



## Studies

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### **On Some Doctrinal Disputations in Early Buddhist Interpretations of *pratītyasamutpāda* (Dependent Co-arising)**

#### **Abstract**

*Pratītyasamutpāda* (Dependent Co-arising) is a foundational Buddhist teaching canonically announced by Buddha as that which represents his “middle position” between the two (ontological) extremes of existence and nonexistence. Nevertheless, early Buddhist philosophers barely reached a consensus about its precise doctrinal or even grammatical meaning. In this article, I provide a basic outline of these disputations based on primary sources trying to show that they, in fact, reflect their various understandings of the problem of causation and the nature of phenomena.

#### **Key words**

causation, Madhyamaka, phenomena (*dharmas*), *pratītyasamutpāda*, Vaibhāṣika, Vasubandhu

Despite the fact that *pratītyasamutpāda* (henceforth referred to as PS) – literally “co-arising having been met”<sup>1</sup> or more commonly “dependent co-arising” – is central or axial to Buddha’s teaching without which all aspects of his teaching (*Dharma*) would “collapse” or at least would not be well-grounded

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Cf. a grammatical analysis of the term by Candrakīrti: “The verbal root *l* means ‘motion’ [to go]; [prefix, preverb] *prati* means ‘attainment’. Hence the transformation of the meaning of the verbal root [which occurs] by the force of an addendum [i.e. preverb] – ‘The meaning of a verbal root is changed by force into another [meaning] with [the help of an] addendum [i.e. preverb] just as the sweetness of the water of the Gaṅges [is changed] with [the help of] the ocean [salty water; i.e. when the river reaches the ocean].’ Thus the word *pratītya* ending in suffix *lyap* [i.e. gerund-termination] performs [the meaning of] ‘attainment’ or ‘with regard to’ [‘dependence on’]. The verbal root *PAD*, preceded by [the pre-

verb] *samut* [means] ‘appearance’ and so the word *samutpāda* performs [the meaning of] ‘appearance’. Hence [the full] meaning of the [term] *pratītyasamutpāda* is ‘arising of beings [things] in dependence upon causes and conditions.’ *etirgatyarthaḥ, pratiḥ prāptiyarthaḥ | upasargavaśena dhātvarthavipariṇāmāt – upasargeṇa dhātvartho balādanyatra nīyate | gaṅgāsālimādhuryaṁ sāgareṇa yathāmbhasā || pratītyasābdo’tra lyabantaḥ prāptāvapekṣāyām vartate | samutpūrvah padīḥ prādurbhāvārtha itī samutpādaśabdaḥ prādurbhāvevartate|tataścahetupratyayāpekṣo bhāvānāmūtpādaḥ pratītyasamutpādārthaḥ, PP, 4. 5–10.*

and connected, almost no consensus about its precise linguistic<sup>2</sup> and doctrinal meaning has been reached. This lack of consensus is perhaps even more pronounced within the Buddhist tradition itself than its Western interpretations, the latter of which is additionally and almost inevitably laden with notions and ideas of Western philosophy (e.g., causality) which are superimposed on an ancient and distant worldview.

Is PS Buddha's "provisional" description of the nature of reality (restricted to the sphere of sentient beings' psycho-physical "constituents", *pañcaskandhas*) given in a nutshell, a linguistic or, better yet, communication "strategy" proved to be beneficial and "stimulative" for sentient beings or at least for some of them in their effort to overcome existential turmoil? There can be no doubt that Buddha framed his Teaching, particularly on PS, intentionally having in mind its "utility" and suitability for religious purposes (notably, the eradication of suffering) as he saw and preached them.<sup>3</sup> Maybe his vision of reality "as it is" (*yathābhūta*) was so far beyond ordinary experience – and hence beyond (direct) expressibility (because language follows ordinary, i.e., shared experience) – that, once he decided to somehow communicate it to the world, he was urged to set up a "teaching method" whose words and utterances could "carry over" (as a raft), but which in themselves had nothing in common with that vision. So, according to this presumption, PS, the doctrine of *pañcaskandha*, the doctrine of *anātman* ("no-self"), etc., are just beneficial instructional strategies and not a faithful signature of reality as it is (whatever it "is") simply because language as any other social human activity cannot and may not transgress the boundaries of "this world" if it wants to be meaningful and appealing. Buddha became famous and appealing because he proved himself as a skilful communicator who knew how to somehow communicate his private and lofty experience in a common, "public" language, whereby it could start to affect others' minds in the pursuit of "the path of deliverance" (*vimuktimarga*).<sup>4</sup> Otherwise, the gulf between "the world of men" (*manuṣyaloka*) and *nirvāṇa* would remain unbridgeable. This could, of course, be the *Mahāyāna* and particularly the *Madhyamaka* understanding of *Buddhadharma* (Buddha's doctrine) as necessarily a "convention" (*vyavahāra*) in the light of its radical differentiation between the "two truths".<sup>5</sup> But was it entirely conventional for Buddha himself?

There are some statements in the Canon which seem to suggest that not all of his teachings are merely a convention, a "raft", for the purpose of carrying one over to the other shore. It seems that some of his teachings expose certain "objective" truths which Buddha discovered and not "invented" (such as, presumably, certain contemplative procedures, types of discourse, etc.), and these are mostly, if not solely, connected with the notion of PS. If so, then at least PS is not a "provisional designation" of reality, a good or appealing frame for changing the stream of uncultivated being, but a statement of an innermost truth about reality, ruthless world affairs and its discourses. PS, as a formulation coupled with a few of its further qualifications given by Buddha, may be conventional in the sense that it serves as an explanation (hence, conventional) of certain doctrinal points (i.e., the explanation of the process of *karma* in the context of *anātman* and many others), but at the same time, it could refer to or "make known" something which is "independent" of *Buddhadharma*. PS could be the whole and "prescriptive" context or axis of the latter in a linguistic, doctrinal and practical sense;<sup>6</sup> in a word, "the boundary point" of experience and hence of *Buddhadharma*.<sup>7</sup>

Buddha's most striking formulation which indicates the "objectivity" of PS is to be found in the *Paccayasutta* (S. 2.1.2.10):

“What is *paṭiccasamuppāda*? Conditioned by birth, Bhikkhus, decay and death [occurs]. Whether *Tathāgatas* arise or not, this property [or: base, *dhātu*] stands, namely [or: as] the steadfastness of phenomena (*dhammaṭṭhitatā*), the orderliness of phenomena (*dhammaniyāmatā*) or that-conditionality (*idappaccayatā*). The *Tathāgata* becomes fully awake to this and realises it; being awake to and having realised it, he explains it, teaches it, points it out, establishes, makes it clear, analyses, exposes it and says: ‘behold – conditioned by birth, Bhikkhus, decay and death [occurs]’. ... These [statements/chains of conditioning, namely ‘conditioned by ignorance, karmic formations...’] which are [qualified as] suchness, not-unsuchness, not-otherness and conditionality – this, Bhikkhus, is called *paṭiccasamuppāda*.”<sup>8</sup>

2

The main disputation between Buddhist philosophers concerned the word formation of “*prāṭītya*”. Some of them (e.g., Candrakīrti, the Vaibhāṣika school, Buddhaghosa) held that it is a gerund (“having been met/attained”), while others (mostly the Sautrāntika school, but also some Mādhyamikas) held that it is a secondary derivative noun in a sense of “those which are transient”. This alternative grammatical analysis was reported by Vasubandhu: “Others, however, interpret [the meaning of PS] differently in order to remove this criticism [apparently by Grammarians, see the context]. [According to them,] *prāṭī* means ‘distributiveness’ [generalisation, *vīpsā*]; the verbal root *I* [means ‘to go’]; *ītya* is a participle [secondary derivative noun], i.e., ‘those which are transient’. *Pad*, preceded by *ut*, means ‘appearance’. [Therefore, according to them], *prāṭītyasamuttapāda* [means] the co-arising [‘arising in combination’] of transient [things] under this-and-that totality of causes.” *anye punarasya codyasya parihārthamanyathā parikalpayanti – prāṭīrvīpsārthaḥ, itau sādharma ityāḥ = anavasthāyinaḥ, utpūrvaḥ padīḥ prādurbhāvārthaḥ, tāṃ tāṃ kāraṇasāmāgrīm prāṭī ityanāṃ samavāyeyotpādāḥ prāṭītyasamuttapāda iti, Bhāṣya* to AK 3. 28ab.

3

Inquiring – almost rhetorically – why Buddha taught PS the way he did, Buddhaghosa explains that it was done in that way “because of the complete auspiciousness (beneficence) of PS [thought in that way] and because he himself [Buddha] has obtained grace (elegance) in instructing PS [that way]. For PS is entirely auspicious (beneficial).” *Paṭiccasamuppādassa samantabhaddakattā sayāṃ ca desanāvīlāsappattatā. Samantabhaddako hi paṭiccasamuppādo* (Vsm. XVII, 33).

4

Some interpreters of Buddha’s treatment of language saw in him a precursor of linguistic nominalism, according to which there is no inherent or “inborn” relationship between words and things “out there” with which the former are inevitable associated. Language does not reveal any permanent or substantial “primary meanings”, but is being “freely” constituted in public usage through

generations just as any other human activity. Meanings of words are, so to speak, arbitrary, dependent on the “speaker’s intention” (*vivakṣā*), and thereby only conventional. This line of thought was, of course, developed in later Indian Grammarians’ (and in some Buddhists’) speculations and some of Buddha’s well-known statements regarding the way he uses language seem to go along with this theory; notably in *Dīghanakassutta* (M. I. 500) where he says that “the one whose mind is liberated (*vimuttacitta*) expresses himself in the way it was said in the world without being attached [to these expressions]” (*yañ ca loke vuttam tena voharati aparāmasan ti*). Likewise, at the end of *Paṭṭhapādasutta* (D. 9) Buddha says: “These [such as, *atta-paṭilābha*, etc.] are the world’s designations, the world’s expressions, the world’s ways of speaking, the world’s descriptions, with which the *Tathāgata* [i.e., Buddha] expresses himself, but without being attached [to these expressions]” (*Imā kho, citta, lokasamaññā lokaniruttiyo lokavohārā lokapaññattiyo, yāhi tathāgato voharati aparāmasan ti*). However, taking the context of these statements into account, they are hardly proof that Buddha advanced full-fledged linguistic nominalism. The context (especially that of *Paṭṭhapādasutta*) suggests that he simply accepted the way language is used by “worldly men” (*putthujanas*) just for the sake of conversation (without being attached to it) trying to “deliver” his message (*Dhamma*) through it. This still does not necessarily mean that *Dharma* expressed in his “technical terminology” (PS, *pañcaskandha*, etc.) is also “conventional” as was firmly held in Mahāyāna Buddhism (cf., for example, Vasubandhu’s *Bhāṣya* to *Madhyānta-vibhanga* III. 22b, where all of Buddha’s so-called utterances or concepts of “direct meaning” (*nīṭārtha*) are understood merely as “skilful means” (*upāya kauśalya*) just as any other). Nevertheless, it is most certainly conventional in one particular way – namely, the real and full meanings of Buddha’s words and utterances are revealed only to the enlightened ones. The meanings of Buddha’s words are, so to speak, revealed gradually (and not at once) as one progresses on the Path. But, whatever language is or whatever it refers to, all of its constituents belong to the “sphere of the sensuous/worldly mind” (*kammāvacaracitta*) and function only



This passage is not only “burdened” with highly abstract nouns (and notions) connected with PS difficult to find in Buddha’s discourses on other doctrinal subject-matters, but also indicates that Buddha first penetrated this “profound” (*gambhīra*; cf. *Nidānasutta*, S. 1.6.10) *dhamma* (hence indicated as “objective”) and only then exposed it in a suitable linguistic way. Thus, he first “becomes fully awake to it” (*abhisambujjhati*), then thoroughly “realises it” (*abhisameti*) and only then he formulates it, explains it, etc., in the manner he does (i.e., *avijjāpaccayā saṅkhārā*, etc.).

As for the abstract “qualifications” of PS enumerated in the above *Sutta*, Pāli Commentaries give explanations which are entirely dependent on the later abhidhammic type or method of analysis. *Dhātu*, *dhammaṭṭhitatā*, *dhammaniyāmatā* and *idappaccayatā* all refer to the inherent nature of conditions (*paccaya-sabhāva*) which, once present, cannot but bring into existence another (definite) *dhamma(s)*, i.e., *jāti* (birth), once present, cannot but “instigate” *jarā-marāṇa* (ageing and death) to occur, etc.<sup>9</sup> So, at least according to the Theravāda Buddhist school (Buddhaghosa), these qualifications do not refer to something which is above *dhamma*-processes (the distinction between the Law/Principle and its “applications” or phenomenal occurrences), but point to the very nature (*dhammatā*) of these processes themselves to which Buddha “became fully awake”. That is to say, the nature of *dhamma*-processes is these processes themselves as they occur and this “fact” is termed by Buddha as “*paṭiccasamuppāda*”, that is, *dhammaṭṭhitatā*, etc. *Sabhāva* (one’s own nature) in this connection, as stressed by Pāli Subcommentaries, denotes a “restriction” in a sense that *dhammic* processes do not require some other agent in the background for their functioning.<sup>10</sup>

*Paccayasutta* reports that, besides PS, Buddha also teaches *paṭiccasamuppanna* (“that which is dependently co-arisen”):

“And what, Bhikkhus, are *dhammas* that are dependently co-arisen? Decay and death, Bhikkhus, is impermanent, compounded, dependently arisen, subject to destruction, subject to extinction, subject to fading away, subject to cessation [the same formulation for the rest of the *nidānas*].”<sup>11</sup>

What is, if any, the relationship or distinction between *paṭiccasamuppanna* and PS? According to Buddhaghosa,

“... *dhammas* that are conditions should be understood to be *paṭiccasamuppāda*. *Dhammas* that are produced through such and such conditions are dependently co-arisen *dhammas*.”<sup>12</sup>

It seems that these two notions refer to two different “points of reference” of *dhamma*-processes and so their nature is epistemological, and not ontological. However, can PS in this connection be reduced to a mere “condition”? For Buddhaghosa, there is no difficulty because he, as we have seen, interprets the abstract properties of PS in terms of *paccaya-sabhāva*.

*Vaibhāṣika*, on the other hand, does not hesitate to interpret the relationship between the two notions in terms of a full-fledged causal theory, although fully aware that both – cause and effect – refer to the same *dharma*-plane:<sup>13</sup>

“The limb that is the cause is *pratītyasamutpāda*, [so] defined because [something] co-arises from it. The limb that is the effect is *pratītyasamutpanna*. Thus, all the limbs are established in both ways, as cause and effect. And so there is no settlement of [conclusive] truth because of an [ever] altering connection [between cause and effect]. What is *pratītyasamutpāda* with reference to [something] is not *pratītyasamutpanna* with reference to that same [thing], like cause and effect or father and son.” Yaśomitra: “A cause is established with reference to effect; an effect is established with reference to cause.”<sup>14</sup>

Vasubandhu rejects this, as well as many other interpretations of PS by Vaibhāṣika for “not being in accordance with the Canon because the definition in the *Sūtra* is different”:

“What is *pratīyasamutpāda*? Namely, this being, that becomes, and so on ... the nature of phenomena (*dharmas*), the steadfastness of phenomena (*dharmas*) ... [ending with the qualification] the immutability’ – this is called *pratīyasamutpāda*. The arising of phenomena (*dharmas*) is the manner of [all] phenomena (*dharmas*). Hence, the very nature of phenomena is just this rule [pattern, norm] [namely] being ignorance, karmic components become, not otherwise. This *pratīyasamutpāda* is not merely a cause.”<sup>15</sup>

within its limits even when spoken by Buddha himself. Otherwise, the word ‘*nirvāṇa*’ itself would bring liberation to all only if uttered by Buddha(s), of course.

5

The terms *sammuti-sacca* (‘conventional truth’) and *paramattha-sacca* (‘absolute truth’) do not appear in the *Sutta* portion of the Canon. In its earliest phase, the term *sammuti* almost entirely refers to (commonly accepted) views or theories, and is nowhere contrasted with *paramattha*, which is, according to Jayatilleke (2004: 366), in the earliest phase used for ‘the highest goal’. Commonly accepted linguistic usage (*lokiya-vohāra*, based on “general opinion”, *sammuti*; cf. Sasaki, 1992: 79) is, for example, ‘being’ (*satta*) or ‘chariot’ (*ratha*), to take famous examples from S. I. 135, although no such things exist when closely analysed (*Yathā hi aṅgasambhārā hoti saddo ratho iti; evaṃ khandhesu santesu, hoti sattoti sammuti*). *Sammuti* is not necessarily deceptive or false only if used “skillfully”, i.e., if one does “not get attached” to such expressions and has in mind what they actually refer to (i.e., among commonly accepted things or phenomena). The qualification of *paramatthatas* or *paramatthena* (from the highest point or meaning) was added only in the later section of the Canon (*Abhidhammapīṭaka* and thereafter), announcing an analysis (and linguistic expressions) of reality in terms of compounded and uncompounded *dharmas*. How these two types of linguistic usages or discourses (cf. also the *neyyattha-nītattha* distinction in A. I. 60) were “reified” as two distinct types of truth (*sacca*) “without a third” (cf. AA I. 95) or even “realities” (*sat*) in *Sarvāstivāda-Vaibhāṣika* (cf. AK 6.4.) is not clear. Anyway, *Mahāyāna* and particularly *Madhyamaka* seem to reinforce the original meaning of *paramattha* (*paramārtha*) as ‘the highest goal’ which has nothing in common with any kind of discourse, truth or analysed reality, including *paramārthatas* in the *abhidharma* sense, which – accordingly and inevitably – altogether belong to *saṃvṛti* (concealing/deceptive reality), including, of course, *Madhyamaka*’s discourse itself. The latter only indirectly (and hopefully) points to or “makes known” (*jñāpayati*) the Ultimate (cf. VV 64 and Commentary) through a par-

ticular type of reasoning, which – although also conventional in nature in *Madhyamaka*’s view – proves to be efficient for penetrating the ultimate goal. Here *saṃvṛti* is obviously understood to be an inevitable epistemological basis for the latter (cf. MMK, 24. 10 and Candrakīrti’s Commentary: *tasmānnirvāṇā dhigamopāyatīvādavaśyameva yathāvastitā saṃvṛtirādāvevābhyupeyā*: “Therefore, *saṃvṛti* is necessarily first to be admitted as it stands because [it is] an expedient [*upāya*] for attaining *nirvāṇa*”).

6

What is amazing in Buddha’s treatment of PS is that it appears as a statement of truth and, at the same time, as a methodological explanation of his doctrinal “position” on many fundamental issues often in contradiction with other current teachings (cf. *Nidāna Saṃyutta* of S., especially *Kaccānagottasutta* and *Aññatitthiyasutta*). Likewise, and this was particularly stressed in Nāgārjuna’s writings, the fact that PS “is there” is a specific and great chance given to beings to fundamentally change their conditions, which would otherwise be impossible to do for they are either stuck with their inborn nature (the determinism of *svabhāva/niyati-vāda*) or exposed to the unpredictability of action (the indeterminism of *yadrccā/ahetu-vāda*). In short, PS “functions” in many ways – as a statement referring to universal truth penetrated by Buddha, as an explanatory basis or frame for situating his teachings, and as a practical argument for the possibility and efficiency of mental cultivation. Linguistically, PS reveals itself as a proper “syntactic” way of addressing or approaching (doctrinal) subject-matters: “Who, Venerable Sir, craves? – The question is not properly put, said the Bhagavant. I do not say that [someone] craves. If I had said [‘someone] craves’ then the question ‘who, Venerable Sir, craves?’ would be properly put. But I do not say so. Me, not speaking thus, who would ask – ‘Venerable Sir, conditioned by what craving [arises]’ – that [would be] a question properly put.” (*Ko nu kho, bhante, upādiyatīti? No kallo pañho ti bhagavā avoca – upādiyatīti ahaṃ na vadāmi. Upādiyatīti cāhaṃ vadeyyaṃ, tatrassa kallo pañho – ko nu kho, bhante, upādiyatīti? Evañcāhaṃ na vadāmi. Evaṃ maṃ avadantaṃ yo evaṃ puccheyya*



So it seems that for Vasubandhu, as well as for Buddhaghosa, in the last instance PS is not “one thing”, while (dependently co-arisen) phenomena another. To speak about PS is to speak about “dependently co-arisen phenomena” (*pratīyasamutpannadharmas*) and vice versa,<sup>16</sup> although Buddhaghosa, on the level of (epistemological) analysis, apparently comes closer to Vaibhāṣika when he defines PS in terms of *paccaya* (-*sabhāva*) and *dhammas* in terms of *paticcasamuppanna*.<sup>17</sup> But, in reality, there is no “ontological” difference between *paccaya* (conditions) and (dependently co-arisen) *dhammas*;<sup>18</sup> there is only a temporal difference – and this is not a category of the *paramattha* type.<sup>19</sup> The Vaibhāṣika school, on the other hand, burdens heavily this insight with a complicated causal theory embedding in it such concepts as *kāritra* (activity), *prāpti* (attainment), *phalapratiḡraha* (fruit/effect-seizing), *phaladāna* (fruit/effect-giving), etc., which Vasubandhu fiercely criticises in a lengthy commentary to AK 5. 26.

In the *Nidānasamyukta* (of the *Samyuktāgama*) of the northern Buddhist Canon, there is one *Sūtra* without a counterpart in the Pāli Canon, entitled (via reconstruction) *Paramārthasūnyatāsūtra* (“Discourse on Emptiness in its Ultimate Sense”),<sup>20</sup> which uses the term *dharmasaṃketa* as a designation of *idappaccayatā* or PS:

“What is the ‘discourse on emptiness in its ultimate sense’? Bhikṣus, when the eye is arising, there is no place from which it comes. When it is ceasing, there is no place to which it goes. Thus, the eye, not being, becomes and, being, it ceases [lit., ‘goes back’].<sup>21</sup> There is action, there is result, but except for the *dharmasaṃketa*, one does not maintain a doer who throws away these *skandhas* and takes up again other *skandhas*. . . . Here this *dharmasaṃketa* [means] – this being that becomes; because of the arising of this, that arises, namely conditioned by ignorance . . . . Again, not being this, that does not become; because of the suppression of this, that suppresses. . . .”<sup>22</sup>

The expression ‘*dharmasaṃketa*’ or the term ‘*saṃketa*’, at least to my knowledge, does not appear in the Pāli Canon, but only later in commentarial literature (*Aṭṭhakathās*), obviously in a sense of ‘convention’,<sup>23</sup> e.g., ‘conventional statement’ (*saṃketavacana*) as opposed to ‘ultimate statement’ (*paramatthavacana*) in the context of the characterisation of the two truths.<sup>24</sup> Likewise, in the vast body of the *Yogācāra* and *Madhyamaka* philosophical literature, *saṃketa* is always associated with the conventional, worldly, conceptual, provisional, symbolic, etc., thus referring to mankind’s joint effort to make (agreeable) sense of the world they live in.<sup>25</sup>

So the expression ‘*dharmasaṃketa*’ would mean ‘conventional *dharma*’ or the like. But, commenting on Vasubandhu’s citation of *Paramārthasūnyatāsūtra*, Yaśomitra explains that *saṃketa* means “the establishment of a connection between cause and effect”,<sup>26</sup> or alternatively, “except for the *dharmasaṃketa* (means) except for the characteristic of *pratīyasamutpāda*”.<sup>27</sup> Thus, according to this explanation, the meaning of the passage would be:

“There is action, there is result, but one does not maintain a doer who throws away these *skandhas*. . . .; there is only (a continuum) of conditionality (*hetuphalasambandha*).”

But, already in his Chinese translation of the AKB, Paramārtha understands the term *saṃketa* here as “metaphorical designation”, thus completely changing the meaning:

“... one does not maintain the existence of an agent except when, conforming to worldly usage, one says that the *dharma*s are a *pudgala*.”<sup>28</sup>

Is it possible that in this *Sūtra* we have a hint of Candrakīrti's equalisation of *saṃvṛti* with *idampratrayatāmātra* ("mere that-conditionality")?<sup>29</sup> Or, to put it differently, is it possible that, for Buddha, *asmin satīdaṃ bhavati* ("this being that becomes"), etc., at least according to *Paramārthasūnyatāsūtra*, is a mere "symbol" (*saṃketa*) of reality suited for human understanding,<sup>30</sup> a reality which is otherwise probably indescribable?

– *kiṃpaccayā nu kho, bhante, upādānaṃ ti, esa kallo pañho (Moliyaphaggunasutta, S. 2.1.2.2). Cf. also M. II. 9: "Dhamma is explained/preached in a causal (connected) way, not in a non-causal (non-connected) way" (sanidānaṃ dhammaṃ desayato no anidānaṃ).*

7

As it was pregnantly expressed, I believe, in MMK 24.18: "We proclaim: what(ever) is dependent co-arising, that is emptiness; that is based on conventional designation; only that is the middle path" (*yaḥ praṭītyasamutpādaḥ sūnyatām taṃ pracakṣmahe / sā prañāptir upādāya pratipat saiva madhyamā*).

8

*Katamo ca, bhikkhave, paṭīccasamuppādo? Jātipaccayā, bhikkhave, jarāmarāṇaṃ. Uppādā vā tathāgatānaṃ anuppādā vā tathāgatānaṃ, t̥hitāva sā dhātu dhammaniyaṃatā idappaccayatā. Taṃ tathāgato abhisambujjhati abhisameti. Abhisambujjhitvā abhisametvā ācikkhati deseti paññāpeti paṭṭhapeti vivaraṃti vibhajati uttānikaroti. 'Passathā ti cāha- jātīpaccayā, bhikkhave, jarāmarāṇaṃ'. ... Iti kho, bhikkhave, yā tatra tathatā avitathatā anaññathatā idappaccayatā- ayaṃ vuccati, bhikkhave, paṭīccasamuppādo.*

9

*T̥hitā vā sā dhātū ti, t̥hito va so paccaya- sabhāvo, na kadāci jāti-jarā-maraṇassa paccayo na hoti ... Paccayena hi paccay' uppannā dhammā t̥t̥hanti: tasmā paccayo dhammā-t̥t̥hitatā ti vuccati. Paccayo dhamme nīyameti, tasmā dhamma-nīyāmatā ti vuccati. Idappaccayatā ti, imesaṃ jarā-maraṇādīnaṃ paccayā idappaccayā, idappaccayā ca [Visuddhimagga: eva] idappaccayatā (SA, Vol. II, 40). Idappaccayatā (lit., 'that-conditionality') is thus the same as idappaccayā ('that-conditions') or, alternatively, as an 'assemblage of conditions' (*paccayasamūha*) – "Because there is a condition or because there is an assemblage of conditions for those (occurrences) beginning with *jarāmarāṇa* as already stated, it is called *idappaccayatā*" (*yaṭhāvuttānaṃ etesaṃ jarāmarāṇādīnaṃ paccayato vā paccayasamūhato vā idappaccayatā ti vutto*, *ibid.*, 41; cf. also *Vsm*, XVII, 6). *Tathāta*, *avitathatā*, *anaññathatā* and *idappaccayatā* are epithets or synonyms for "the property (or: sign) of conditions" (*paccayākāra*) – "Because each particular *dhamma* originates through [its] particular [appropriate] conditions, neither more nor*

less, it is [called] suchness (*tathatā*). Because [once] conditions reach [their] completeness, there is no non-production, even for a moment, of arising *dhammas*, it is [called] not-suchness (*avitathatā*). Because there is no arising of a [certain] *dhamma* through conditions [appropriate] to some other *dhamma*, it is [called] not-otherness (*anaññathatā*) [for the interpretation of *idappaccayatā* in this context, see above, *paccayasamūha* as an 'assemblage of conditions']" – *Tathatā ti ādāni paccayākārass'eva vevacanāni: So tehi tehi paccayehi anūñadhikeh'eva tassa tassa dhammassa sambhavato tathatā ti, sāmaggim-upagatesu paccayesu muhuttam pi tato nibbattanadhammānaṃ asambhavābhāvato avitathatā ti, aññadhammapaccayehi aññadhammānuppattito anaññathatā ti* (*ibid.*; cf. also *Vsm*, XVII, 6). No explanation of these abstract terms is offered in either *AKB* or in *Sphuṭārthā* of Yaśomitra.

10

*Dhammato añño kattā natthī ti dassetuṃ (Dīghanikāya-Tīkā, 673)*. The same text also mentions another, very curious reason why *sabhāva* is introduced in the "definition" of *dhamma* – "because of the acceptance of the opinion of people who need to be instructed" (*bodheyayanānurodhavasena*, *ibid.*, 76), cf. *Karunadasa* (1996: 15).

11

*Katame ca, bhikkhave, paṭīccasamuppannā dhammā? Jarāmarāṇaṃ, bhikkhave, aniccaṃ saṅkhatam paṭīccasamuppannam kha- yadhammaṃ veyadhammaṃ virāgadhammaṃ nirodhadhammaṃ.*

12

*Paṭīccasamuppādo ti paccayadhammā vedit- abbā; paṭīccasamuppannā dhammā ti tehi tehi paccayehi nibbattadhammā, Vsm, XVII, 4; cf. also SA, *ibid.*, 41, paṭīcca-samuppannam ti, paccaye nissāya uppannam.*

13

In the final analysis, there is no difference between *PS* and *praṭītyasamutpanna* because, according to *Sāstras* (presumably *Prakaraṇa*, cf. *Bhāṣya* to *AK* 3.25b), both refer to all compounded *dharma*s (*saṃskṛta-dharma*), *Bhāṣya* to *AK* 3.27.

14

*hetubhūtaṃgaṃ praṭītyasamutpādaḥ, sam- utpādyate 'smāditi kṛtvā | phalabhūta- maṅgaṃ praṭītyasamutpannam | evaṃ sarvānyaṅgānyubhayathā sidhyanti; hetu-*



An interesting and original solution to this problem was offered by neo-*Vaibhāṣika* Saṃghabhadra, who in his interpretation tried to retain both meanings of PS, namely conventional and ultimate.<sup>31</sup> For him, the traditional interpretation of PS (the three lives' interpretation) is based on the causality of time which has a beginning (*ādi*, i.e., *avidyā*) and so it refers to conventional truth (*saṃvṛti*), which Saṃghabhadra terms *dharmasaṃketa* ('acceptable agreement', i.e., a causal relationship between cause and effect) or *prajñapti* ('intimation'). And this is what is precisely stated in the *Paramārthasūnyatāsūtra*. On the other hand, the very conditionality of things which are dependent upon each other is based upon the actuality (*kāritra*) of time and, from this perspective, there is neither a beginning nor an end (as in the time aspect of causality, *dharmasaṃketa*). This is termed *paramārtha* by Saṃghabhadra. So, PS has a beginning (the time aspect of causality, *dharmasaṃketa*), but is also beginningless (the actuality aspect of causality, *paramārtha*). Saṃghabhadra obviously understands the canonical treatment of PS to be a conventional interpretation (as pertaining only to the psycho-physical constituents of human beings), while *Vaibhāṣika*'s "special" causal theory elucidates the fact of conditionality (and so of PS) in its ultimate sense (*paramārtha*).<sup>32</sup> And this is perfectly in accordance with *Sarvāstivāda-Vaibhāṣika*'s general and clear-cut distinction between *saṃvṛti-satya* (concealing truth) and *paramārtha-satya* (absolute truth). However, it is difficult to believe that Buddha understood the ultimate meaning of PS in terms of a special and complicated causal theory constructed by *Vaibhāṣika*, "publicly" (or to his *Samgha*) offering only a conventional interpretation.<sup>33</sup>

In any case, the interpretations and elaborations of PS offered by early Buddhist philosophers were far from the issue having been settled. The situation was further complicated by the necessity of incorporating somehow a newly developed "special" causal theory (the system of *hetus*, *pratayas* and *phalas*) into the old formula, which was more or less successfully done by *Theravāda* (Buddhaghosa), and less successfully by *Sarvāstivāda*. As for the latter (particularly for *Vaibhāṣika*), PS was a kind of obligatory doctrinal heritage, "frozen" in its dogmatic twelve-membered formula of generating existence, and actually suppressed and replaced by a more elaborate special causal theory, to which the old sutric formula served as a mere "symbol" (*saṃketa*).<sup>34</sup> The question "what PS *actually* means (*artha*)" was never asked, the only concern was to further elaborate "its" causal functioning, and this enterprise finally ended in a more or less rational "jungle" of different and complicated theoretical (causal) constructions.<sup>35</sup>

This situation dramatically changed with the emergence of Mahāyāna Buddhism in general, and its foremost philosophical school Madhyamaka in particular. For the latter, PS does not refer primarily to the process of causation between "things", but is a statement or "definition" of "things" themselves. A thing or phenomenon *is* PS, which further means that "it" is nothing in itself or by itself (*niḥsvabhāva*), and is hence a bare or "empty" (*sūnya*) phenomenon, whose "positive" existence is nothing but a mentally generated "dependent designation" (*upādāya prajñaptir*). What can be said of phenomena "as they are" (*yathābhūta*) is only the mere fact of conditionality (*idaṃpratayayatāmātra*), and there is no other way of establishing them.<sup>36</sup> The apparent diversity of phenomena and their mutual relations is the result of mental imputations (*samāropa*) and linguistic or mental "diffuseness" (*prapañca*), which obscure the original appeasement or "nirvanisation" of phenomena.<sup>37</sup>



For Madhyamaka, thus, PS is a mighty “cure” for the conceptualisation of reality, and our inborn and obsessive inclinations towards “things”

*phalabhāvāt | na caivaṃ satyavyavasthānaṃ bhavati, bhinnāpekṣatvāt | yadapekṣya pratīyasamutpādo na tadevāpekṣya pratīyasamutpannam, hetuphalavat piṭṭputravacca, Bhāṣya to AK 3.28b; Yaśomitra (Jyākhyā): phalamapekṣya heturvyavasthāpyate, hetuś-cāpekṣya phalamiti.*

15

*etadapyutsūtram; sūtre ‘nyathā nirdeśāt | “pratīyasamutpādaḥ katamaḥ? Yadutāsmiṃ satīdaṃ bhavati” iti vistareṇoktvā iti yā “tra dharmatā dharmasthītā yāvadviparyastatā ayamucyate pratīyasamutpādaḥ” iti | dharmajātīḥ dharmāṇāṃ śailīḥ | ato yeyam dharmatā ya eṣa niyamah | avidyāyāmeva satyāṃ saṃskārā bhavanti, nānyathā | eṣa pratīyasamutpādo na hetureva, Bhāṣya, ibid.* Yaśomitra cites in full this famous statement of Buddha obviously from the version found in *Śālistambasūtra* 2 and 9 (cf. Ross Reat, 1993: 27, 33), which adds some further qualifications not to be found in *Paccayasūta* or elsewhere in the Pāli Canon, namely *bhūtātā* (reality), *satyatā* (truthness), *tattva* (thatness), *aviparītātā* (exactness), together with the abovementioned *aviparyastatā*.

16

Cf. also Cruise (1983: 155): “‘Causation’ is not one thing and ‘things involved in causation’ another ... to be a thing is to be a causal thing, to be conditioned and a condition.” Kalupahana (1975: 68), on the other hand, makes a “... distinction between a causal relation (*paṭicca-samuppāda*) and the causally related (*paṭicca-samuppanna*)”. The former aspect comprises “the pattern” in accordance with which things change, while the latter relates to changing things themselves.

17

Cf. the commentarial explanation of Buddha’s famous statement “who sees *dhamma* sees *paṭiccasamuppāda*, who sees *paṭiccasamuppāda* sees *dhamma*” – “Who sees *paṭiccasamuppāda* sees conditions, who sees *dhamma* sees dependently co-arisen *dhammas*” (*yo paṭiccasamuppādaṃ passati ti yo paccaye passati so dhammaṃ passati ti so paṭiccasamuppādanadhamme passati*, MA, II, 230).

18

This fact is also reflected in well-known complementary commentarial “definitions” of *dhamma*, which suggest that *dhamma*, *sabhāva* and *paccaya* are in the final instance one and the same “thing”: “Dhammas are so called as they bear their own nature”, *Attano sabhāvaṃ dhārenti ti dhammā*, DhsA, 126, and “Dhammas are so called as they are borne by their conditions”, *Paccayehi*

*dhāriyanti ti dhammā*, DhsA, 63. In the same line of reasoning is Buddhaghosa’s criticism of those who imagine that “*idappaccayatā* is the essence (*bhāva*) of that-conditions” in a sense of “essence as a [particular] mode (*ākāra*) of ignorance, etc., as a cause [acting] in the manifestation of [kammic] formations, etc., and that the term *paṭiccasamuppāda* [is used] for the change/transformation (*vikāra*) [occurring] in formations when there is that [particular mode in ignorance acting as a cause]”. Rejecting completely such an interpretation, Buddhaghosa underlines that “it is ignorance, etc., themselves that are called ‘cause’”. – *Ye pi maññanti, idappaccayānaṃ bhāvo idappaccayatā – bhāvo ca nāma yo ākāro avijjādīnaṃ saṅkhārādi-pātubhāve hetu so – tasmīṃ saṅkhāravikāre paṭiccasamuppādasaiṅṅā ti ... Avijjādīnaṃ hetuvacanato*, Vsm, XVII, 14.

19

Time (*kāla*) is, at least according to *Theravāda Abhidhamma*, a mere “concept” (*paññatti*), not any different from ‘mountain’, ‘house’, ‘person’, etc., which is defined as that which “remains” (*avasesa*) after reality *paramatthatas* (from the absolute point of view) is analysed. It is said that all such things, “although not existing *paramatthatas*, become support for generating consciousness in the form of shadow(s) of things (ultimate)” – *evam ādippabhedā pana paramatthato avijjāmanā pi athacchāyākārena cittuppādānam ālambanabhūtā, Abhidhammattha sangaha*, VIII, 29, 30. It could be said that time is understood to be a “subjective reflection” of the fact of PS’s (or *idappaccayatā*) “being there”; cf. also Sasaki (1992: 107).

20

The entirety of this *Sūtra* (*Samyuktāgama*, 335) was reconstructed from Chinese by Lamotte (1973), although the part cited was already reconstructed by Poussin (cf. n. 80 in chapter nine of his French translation of AKB). This part of the *Sūtra* was cited by Vasubandhu in his commentary to AK 3.18.

21

For Vasubandhu, this part of the *Sūtra* is one of the “canonical proofs” (*uktatvāt*) that *Vaiśāṅghika*’s theory of *sarvakālāstitā* (the existence of *dhammas* in all three time periods, i.e., the past, the present and the future) has no footing in Buddha’s own words; cf. *Bhāṣya to AK 5.27b*.

22

*Paramārthaśūnyatāsūtram katamam/ caḥṣur bhikṣava utpadyamānam na kutaścid āgacchati/ nirudhyamānam na kvacit saṃnicayam gacchati/ iti hi bhikṣavaś caḥṣur abhūtvā bha-*



which constantly fuel a distorted vision of reality and existence. It, at the same time, mirrors *nirvāṇa* and is as such “defined” by Madhyamaka as “the appeasement of (all) diffuseness/mental and linguistic proliferations” (*prapañcānāmupaśama*).<sup>38</sup>

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*vati bhūtvā ca prativigacchatīti/ asti karmāsti vipākaḥ kāraḥ tu nopalabhyate ya imāṃś ca skandhān niḥśipyaty anyāṃś ca skandhān pratisamḍadhātīyanyatra dharmasaṃketāt/ ... anyatradharmasaṃketād iti/ atrāyaṃ dharmasaṃketo yad utāsmiṃ saṭīdaṃ bhavati/ aśyotpādād idam utpadyate/ yad idam avidyāpratīyayāḥ ... tatrāsmiṃn asaṭīdaṃ na bhavati/ asya nirodhād idam nirudhyate ...*

23

Etymologically, *saṃketa* comes from *saṃ√CIT*, “to observe together” or “to agree together”, and so it is semantically close to Pāli *sammuti* (from *saṃ√MAN*, “to think together”) in a sense of general agreement.

24

*Dve saccāni akkhāsi sambuddho vadataṃ varo sammutiṃ paramatthaṃ ca tatiyaṃ n'ūpalabhati sanketavacanaṃ saccaṃ lokasammutikāraṇaṃ paramatthavacanaṃ saccaṃ dhammānaṃ bhūtalakkaṇaṃ* (AA. I. 95) – “The Perfectly Awakened One, the best of speakers, (proclaimed two truths) – conventional and ultimate; a third is not to be found. A conventional statement is truth in terms of worldly conventions; an ultimate expression is truth (in terms of) the real characteristic of *dhammas*.”

25

In PP 492.8 (*Vṛtti* to MMK 24. 8), *saṃketa* appears in the third “meaning” of *saṃvṛti* as (commonly accepted) expressions: *saṃvṛtiḥ saṃketo lokavyavahāra* – “*saṃvṛti* (means) conventional worldly designation”, such as, e.g., “name, the named (the object of naming), knowledge, the known (the object of knowledge), etc.” (*abhidhānābhidheyajñāna jñeyādi*, *ibid.*).

26

*saṃketo hetuphalasambandhavyavasthā, Vyākhyā* to AKB 3.18.

27

*dharmasaṃketād iti pratīyasamutpādalakṣaṇāt, Vyākhyā* 708 (Wogihara).

28

Poussin, AKB (Pruden, Vol. IV, 1990: 1369). Cf. also Eltschinger (2010: 323, n. 102).

29

*Kim saṃvṛtervyavasthānaṃ vaktavyam? idampratīyatāmātreṇa saṃvṛteḥ siddhira-bhyupagamyate*, PP. 54.24 – “How to declare the establishment of the conventional? The establishment (proof) of the conventional is obtained by (the fact of) mere conditionality.” This conforms to his second

“definition” of *saṃvṛti* given in PP 492.7–8: *parasparasambhavanam vā saṃvṛtiranyonya samāśrayeṇetyarthaḥ* – “Or, the conventional means mutual occurrence by way of supporting [i.e., conditioning; cf. a more usual expression *parasparāpekṣā*] each other.”

30

The statement *asmiṃ saṭīdaṃ bhavati*, etc., is perfectly in conformity with ordinary human experience and does not go “beyond convention” (cf. *sāmaññaṃ nātidhāveyya*, M. 3. 230), for it is clear to everyone that from a certain seed a certain fruit emerges, that where there are harsh words animosity inevitable occurs, etc. These are observable facts and there is nothing obscure about them. Obscurity and contradictions emerge, as is pointed out by *Madhyamaka*, when we try to impute (*samāropa*) to them certain “rational” or metaphysical categories (of the *svabhāva* type), which, instead of offering an explanation, only obscure the bare and plain fact of *asmiṃ saṭīdaṃ bhavati*, etc. Thus, various “theories” (*dṛṣṭi*) emerge “about” reality, i.e., causality (*svayaṃkṛtam*, *paraṃkṛtam*, etc.). In trying to “secure” this plain fact of conditionality from “non-referential” imputations, Candrakīrti says that “because of [the undesirable] consequence of substantialism and because it cannot be [otherwise] argued, [*saṃvṛti* is established by refuting a] fourfold thesis [cf. MMK 1.1]”, *na tu pakṣacatuṣṭay ābhyupagamena sasvabhāvavādaprasaṅgāt, tasya cāyuktatvāt*, PP. 54.24–25. Garfield's (2003: 15) observations are very appealing in respect of this issue: “Penetrating to the depths of being, we find ourselves back on the surface of things, and so discover that there is nothing, after all, beneath these deceptive surfaces. Moreover, what is deceptive about them is simply the fact that we take there to be ontological depths lurking just beneath.”

31

What follows is taken from Sasaki (1992: 111–112); cf. also 109–110.

32

To my knowledge, *Ābhidharmikas*'s attempt to interpret PS explicitly in terms of the two truths is the only such attempt. Saṃghabhadra, just as *Mādhyamikas* (e.g., Buddhapālita), understands the canonical treatment of PS to be conventional (*saṃvṛti*, *saṃketa*) in a sense that it refers only to the arising and ceasing of psycho-physical phenomena (the three lives' explanation). But, what is conventional in this interpretation, according to Saṃghabhadra, is not the “arising and ceasing” as it is for *Mādhyamikas*, but



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### Goran Kardaš

#### O nekim doktrinarnim prijeporima u ranim buddhističkim interpretacijama »su-nastajanja u zavisnosti« (praṭṭīyasamutpāda)

##### **Sažetak**

Praṭṭīyasamutpāda (»su-nastajanje u zavisnosti«) temeljno je buddhističko učenje koje Buddha naziva »srednjim putem« između ontoloških ekstrema egzistencije i neegzistencije. Unatoč tome, rani buddhistički filozofi nisu postigli konsenzus u pogledu njegova točnoga doktrinarnog ili čak gramatičkog značenja. U ovome članku dajem osnovne linije tih prijepora među ranim buddhističkim školama, temeljene na primarnim izvorima, nastojeći pokazati da oni zapravo reflektiraju njihova različita shvaćanja problema uzrokovanja i prirode fenomena.

##### **Ključne riječi**

uzrokovanje, Madhyamaka, fenomeni (*dharme*), *praṭṭīyasamutpāda*, Vaibhāṣika, Vasubandhu

### Goran Kardaš

#### Zu einigen doktrinellen Unstimmigkeiten in frühen buddhistischen Interpretationen des „Mit-Entstehens in Abhängigkeit“ (praṭṭīyasamutpāda)

##### **Zusammenfassung**

Die praṭṭīyasamutpāda („Mit-Entstehen in Abhängigkeit“) ist die grundlegende buddhistische Lehre, welche Buddha den „Mittleren Weg“ zwischen ontologischen Extremen der Existenz und Nichtexistenz nennt. Nichtsdestotrotz erreichten die frühen buddhistischen Philosophen keinen Konsens über dessen treffende doktrinelle oder sogar grammatische Bedeutung. In diesem Ar-

*tikel erläutere ich die Grundlinien dieser Unstimmigkeiten zwischen den frühen buddhistischen Schulen, die auf primären Quellen fußen, indem ich zu schildern trachte, dass eigentlich diese Unstimmigkeiten ihre auseinandergehenden Auffassungen des Problems der Verursachung und Natur von Phänomenen widerspiegeln.*

### Schlüsselwörter

Verursachung, Madhyamaka, Phänomene (*Dharmas*), *pratītyasamutpāda*, Vaibhāṣika, Vasubandhu

the sphere of the “psycho-physical”, which, when analysed properly (*paramārthatas*), reveals itself as a complicated causal structure bearing on such functions imagined as real (*sat*), as actuality (*kāritra*), potentiality or capability (*sāmarthya*), etc. *Mādhyamikas*, on the other hand, insists on the conventionality of causation itself (“arising and ceasing”, i.e., *saṃvṛti*=*idampratīyatā*, cf. n. 29 above) and provides a completely new rendering of PS as a “non-arising” (non-ceasing, etc.) *paramārthatas* (a qualification which is persistently applied by Bhāviveka and not by Candrakīrti, at least not explicitly). In fact, Buddhaghosa’s interpretation of PS in *Visuddhimagga* ch. XVII and *Vibhaṅga* ch. VI (*Pañcikasamuppādivibhaṅga*) also functions on two (exegetical) levels – *suttantabhājanīya* (according to canonical discourses) and *abhidhammabhājanīya* (according to “more advanced” *abhidhammic* discourses), which only implicitly imply the *saṃvṛti-paramārtha* distinction. On the first exegetical level, PS is interpreted according to the three lives’ theory (i.e., temporally, a series of successive states), while *abhidhammabhājanīya* views all the limbs of PS as functions in each and every “thought moment” (*viññānakhaṇa*) atemporally (i.e., causally), systematically applying the system of 24 *paccayas* (types of conditions) to it.

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On many points in AKB, Vasubandhu tries to show that *Vaibhāṣika*’s reading of the Canon is highly strained, almost violent in their effort to “harmonise” their special theories with the canonical statements.

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According to *Vaibhāṣika*, the definition of PS or dealing with it is “optional in the *Sūtras* and definite in the *Abhidharma*”, *ābhiprāyikāḥ sūtre lākṣaṇiko ’bhidharṃe*, *Bhāṣya* to AK 3. 25b.

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It is not even clear whether PS counts only for conscious beings having in mind its “abstract” formulation of the form “this being that becomes”, which is “at the bottom” of the formula. Recently, E. Shulman, in his well-argued article discussing the “initial meaning” of the *pratītyasamutpāda*, argues that, in the earliest strata, this “concept” “addresses the workings of the mind alone” (2008: 299), and that the *idappaccayatā*, at least at this initial stage, does not refer to the general or “ab-

stract” causation principle of all “things” (not just mental or related to the mental), because it [*idappaccayatā*] “never occurs detached from the articulation of the 12 links” (ibid., 307). This conclusion, as well as the presented argumentation based on Pāli canonical sources, is philologically faultless. Nevertheless, there are some implicit or even explicit indications that the formula was, in its abstract determination even in the early period, held to count for non-living or non-human “things” as well, although this is understandable because of the well-known reason (the problem of suffering) that Buddha did not care for “the world” outside the human domain, referring only occasionally to the appearance of causal processes in the natural world and always by analogy with causal processes occurring in the mental world, as for example in S. III 54. Thus, Vasubandhu in *Bhāṣya* to AK 3. 25, ibid., mentions four different interpretations of PS (static, the one that is accepted by *Vaibhāṣika*, momentary, prolonged and serial), which “pertain to both living and non-living [things]” (*tathāvasthikāḥ kṣaṇikāḥ prākaraṣikāḥ sāmbandhikāḥ sattvākhyo ’sattvākhyasceṭi bhedaḥ*), and the reason why in the *sūtras* PS pertains only to living beings is “to abandon perplexity regarding the past, the future and the present” [i.e., “did I or did I not exist in the past”, etc.] – *kimarthaṃ punaḥ sūtre sattvākhyā eva?*, *Bhāṣya*, ibid., *pūrvāparāntamadhyeṣu sammohavinivṛttaye* (AK 25cd). The locus classicus of this issue is *Śālistambasūtra*, a text that could be the earliest *Mahāyāna sūtra* we are in possession of, but which is treated as a typical (early) *abhidharma* treatise. The *Sūtra* views PS in terms of causes (*hetupāṇibandhatas*) and conditions (*pratīyapāṇibandhatas*) applied to “outer” (*bāhya*) and “inner” (*adhyātmika*) PS (10) thereby analysed in four sections: in terms of causes and conditions applied to inner PS and in terms of causes and conditions applied to outer PS. An example of the causal relation in the outer PS is the gradual emerging of a fruit from a seed (via a sprout, a leaf, etc.). (11) The conditional relation regarding this causal occurring would be “the coming together” (*samavāya*) of the six elements (earth, water, heat, wind, space and season). (12) The same idea – namely, that a cause is primary for the emerging of an effect, while the conditions are auxiliary – is found in an early Pāli “paracanonical” text *Nettipakaraṇa* using almost the same example and interpretation as here. There (451–453; cf. also a parallel passage



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**Sur quelques difficultés doctrinales  
dans les anciennes interprétations  
de la « coproduction conditionnée » (*pratītyasamutpāda*)**

**Résumé**

*Pratītyasamutpāda (« la coproduction conditionnée ») est l'enseignement bouddhique que le Bouddha nomme « la voie du milieu » entre deux extrêmes ontologiques, celles d'existence et de non-existence. Malgré cela, les anciens philosophes bouddhistes ne sont pas parvenus à un consensus autour de sa signification doctrinale précise, voire grammaticale. Dans cet article, je livre les traits principaux des difficultés présentes dans les anciennes écoles bouddhistes fondées sur les sources premières, en essayant de montrer qu'en fait, elles reflètent leurs diverses compréhensions du problème de causalité et de la nature du phénomène.*

**Mots-clés**

causalité, Madhyamaka, phénomènes (*dharma*), *pratītyasamutpāda*, Vaibhāṣika, Vasubandhu

in *Peṭakopadesa*), *hetu* is further identified with *sabhāva*, *asādhāraṇa* (not shared in common), and *pratyaya* (*paccaya*) with *parabhāva*, *sādhāraṇa* (shared in common). Finally, we can recall here that Pāli Commentaries elaborate the idea of “the five (natural) laws” (*pañcavidha niyama*), namely “season law” (*utu-niyama*), “seed law” (*bīja-niyama*), “mental law” (*citta-niyama*), “kammic law” (*kamma-niyama*), and “dhammic law” (for their formal definitions, cf. DhsA, 854). In sum, there is no reason to assume that Buddha’s vision of PS was “initially” reduced to the plain of mental processes alone, although it is true, as Shulman illustrates, that in the earliest sources the explication of PS (and *idappaccayatā*) always occurs in this context.

36

Cf. footnote 29.

37

Hence, according to Madhyamaka (Nāgārjuna), there is no “ontological” difference between *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*, cf. MMK 25.20. The difference starts with the process of nam-

ing and differentiating reality, which finally ends up in a “jungle of (distorted or dogmatic) views”.

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“When *pratītyasamutpāda* is viewed just as it is, in it there is appeasement of [all] diffuseness [proliferations] because the Noble Ones [have achieved] complete cessation of diffuseness of naming and of other [alike] signs. And so this *pratītyasamutpāda* is called the [complete] appeasement of diffuseness. In it there is no activity of consciousness nor of mental phenomena, [in it] knowledge, objects of knowledge, as well as [karmic] doings are ceased because [in it all] adversities, such as birth, aging and death, are prevented without remainder. [It is therefore] auspicious.” *yathāvasthitapratītyasamutpādadarśane sati āryāṇāmabhidheyādilakṣaṇasya prapañcasya sarvathoparamāt, prapañcānāmupaś amo ’sminniti sa eva pratītyasamutpādaḥ prapañcopaśama ityucyate | cittacaittānāṃ ca tasminnapravṛttau jñānajñeyavyavahāra nivṛttau jātijarāmaraṇādindiravaśeṣopadrava rahitavāt śivaḥ*, PP. 11. 8–11.