

Vasubandhu Verses 21-22 Dharma Talk 8/25/2022

As we begin, I'd like to give credit to the sources: Vasubandhu himself, Ben Connolly for decoding, to Tim for leading us and to all the others who have given dharma talks during this study, to Amie Diller, and to both Norman and Kathie Fischer for further decoding,

I also want to say that I completely understand Tim's urge to apologize for his talk, to decide hours before giving it that it wasn't the right talk, to Scott's mention of not going too far into the weeds, because BOY, are there ever a lot of them; also rabbit holes, in which I lingered, musing over early Buddhism and its many permutations.

Having said that!

(Pass out printed verses and pencils)

Let's read the two verses together.

V.21 The other-dependent nature is conceptualization arising from conditions.

The complete, realized nature is the other-dependent nature's always being devoid of the imaginary.

V.22 thus it is neither the same nor different from the other-dependent.

Like impermanence, etc., when one isn't seen, the other also is not seen.

Now, is that perfectly clear??

Take a moment to jot down a word or phrase that speaks to you.

I have heard many people comment that their first experience with the Yogacara was either alien, confusing, or just too dense to want to bother with...so many categories, numbers, classifications. The bottom line issue for so many people studying buddhism or any other body of wisdom knowledge seems to be "how can I use this in my life?" If we take the bodhisattva vow, we ask, "How does this contribute to my saving all beings? Or reduce suffering in both my heart and the hearts of others?"

We have to do a bit of scrambling around the translated Sanskrit, or Pali, or Chinese; thanks to Ben Connolly, much of that has been morphed for us.

For this study, I think we are tasked with learning a language, or at least a vocabulary of Mind Consciousness.

Yogachara (Sanskrit: योगाचार, IAST: Yogācāra; literally "yoga practice"; "one whose practice is yoga")[1] is an influential tradition of Buddhist philosophy and psychology **emphasizing the study of cognition, perception, and consciousness through the interior lens of meditative and yogic practices.** While often regarded as a kind of Idealism, critical scholars argue that it is closer to a kind of phenomenology or representationalism, aimed at *deconstructing the reification of our perceptions.*

Reification!!? is something I came across when I asked one of my Tibetan and zen practitioner friends(Amie) to comment on **alaya-vijnana**. So this is the storehouse consciousness. Reification was a new & perplexing word to me: ***conversion of the abstract into the concrete; the regarding or treating of an idea as a thing, or as if a thing.***

This is, it seems to me, one of the things we fall prey to...rather than imagination used as an aesthetic or creative kickstarter, we *imagine* something that is in the mind as something that is *concrete*, or has a tangible form.

The first part of the text is full of concepts on how to work with our emotional states. In the discussion of the alaya vijnana, we are shown the seeds of all dharmas. In the moment that karma ripens we have choice in how we will respond. We water the seed of habit and conditioning, of suffering, or water a different seed,

We must know what we are doing, however! We trust a lot of that to zazen. Over years, decades. And we read, study, and take it deeply to heart.

Vasubandhu writes about The three natures: (knowing how we see things):

The imaginary

The other-dependent (dependent origination/dependent co-arising)

The completely realized (other-dependent without imagination, or as Chris B puts it "extras")

And they are mentioned immediately in v21

Soooo...we are a salad of perceptions, reactions, and energy that may or may not be actual truth, or reality...the idea of each one of us being our own center of

the universe, as Mel Weitsman said. Which we are! But as we see, it's a shared universe. We're all our own center of the universe, and we're all in it together. I think that is what is meant by **other-dependent nature**. I heard NF say that Vasubandha wrote out of compassion. In asking us to recognize that we are not alone, that we are always inter-dependent, even for the air we breathe, he offers us to take the step of compassion, first for ourselves.

There are two barriers to overcome:

***Afflictive emotions(as written here: self-view, self-delusion, self-pride, self-love)(anger, attachment, ignorance, jealousy, pride)OR(pride, anger, envy,laziness, distraction)**

***Delusion** (deeply held assumptions; everything is consciousness; conceptualizing "discriminating" and projecting). We are always dividing in order to do so. We have to have a "me" and a "you". And this is where we get into trouble.

What is **karma ripening**? It is the present moment. Causes and conditions bring things up. Things come up, arise, but they don't last. The important thing to see is that it is impersonal. Everything is not your fault! What happened in the past will come forward: liberating, humbling. It's not under our control.

So we have to pay attention, notice, **and let it go**. Otherwise, when you mix in the deeply held and profoundly held habit of ME, YOU, and what the world means, we are grabbing on and reproducing that moment and, it having ripened, will further ripen!

We can know who we are and still be free from the suffering(anger, hatred, delusion) of it. From personal experience, I know that we can't just think our way out of self-clinging. Vaubandha AND Dogen agree. Just know what it is and appreciate it for what it is and relax. Think not thinking? How? Non-thinking.

Back to V 20: Whatever thing is conceptualized by whatever conceptualization is of an **imaginary nature**: it does not exist.(it's metaphorical; it doesn't exist as we think it does).

As Joden Bob pointed out in the last talk, we've been chanting this for years! In the Heart sutra: no eyes no ears no nose no tongue no body no mind (all things are empty of the nature of self, of suffering, and will fall away if we leave them alone). Vasubandhu wants us to really dig in and look.

Self and world exist in a way...of course we have seen and heard, but we cannot depend on them.

V21: **the other dependent nature** is a *conceptualization arising from conditions*; When we see a tree, it's dynamic, not static. It depends upon all the components that allow it to become a tree. Water. Cellulose. Light from the sun. a certain latitude longitude. Climate seasons. We are not independent. We are a flow. (no old age and death; that's imaginary if you can see it from a non-separation perspective).

This reminds me of Suzuki roshi's definition of life as a movie. We are all in it, but we need to know that it's a movie! Projected on a big white screen. (Parikalpita)

The **complete realized nature** is *the other-dependent nature's always being devoid of the imaginary*. (reification!) **Read p. 148-9 (my friends, I did not come here to confuse you!)**

Enlightenment is a way of seeing that both transcends and is not other than conceptualization. It's a paradox, as we so often hear of in zen. We can transcend, but not by escaping into detachment. We immerse and embrace our lives. This is what makes us human.

Enlightenment, complete realization, is not something or somewhere else.

Think not-thinking.

And hey! We are human!

An insight by NF is that It's thanks to our conceptualized lives that we make connections with others, and we can fully enjoy it without clinging to imaginary stuff.

v22 Thus it is neither the same nor different from the other-dependent; Like impermanence, etc; when one is not seen, the other also is not seen. "Etc". according to Ben, refers to The three marks of existence: **impermanence, suffering, and non-self**. In this later part of the poem, the emphasis is on interdependence and non-dualism. To quote Ben Connelly on p.153. "When we see that things are impermanent, we see that there is suffering that comes with them, and we see that things don't have a stable, continuous self...Buddha recommends we actually see and deal with these three marks rather than trying

to pretend they are not there. He says actually facing them is the road to real liberation from suffering. (& read to end of chapter

This is the language of non-dualism.

Suchness, thusness. Just this is it. Beyond, and including, it's just this. Here and gone.

This is the be here now direction. This is me. No point in having it be other.

Perhaps we don't torture ourselves so much. Just appreciate it. **Whatever has happened created this moment.** This is the compassionate view, and we must have it if we are to find peace. To "escape this crazy life of tears". (from a Norman Fischer dharma talk given by Hoitsu Suzuki Roshi, son of Shunryo).

Just a word here about imagination. When we talk about imagination from a Vasubandhu point of view (parikalpita), "imagination" is synonymous with confusion or illusion. Don't dismiss the notion of imagination as we know it now. That's healthy, creative. A different kind of reality. In these verses imagination is used as a pejorative: delusion. Give our whole effort to this world, loving our lives, becoming compassionate ("I see that other person as myself" NOT someone separate).

Because for me a captivating idea in yogacara is **storehouse consciousness aka Alaya Vijnyana**, I took the discussion to my dharma friend & teacher Kathie Fischer. This is what came of our conversation:

Her first words? "Well, it's complicated". We need to understand that a huge body of knowledge existed in the culture of early (3rd C BCE and later) Buddhism, the Abhidharma, sometimes referred to as "a discussion concerning the dharma" (but very technical, analytic, and systematic) and Vasubandhu's yogacara was an effort to draw some of that together in the poetic verse style. So we get an end point of an old and complex system. It is always to be noted that these systems were developed for the purpose of **alleviating suffering**.

One way of looking at the alaya vijnyana (storehouse consciousness) is as genomes; genetic inheritance. All the seeds are there, we're told. Some of the seeds will absolutely result in a fixed condition. (like color blindness) Some will produce tendencies (like diabetes. If we eat right, get exercise, etc we can affect the tendency). **We cannot change that seedbed.** We'll never get over being angry, but through long training, we can choose not to water that seed.

Everything still arises, but our strong reception and quiet observation can allow

us to develop a mindset of beneficial rather than self-destructive responses. This is the gift of shikantaza.

Because I have discovered recently the accessibility of Thich Nhat Hahn (diamond sutra) I wanted to draw from his **Fifty Verses on the Nature of Consciousness**

Store Consciousness

One: Mind is a field In which every kind of seed is sown. This mind-field can also be called "All the seeds".

Two: In us are infinite varieties of seeds: Seeds of samsara, nirvana, delusion, and enlightenment, Seeds of suffering and happiness, Seeds of perceptions, names, and words.

Three: Seeds that manifest as body and mind, As realms of being, stages, and worlds, Are all stored in our consciousness. That is why it is called "store".

Four: Some seeds are innate,
Handed down by our ancestors.

Some were sown while we were still in the womb, Others were sown when we were children.

Five: Whether transmitted by family, friends, Society, or education, all our seeds are, by nature, both individual and collective.

Six: The quality of our life depends on the quality of the seeds that lie deep in our consciousness.

Seven: The function of store consciousness is to receive and maintain Seeds and their habit energies, So they can manifest in the world, or remain dormant.

Further, we can look at TNH's metaphor of the mind as a garden. Weeds will sprout. We can pull them in order to let the flowers or vegetables strengthen and not be deprived of nutrients. Any good gardener knows that weeds just are. (after all, they're just plants in the wrong place). Forget eliminating them. Yet we

see magnificent gardens! HOW? Through attentive care and choosing what plants get to dominate, just like our minds.

Remember, in the first lines of the teaching poem, Vasubandha refers to the transformation of consciousness. The transformation of consciousness! We are not static beings. As Suzuki roshi said, "The problems you have now are the problems you will have for the rest of your life"

But he did NOT say they would be insurmountable, or how much space they might occupy. Our minds are an ever evolving process. We can turn to some of the lessons here for support when we become frustrated by challenges and setbacks along the way. Recognize the seed you are experiencing. Decide whether you want to keep watering it.

May we all find our way to seeing clearly. May we face the hard stuff with compassion to ourselves and our companions. May we see that we are not alone.. May we be free from suffering.

Thank you very much.

In the time we have left, let's get into groups and share the word we wrote on our paper. See how they sit with you now.