</sup> Desire/thirst (*tṛṣṇā*), appropriation (*upādāna*) and becoming (*bhāva*) arise interdependently and form three of the twelve links in the wheel of saṃsāra (*saṃsāracakra*).

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consequences of acceptance of such dualism on the individual level are all too obvious in a life of pervasive unsatisfactoriness. The sage can completely overcome such dualism; others can work to counter its spell. The effects of it can be ameliorated on the social level by the presence of traditions, philosophies and practices, social mores and attitudes whose ultimate roots lie in a deeper vision.

Since the Yogācārin vision is based on an organic non-duality between self and world it is understood that any attempt to master the 'world' is misconceived and futile. The subject does not stand outside and opposed to the world and hence the world cannot ultimately be an object to master. The self is embedded and implicated in the world; or rather, self and world both emerge from a deeper contextuality and cannot be grasped as independent entities.

The natural environment, in Yogācāra perspective, is not inert and unconscious. Humans and animals are sentient; even the earth itself is called on to bear witness to Śākyamuni's Awakening. Just as consciousness is not found independently of other factors of existence so materiality or pure matter is never found. It is an abstraction. As matter does not exist in-itself, the world cannot be adequately comprehended as a mechanism reducible to homogeneous units. If pure matter existed, it could be constituted of purely external relations amenable to an exhaustive quantitative analysis, but, according to the Yogācārin vision, the relations which constitute reality cannot be reduced to mechanical ones and cannot be explicated in a purely quantitative and external fashion.

Since the natural world was never conceived as an inert resource lying at man's disposal, Buddhism did not conceive of it in purely utilitarian terms. Nor does it have value in-itself but in Mahāyāna perspective only in the context of the relations which constitute reality as a totality (*dharmadhātu*).

The Yogācārin and Mādhyamikas also reject a dualism between absolute and relative, and any philosophy that would see value residing in or deriving exclusively from one rather than the other, or that would negate one in favour of the other. Dualism is not to be overcome by the reduction of one to the other. In the non-dualism of absolute and relative lies the key to authentic and necessary engagement (characterised by compassion) that does not 'use' things and beings to its own ends but realises universal interdependence (through wisdom).

*This Immense Panorama: Studies in Honour of Eric J. Sharpe*

The Yogācārins and Mādhyamikas reject this dualism between absolute and relative not in favour of simple materialism and the empiricism that accompanies it, nor in favour of a reified absolute Subject or God, nor in favour of a monism that would swallow all differences. Reality is thoroughly relational. But, as the Mādhyamikas in particular warn, we should not attribute self-existence to this relational process. Neither 'nature' and the relations which constitute it, nor Mind, nor God, nor the absolute, nor nirvāṇa are self-existent. We can find rest neither in 'the many' nor in 'the One'. The peace, the nirvāṇa, that we may realise is not located anywhere (*apraṭiṣṭhita*). The Yogācārins 'base' themselves (if such an expression is permissible) in experience *prior* to its split in ordinary deluded consciousness while the Mādhyamikas point to the indefinable emptiness (*śūnyatā*) in which we find no metaphysical or epistemological 'ground'.

The Yogācārins, as far as we know, never contemplated the possible consequences of the elevation of philosophies based on the Cartesian form of extreme dualism to the position of the dominant philosophy of an entire age or civilisation. Clearly the Buddhist perspectives offer a potential critique of ontologies and epistemologies based on this dualism and, more positively, a powerful alternative vision.