(Sesavatī:)

'How it came to be possessed by me, this mansion with its flocks of herons, peacocks and partridges, and frequented by heavenly water-fowl and royal geese; resounding with the cries of birds, of ducks and koels[1].

Containing divers varieties of creepers, flowers and trees; with trumpet-flower, rose-apple and asoka trees. Now how this mansion came to be possessed by me I will tell you. Listen, venerable sir.

In the eastern region of the excellent (country of) Magadha there is a village called Nālaka, venerable sir. There I was formerly a daughter-in-law and they knew me there as Sesavatī.

Scattering flower blossoms joyfully, I honoured him skilled in deeds and worshipped by gods amd men, the great Upatissa[2] who has attained the immeasurable quenching[3].

Having worshipped him who had gone to the ultimate bourn, the eminent seer bearing his last body, on leaving my human shape I went to (the heaven of) the thirty(-three) and here inhabit the place.'

(Vimānavatthu, vv.642-53)

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1   The word *koel* is to be found in the Concise Oxford Dictionary, 9th ed., as the name (derived from Hindi) for the Indian cuckoo; Skt and Pāli: *kokila*.

2   The personal name of Sāriputta who, according to tradition, came from the village of Nālaka.

3   *nibbuta.*

DEBATES ON TIME IN THE KATHĀVATTHU

David Bastow

I INTRODUCTION

The aim of this paper is to give an account of the relations between the Kathāvatthu discussions of time and the theories and arguments of the Sarvāstivāda. On the basis of this account, I shall make some suggestions about the intellectual context in which the Kathāvatthu (abbrev. Kvu) was composed, and about its mode of operation within the context. As it is my opinion that the composers of Kvu[1] had a much better understanding of the early controversies about time than did the composers of the Kvu Commentary[2], I shall attempt to examine Kvu in its own terms. My interpretation will therefore be very different from that of the PTS translators.

As Lance Cousins says[3] it seems that the early part of Kvu, composed around the time of Aśoka (third century BCE) describes a three-way debate. The protagonists can be given sectarian names, though it need not be assumed that the different positions belonged at that time to groups of Buddhists who had formally separated. The Sthaviras disagreed with the theories of the Pudgalavādins about the person, and with the theories about time of the Sarvāstivādins. The Sarvāstivādins seem to have

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1   PTS 1979; *Points of Controversy*, tr. S.Z. Aung and C.A.F. Rhys Davids, PTS 1960.

2   Kathāvatthupakaraṇa-aṭṭhakathā, PTS 1979; *The Debates Commentary*, tr. B.C. Law, PTS 1989.

3   L.S. Cousins, 'The «Five Points» and the origins of the Buddhist schools', in T. Skorupski ed., *The Buddhist Forum* II, SOAS, London 1991, p.35.

been with the Sthaviras in their opposition to Pudgalavāda. The place of Kvu in the debates about time can best be understood by comparing the Kvu with what is known about the Sarvāstivādin position from other sources.

Sarvāstivāda ideas about time developed gradually, over the many hundred years of the tradition's existence. Their characteristic belief, in fact the one that gave them their name, was that there is a sense in which past and future exist, are real. In relation to this belief, their thinking developed in two different ways. They gradually put together [A] a collection of philosophical arguments, which claimed in different ways to prove that past and future (or rather past and future objects, dharmas) must exist. They also constructed [B] an ontological theory — an extension to dharma-theory — to show in what way past and future exist. Our knowledge of their thinking about time comes from three different sources, three different periods in their history. One of their Abhidharma texts was the Vijñānakāya; this was composed in the third to second century BCE, so probably within a few decades of the early part of Kvu. It contains versions of three arguments [A][4], but no elaboration of the theory [B]. The Mahā-vibhāṣā (first century CE) gives another argument, simple and profound[5], and sets out a fairly complete account of theory [B]. In the fifth century CE Vasubandhu, in his Abhidharmakośa, described and attacked what he saw to be central points of the Sarvāstivāda position. In response to this, new versions of [A] and [B] were developed, in particular by Saṃghabhadra.

What is the relation of Kvu to all this?

The position I shall argue for is as follows:

1. In the first chapter (vagga) of Kvu, kathā I.6 is a set piece debate between Sthavira and Sarvāstivāda. It is concerned with an early version of the theory [B]. It does not mention the arguments put forward by the Vijñānakāya.

2. In the rest of Kvu there are several further kathās concerned with time; these are recognisably related to the arguments [A] of the Vijñānakāya[6].

Before I look in detail at those parts of Kvu concerned with time, I wish to make some observations about the format of Kvu, as the understanding of this format is crucial to an understanding of the philosophical debates which take place within it.

(a) The identification of the protagonists in the debates. — Those who are familiar with the PTS translation should note that the text of Kvu nowhere identifies the protagonists in the debates it reports[7]. Not only does Kvu not identify the rival sects whose views are, according to the Commentary, being 'purged' but nowhere are we told for any particular question and answer who is the questioner and who is giving the replies. Everything has to be

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4   The first of these arguments is discussed in detail in my paper 'The first argument for Sarvāstivāda', Asian Philosophy 5, 2, 1995.

5   See my paper 'Mahā-vibhāṣā arguments for Sarvāstivāda', Philosophy East and West 44, 3, 1994.

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6   In his introduction to his translation of the first two chapters of the Vijñānakāya ('La controverse du temps et du pudgala dans le Vijñānakāya', Études Asiatiques, Paris 1925, p.345; repr. in H.S. Prasad, Essays on Time in Buddhism, Delhi 1991, pp.79–112), Louis de La Vallée Poussin says 'Le Kathāvatthu et le Vijñānakāya représentent et font triompher deux doctrines contradictoires; ils ne se rencontrent pas'. I shall try to show that this is far too simple a view of the relation between the two texts.

7   Mrs Rhys Davids, in her 'Prefatory Notes' to Points of Controversy, p.xxxii, speaks with justifiable caution of the 'sects or groups . . . on whom the opinions debated about are fathered by the Commentary'.

gathered from the content. So the identification, in the translation, of the main protagonists in each section (*kathā*) is due to the Commentary; but often the latter does not analyse the discussion in detail, and the attribution of particular questions and answers to specific protagonists has been done by the translators — often, as Mrs Rhys Davids admits (p.lii), with considerable difficulty.

(b) The question of what is meant by a 'protagonist' in this context. — It should be noted that unlike the translation the text does not in its format indicate for each kathā a 'controverted point'. The format of the translation implies that for each kathā there is such a point, a question on which the participants take opposing sides, and which the ensuing discussion aims to resolve; but there is no such implication in the text. When we look at the content of the debates, we see that sometimes (notably in I.6) there are opposed positions; but sometimes the 'protagonists' are rather to be seen as participants contributing in their different ways to a discussion on a topic which is controversial or puzzling.

(c) The logic of the Kvu debates. — The impression given by the translation is that each subsection of each kathā is an argument in itself, in which the questioner, usually Sthavira, reveals or at least claims a self-contradiction within the views professed by the opponent. (To take a small example: the first sentence of the argument in I.6 is, according to the translation, *'Theravādin.* — You say that «all» exists. Hereby you are involved in these further admissions:- all exists everywhere . . .'. But the adversarial term 'admission' does not appear in the text. Rather, there is simply 'Does everything exist? Yes. Does everything exist everywhere? That should not be said'.) The translators would no doubt support their adversarial interpretation by pointing out that Kvu begins (in the *Puggala-kathā*) with an argument worked out according to an apparently elaborate logical

matrix[8]. The detailed matrix is fully articulated only in the first subsection of kathā I.1 ([1] - [10] in the translation). There it is meant to exhibit an alleged contradiction between 'the person (*puggala*) is known in the sense of a real and ultimate fact', and *'Puggalo* is not known in the same way (*tato*) as are [other] real and ultimate facts'. If this matrix were intended to govern the whole of Kvu, then in each pair of answers given by the opponent the second answer would be revealed as inconsistent with the first. In the rest of kathā I.1 the matrix is still in operation, in that in each subsection the (alleged) incoherence in the opponent's position is made explicit. (For example [138]: 'Acknowledge the refutation: if the former proposition is true, you should also, good sir, have admitted the latter . . .'.) But in the rest of Kvu the matrix survives, if it does, only in the use of '-*pe*-', as in [1] of kathā I.6, where the final pair of questions is 'Does everything exist. Yes. Does the view «that it is wrong to say that everything exists» itself exist?' No -*pe*-'. Here '-*pe*-' presumably refers back to the matrix, and so means 'the answers you have given contain a contradiction'. But of course to say this is not to demonstrate that there is in fact a contradiction; so the use of -*pe*- is rather a feeble argumentative weapon.

My own view, as I shall argue, is that the Kvu passages concerned with time do contain philosophically powerful arguments; but their actual logical format is obscured rather than revealed by inserting at the end of every subsection 'the answers you have given contain a contradiction'. So I think that it was an error on

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8   This matrix has been analysed, or at least expressed in logical symbols, by F. Watanabe, *Philosophy and its Development in the Nikayas and Abhidhamma*, Delhi 1983, Ch.II. Watanabe follows a paper by A.K. Warder, in *Proceedings of the 25th International Congress of Orientalists* (1963), to which I have not had access.

the part of the PTS translators to use a consistently adversarial tone throughout the book.

Debates about time in Kvu are of two types. There is first the large-scale set-piece debate in I.6, in which the Sthaviravādin is attempting to demonstrate the incoherence of the Sarvāstivādin position. But secondly there are several shorter kathās throughout the rest of the book in which topics relevant to the understanding of time are debated. The Commentary does not connect these shorter debates to the Sarvāstivādins; nevertheless I shall try to show their relevance to the Sarvāstivādins' concerns.

II THE DEBATE IN I.6

In this section I wish to show:

i) that Kvu here demonstrates considerable knowledge and understanding of the Sarvāstivāda position at an early stage of its development.

ii) that to understand the structure of the argument the kathā should be taken as a whole; it is a mistake to take each sub-section as an independent argument against the Sarvāstivāda position. Some of the subsections are concerned rather with making clear what that position is.

Kvu I.6 begins thus:

[1] Does everything exist (sabbaṃ atthīti)? Yes.
Does everything exist everywhere (sabbathā)? No (literally: that should not be said).
. . . always (sabbadā), by everything (sabbena), in every-thing (sabbesu), having become unbound (ayogan ti katvā)? No.
Does that which does not exist exist? No.
That everything exists is a bad view, (that everything exists is a good view) — does this view exist? No. (-pe-).

Here there are no arguments for or against the Sarvāsti position; rather the questioner is beginning by clearing away possible misapprehensions about what the position is. The 'sarvāsti' name is insufficiently specific; it needs to be made clear that the position does not involve the postulation of a universal undiscriminated reality, perhaps similar to the Upaniṣadic Brahman.

The questioner now focuses on the matter really at issue:

[2] Do past and future exist? Yes.
Surely the past is ceased (niruddham), gone away . . .?
Surely the future is not yet arisen (ajātam) . . .?

These are the obvious questions. How can you say that past and future exist, when the past is by definition what has ceased, the future is by definition what has not yet arisen? On the other hand, there is no problem in saying that the present exists; this has not ceased or gone away . . ., it has arisen, has come into being, is manifested. If the existence of the present is equivalent to its being not-ceased, arisen, manifested, how is it that this equivalence does not hold for the past and future?

Here again, one can hardly say that there is an argument against the Sarvāstivāda view. No-one who asserts the reality of past and future can be unaware of the meanings of 'past' and 'future'. Rather the questioner is opening up the discussion, expecting further elaboration of what is being claimed. There must be some theory lying behind the Sarvāstivāda assertion.

In [3] and [4], the same questions as in [2] are asked, the same answers given, with respect not to past and future tout court, but in reference to past and future rūpa, and the other khandhas. This adds nothing to the debate; though as we shall see the question of the relation between past, present and future on the one hand and the things which exist in the past, the present

and the future on the other, was a matter that had to be explicitly settled.

In [5] and [6] we and the questioner come to the beginnings of a theory:

> Present, *rūpa, rūpa,* present, present *rūpa* — are these not-distinct, of the same meaning, the same, of the same content and origin? Yes.
>
> When present *rūpa* ceases, does it give up its presentness (*paccuppanna-bhāvaṃ*)? Yes.
>
> Does it give up its *rūpa*-ness. No.

The second and third questions seem designed to set out the core of the Sarvāstivāda theory: a *rūpa-dharma* can in a sense survive its ceasing to be present; it still remains identifiable as a *rūpa-dharma*. Its presentness is as it were a passing phase in its history. This is the theory to be explained in detail (several centuries later) in the Mahāvibhāṣā. There exist (now) not merely present dharmas, but past and future dharmas; existence or reality are to be distinguished from presentness. Or to put it another way, a dharma normally has a three phase history. First, it remains for an indefinite length of time in its future phase (*anā-gata-bhāva*); then when the conditions are right it is momentarily manifest as present; then it 'ceases', is '*niruddhaṃ*', and enters into its existence as a past dharma.

In the next subsection [6] of Kvu, the Sarvāstivādin explains his core idea further by means of an analogy: a white cloth can give up its whiteness without ceasing to be a cloth. The analogy shows that just as it is a mistake to collapse together the meanings of the two terms in 'white cloth', to think of them as applying to exactly the same class of objects, and in fact essentially linked, so the initial answer in [5] above is mistaken in claiming that the two terms in 'present *rūpa*' are essentially

related, in that '*rūpa*' can be meaningfully applied only to some present reality. In general, reality and presentness are distinct.

In [7] and [8] we are for the first time given a telling argument against the Sarvāstivāda position. If, as just explained, *rūpa* does not give up its *rūpa*-ness when it ceases, becomes past, does this not amount to saying that *rūpa* is permanent (*nicca*), persistent, not subject to change? Of Nibbāna it can truly be said that it does not give up its Nibbāna-ness, and that it is permanent, persistent . . . (but surely the Sarvāstivādin cannot be intending to obliterate the distinction between conditioned and unconditioned dharmas!).

This objection was always a problem for the Sarvāstivāda[9]. Of course they did not see themselves as disagreeing with the Buddha's doctrine of the transience of all worldly things, nor indeed with its Abhidharmic version, the momentariness of all conditioned dharmas; for they interpreted this doctrine as referring to the momentariness of the 'present phase' in the dharma's history — the momentariness of its manifestation, of its participation in a stream of experience. But they never found, in answer to the charge of denying *aniccatā*, a simple way of explaining the difference between the indefinitely extended temporal history of dharmas, central to their theory, and the trans-temporal *niccatā* of Nibbāna.

The same theme is pursued in [9] - [20]. It is pointed out that the present (or rather present *rūpa* etc.) gives up its presentness; and the future (or rather future *rūpa* etc.) gives up its futureness;

9   See Vasubandhu's challenge, Abhidharmakośa V 27b (repr. in Prasad, *op. cit.,* pp.129–46), and Saṃghabhadra's reply, translated by L. de La Vallée Poussin in 'Documents d'Abhidharma: la controverse du temps', *Mélanges Chinois et Boud-dhiques* V, 1936–7, pp.83–4 (repr. in Prasad, *op. cit.,* pp.147–298).

but the past (or rather past *rūpa* etc.) does not give up its past-ness. How then can one say that past dharmas are impermanent, unlike Nibbāna?

[22] is again a matter of questions which reveal the Sar-vāstivāda position, in fact a clarification of the theory hinted at earlier. It is an implication of this theory that the same thing (for example a *rūpa-dharma*) having been future becomes present, having been present becomes past.

> Having been future, the present (or present thing) comes into being (*anāgatam hutvā, paccuppannam hotīti*)? Yes.
> The very same thing is future and (then) present? No.
> (But surely this involves a contradiction?) The very same thing is future and (then) present? Yes.
> Having been, it becomes; having been it becomes? No? Yes.
> Not having been, it does not become; not having been it does not become? No. ...
> Having been future, it (the same thing) becomes present; having been present, it (the same thing) becomes past? Yes.

Given an understanding of the Sarvāstivāda theory, this is reasonably straightforward. (The Commentary though struggles with it at some length.) This abstract expression of the theory is surely linked to the aphoristic expression of its contrary, quoted for example in the Abhidharmakośa V 27: 'not having existed, (the momentary dharma) comes into being; having been, it com-pletely disappears (*abhūtvā bhāvaḥ, bhūtvā ca prativigacchati*)'. Vasubandhu says this comes from the Paramārthaśūnyatāsūtra (from the Samyuktāgama); he himself uses an even simpler ver-sion: '*abhūtvā bhāvaḥ, bhūtvā abhāvaḥ*'.

The Sthavira does not in this subsection provide any counter-arguments against this position[10].

[23] to [49] do though put forward a further argument against the Sarvāsti position, with a massive accumulation of examples. The argument is a good one, and is one that the Sarvāstivādins had to meet. (It is brought up again by Vasubandhu, Abhidharma-kośa V 27a.) It relies on the part of the theory of which we are already aware, that when a *rūpa-dharma* ceases to be present it still retains its *rūpa*-ness. The argument is that if past dharmas are real, and if they can be truly described as, for example, eye, or eye-consciousness, light, attention, . . ., then with all these existing together in the past surely all the conditions exist in the past for real seeing to occur; so it should be that 'there is seeing of past *rūpa* with the past eye'. That is, what could it mean to say that a *rūpa-dharma* is real if it in no way performs the functions of a *rūpa-dharma*? Surely, the Ābhidharmika might say, the very existence of conditioned dharmas is constituted by their conditionality, their function within the causal network re-presented by the fundamental doctrine of *paticcasamuppāda*. For them to exist is for them to be functional.

To take another challenging example:

> Does the past desire (*rāgo*) exist? Yes.
> Is the arahant then in a state of desire (*sarāgo*) by virtue of that desire?

In Kvu the Sarvāstivādin makes no reply to this weighty objection to his theory. For the theory to have any meaning at

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10 Mrs Rhys Davids says (*Points of Controversy*, p.90, n.2) that 'the op-ponent invests time with objective reality', and so according to the translation the counter-argument is that the Sarvāstivāda position implies an absurdity; namely that the future is the same as the present which is the same as the past. But as we shall see the 'opponent' explicitly rejects this objectification.

all, for it to be at all plausible, there must be a way in which past and future dharmas are real without performing the functions they would perform if they were present, in their present phase. Can the Sarvāstivādin develop his theory to articulate, to make explicit, his view of how this is possible?

In fact in the theory as described in the Mahāvibhāṣā this question of the functional reality of past and future dharmas, far from being a problem for the theory, becomes the basis of the theory itself. That is, the distinction between present reality of a *rūpa-dharma* on the one hand, and its past and future reality on the other, is precisely the functional differences between the three time-phases (the theory speaks of these as the three *bhāvas* of the dharma). Presentness is just the functional capacity to play those causal roles in the world which the Kvu questioner is asking about. The present stage of a *rūpa-dharma*'s existence is the stage at which it can be seen by a present eye, if light is present. In their past and future phases *rūpa-dharmas* do not have these functional capacities — but they do have others, for example the capacity to affect the mind in memory or pre-vision.

We do not know precisely when this functional interpretation of the three times, the theory of '*kāritra*', became explicit in the thinking of the Sarvāstivāda school. It is present in the Mahāvibhāṣā; it is not mentioned in the Vijñānakāya. It is significant that the *kāritra* theory appears to be unknown to the Kvu Commentary. In fact the latter adds very little on these passages, merely brief verbal expansions of selected portions of the text. For the most part it is content to say 'everything is to be understood in accordance with the text'[11].

The Commentary's inability to provide the philosophical back- ground to the Kvu discussion is significant because in its introduction to its comments on Kvu I.6 (Commentary, p.44), it speaks of the '*sabbam atthi*' view as being 'held for instance at present by the Sabb'atthivādins' (*seyyathāpi etarahi Sabbathivādānaṃ*). As K.R. Norman says[12] it is not clear whether the '*etarahi*' refers to the time of the writing of the Pāli Commentary (fifth century CE), or to the time of the Sinhalese commentaries from which the Pāli was edited and translated. (These Sinhalese commentaries are usually given a date not later than the first century CE.) In any case there seems to be no evidence that the authors or editors of the Commentary have themselves any direct contact with the Sarvāstivādins of their time, or any direct appreciation of their thinking. This is in contrast to the composer or composers of Kvu, who do seem to have a good understanding of the Sarvāstivāda position at an early stage of its theoretical development.

To summarise my conclusions about the debate in kathā I.6: this kathā is designed as a whole to reveal the fundamental ideas of the Sarvāstivāda theory of time, and to put forward two powerful arguments against this theory.

The final section of Kvu I.6 consist of sutta quotations, without any comment or exegesis. Two sutta texts are cited as supporting the Sarvāstivāda position, three as against the position. Considering texts 1 to 4 below, a neutral observer may think it unlikely that the Buddha was meaning to take up a position one way or another on what later became the controversial point of '*sabbaṃ atthi*'.

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11 *The Debates Commentary*, p.50.

12 K.R. Norman, *Pāli Literature*, Wiesbaden 1983, p.123.

1. FOR the Sarvāstivāda position: the Buddha's definition of *khandha*, for example the *rūpa-khanda*, includes all *rūpa*, past, present and future, internal and external, far and near . . . (M II 16 f.).

2. FOR: in S II 101, speaking of the four *āhāras*, the foods of karmic dynamism, the Buddha says:

> If there be desire (*rāgo*) . . . for these four, then consciousness is firmly placed, name-and-form descends, *saṃkhāra* (here meaning motivated actions?) grow.
>
> When there is (*atthi*) growth of *saṃkhāra*, then in the future (*ayatiṃ*) there is (*atthi*) renewed becoming and rebirth.

3. AGAINST:

> There is no eye . . . mind by which one could recognise, make known, the Buddhas who are past, *parinibbute* . . . (S IV 52).

4. AGAINST: the sequel to 2 above:

> If there be not *rāgo* for these four, . . . there is (*atthi*) in the future no renewed becoming (S II 102).

But Kvu also quotes a sutta passage, S III 71, which seems to address the matter more directly:

> The three ways of speaking, of designation, of conceptualising, [which are] not mixed up, and [were] not mixed up in the past, [these] are not and will not be confused by blameless *sāmaṇas* and wise brahmans: that *rūpa* (etc.) which is past, ceased (*niruddha*) . . . it is said to be 'it has been (*ahosīti tassa saṅkhā*)'; it is not said to be 'it is (*atthi*)' nor 'it will be (*bhavissati*)'. (And equivalent distinguishing statements for future and present *rūpa*.)

The wording in the Sutta is not decisive; the Sarvāstivādin could certainly interpret it in a way compatible with his own position. But it is difficult to see why the Sutta was composed, if not to put forward an anti '*sabbaṃ atthi*' position, as part of a

theoretical debate such as that in which Sthavira and Sarvāstivādin are engaged in Kvu. In this it is unlike texts 1 to 4, which do have a clear raison d'être quite apart from the Sarvāstivāda debate. One possibility is that it is a late sectarian addition to the Saṃyutta. C.S. Prasad notes[13] that its equivalent does **not** appear in the Saṃyuktāgama, which he says should be 'considered to be a work of the Sarvāstivāda tradition or of a school related to it'.

III   DEBATES ABOUT TIME IN THE REST OF THE KATHĀVATTHU

In this section I wish to show the following:

i)   with respect to the **contents** of the remaining kathās which discuss time — although none of these kathās is linked by the Commentary to the Sarvāstivāda, nearly all are recognisably within the context of debate which produced the arguments for the real existence of past and future, in the Vijñānakāya. What I mean by this is not that they are directly addressed to the Sarvastivāda position, but that they contains ideas, use arguments, which must have been current within the Buddhist philosophical community during the third century BCE; and which the Sarvāstivādins used for their own purposes. This debating community must have been, in spirit at least, non-sectarian or trans-sectarian.

ii)   with respect to their **form** — they are best seen as the open-minded and collaborative consideration of a variety of arguments and points of view on puzzling or controversial issues. They do not read as if the Sthavira thinks of himself as taking on and defeating all comers on all issues. Very often the protagonist, identified by the Commentary (or at least by the translation) as

13   In 'The Chinese Āgamas vis-à-vis the Sarvāstivāda tradition', BSR 10, 1, p.51.

the opponent, is given the last word; this cannot merely be a matter of politeness between adversaries[14].

In Kvu I.7 it seems that the Sarvāstivādin is the questioner. The point at issue is whether the past, present and future consist in the *khandhas* (*atītaṃ khandhā ti?*), the *āyatanas*, the *dhātus*. The (presumably) Sthavira respondent agrees that this is the case (no doubt influenced by sutta quotation 1 above), but will not accept the inference that therefore past and future exist just as the present does. This agreement that the three times do not have independent existence, but consist merely of, are to be analysed into, past, present and future *khandhas*, is echoed in the opening section of the Mahāvibhāṣā discussion of time[15]. In fact there the contrary opinion is attributed to the Dārṣṭāntikas and the Vibhajyavādins. This contrary opinion is that:

> time by its nature is eternal (*nitya*); the *saṃskāras* are *anitya*. *Saṃskāras* go round in time, like fruits in baskets, going out of one basket and into another; or as men leave one house to go to another. In the same way *saṃskāras* from the future go into the present, from the present go into the past.

However, this primitive objectification of the three times as containers of conditioned dharmas is firmly rejected by the author of the Mahāvibhāṣā: 'time **is** the *saṃskāras*, the *saṃskāras*

are time'[16].

(Kvu I.8 is about the theory of time, attributed by the Commentary to the Kassapikas, that only the part of the past exists which consists of dhammā with 'unripened fruit', karmic consequences which have not yet come to pass. Only that part of the future exists which consists of karmic fruitions which are 'bound to arise' but have not yet arisen. This is in itself a fascinating theory, a kind of compromise between the Sthavira and the Sarvāstivāda positions; but its full discussion would take too long to be possible in this paper.)

I shall now discuss a group of kathās which use ideas closely related to the main argument in the Vijñānakāya for the real existence of past and future.

Kvu V.8 is about knowledge or insight (*ñāṇaṃ*) into the future. [1] and [2] discuss the means to this knowledge. It is denied that knowledge of the future comes through any kind of causal inference. This seems surprising; as Mrs Rhys Davids comments 'presumably the belief was in an intuitive vision, and not in a process of inference'[17]. Now such a belief played an important role in the argument which is given most space in the relevant passage of the Vijñānakāya[18]:

> There are people who see [a] that desire, one of the three roots of suffering, is bad (*akusala*); and [b] that it produces in the future a painful consequence. Should we say that what such a person sees is past, present or future? If

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14   I agree with Cousins, *op. cit.*, p.36: 'It is by no means clear that most of the views we are given [by the Commentary] as sectarian views were ever the positions of clearly defined schools. Many of them are surely constructed dilemmas, intended as debating points to sharpen understanding of issues. They could never have been the cause of serious sectarian division'.

15   Cf. 'Documents d'Abhidharma: la controverse du temps', *op. cit.*, pp.8–9; a translation by La Vallée Poussin of pp.393–6 of Mahāvibhāṣā 76.

16   There is an interesting discussion of primitive theories of objectified time in S. Schayer, *Contributions to the problem of time in Indian philosophy*, Cracow 1938, repr. in Prasad, *op. cit.*, pp.307–82.

17   *Points of Controversy*, p.182, n.2.

18   See my paper on this argument, referred to in n.4.

it is past or future, then past or future exists.

Firstly [that is with respect to [a]], the seeing and the object of seeing cannot be simultaneous, for there cannot be in one *pudgala* two simultaneous *cittas*, the *cittas* which are the object and subject of the seeing. [Hence the object of present seeing must be past, so the past exists.]

Secondly [that is with respect to [b]], what is seen cannot be present if the seeing is present, for the act and its karmic fruit cannot be simultaneous. [Hence the seen 'painful consequence' must be future, so the future exists.][19]

The argument [a] will be relevant to our forthcoming discussion of Kvu V.9; but the point of [b] seems to be that there can be, for the wise, a 'seeing' of (not just an inference to) the future consequences of a present karmic action. The force of the argument for the reality of the future presumably stems from the claim that it can be 'seen' in some direct way. The Sarvāstivādins were very impressed by the traditional doctrine of the three-fold nature of perception; that for perception to occur, three things (types of dharma) have to come together: sense-organ, sense-object and sense-consciousness. (Of course mind, *manas*, counts for these purposes as one of the six senses.) They argued that there is a kind of perception of past and future (here the sense organ is *manas*); so the objects of this perception must be real. Obviously, this argument is of no relevance if all knowledge of the future is by causal inference from what is perceived in the present, rather than by direct perception of the future.

In the remaining sections of Kvu V.8, it is denied that someone who is at a particular stage of the four Noble Paths has

knowledge of the succeeding stage, but then it is claimed that the Buddha did have an insight into the future, as when he forecast what the future had in store for Pātaliputra. The kathā as a whole certainly has no obvious conclusion; it seems rather to be a collection of ideas all related to knowledge of the future, but not closely related to each other. The Commentary offers no help of any substance.

Kvu V.9 [1] is even more obviously related to the arguments of the Vijñānakāya; in fact it is directly relevant to part [a] of the argument quoted earlier. The first question in this kathā is 'Is there knowledge of the present?'; but this is not really the point at issue. Of course the answer to this question is Yes; but the questioner goes on to ask 'Does one know that knowledge by the same knowledge?' This is a reference to introspective or self-conscious knowledge, not my seeing a tree but my knowing that I am seeing a tree; but more importantly, it refers to the knowledge and analysis of the processes of one's own mind, which are so important to the 'mindful' Buddhist. In all these complex thoughts, two distinct acts of knowledge are involved, one (as a later question suggests) the object (*ārammaṇam*) of the other. The point is stressed by analogies: Does one cut a sword with that (same) sword; does one touch a fingertip with that same fingertip? The logical format of this part of the kathā suggests that the questioner wishes to disprove the claim that there are two knowledges involved in self- conscious knowledge; but the text consists in fact of powerful arguments **for** the claim.

As has been said, this philosophically important Kvu argument about two knowledges is centrally relevant to part [a] of the first argument in the Vijñānakāya. There the two acts of consciousness are an act of desire, and the knowledge of and reflection on that desire. The Vijñānakāya draws the further consequence, that these two distinct acts of consciousness (in

19   L. de La Vallée Poussin, 'La controverse du temps et du pudgala dans le Vijñānakāya', *Études Asiatiques*, Paris 1925, p.346.

mindfulness, or in any self-conscious mental activity) cannot be simultaneous. The principle that a stream of consciousness can contain only one act of consciousness (*vijñāna* or *citta-dharma*) at a time was taken as axiomatic by the Ābhidharmikas, though I do not know that there is any direct justification for it in the suttas[20]. The Vijñānakāya concludes that when one knows one's own mental activity the consciousness which is the **object** of this knowledge must be in the past. [In fact there is here direct perception of the past; hence the past must be real.]

Kvu V.9 [2] argues that there must be knowledge of the present, because 'when every *saṃkhāra* is seen (*diṭṭhe*) as *anicca*, is not that knowledge itself seen as impermanent?' This is not directly relevant to the Sarvāstivāda position, but is surely an ingenious argument: I take it to refer to the fundamental Buddhist doctrine of the Three Marks of Existence, of which one is '*sabbe saṃkhārā aniccā*'. This is certainly a fact that can be known. But does not the scope of this doctrine include present *saṃkhārā*, including in fact the present act of knowledge by which one knows the doctrine? So there is knowledge of the present[21].

There is an even more striking parallel between the arguments of Kvu XIX.1 and Vijñānakāya IV.9 (the final section of the chapter dealing with time). The latter puts the argument in its standard form:

One must abandon the *āsravas*. Are those *āsravas* which are to be abandoned past, future or present? They cannot

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20   See Abhidharmakośa II 34d: the *cittas* and *caittas* which have the same object are simultaneous, but 'at a given moment only one single *citta* can arise'.
21   This puzzling problem of the analysis of knowledge of 'all dharmas' is discussed at greater length in kathā XVI.4, where it is made clear that there are telling arguments in both directions.

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be present, for then there would be in the same mind two modes or complexes of consciousness; that which is abandoned and that which does the abandoning. This is impossible. [Therefore the *āsrava* which is abandoned must be past, so the past must exist.]

Kvu XIX.1 is a clever collection of arguments leading to an obvious absurdity; an excellent example of what Lance Cousins calls 'constructed dilemmas'.

Kilesas are to be renounced.
[1]   How can one renounce past *kilesas*? The past is already ceased.
[2]   How can one renounce future *kilesas*? The future has not yet arisen.
[3]   How can one renounce present *kilesas*?
Does one put away lust by means of lust?
Does there come to be a conjunction (*samodhāna*) of two *cittas*?
The *kilesa* is *akusala*; its abandoning is *kusala*. Surely *kusala* and *akusala* dhammas cannot 'come face to face' with each other?
[4]   So there can be no abandoning of *kilesas*!

The parallelism between these two arguments, about on the one hand the abandonment of *āsravas*, and on the other the renouncing of *kilesas*, can hardly be a coincidence; they must at least stem from the same tradition of debate.

Kvu IX.6 and 7 are about the claim that consciousness which had a past or a future object (as in the cases of direct memory or pre-vision discussed in V.8 and V.9 above) has no object. This claim must have been a standard move at the time, though neither Kvu nor the Vijñānakāya gives any argument supporting it, apart from the dogmatic assertion that past and future objects

do not exist. Section IV of the Vijñānakāya (La Vallée Poussin's translation, p.352) begins:

> The śramaṇa Maudgalyāyana says 'There is a thought whose object is non-existent (asty abhāvālambanaṃ cittaṃ)'.

The Sarvāstivāda protagonist argues that it is part of the very nature of vijñāna that it has an object; this is explicit in the Bhagavat's teaching about vijñāna. (Sêe my earlier reference to the threefold theory of perception.) Maudgalyāyana is reported as replying:

> There is certainly a citta with non-existent object. What citta? That which bears on the past or the future.

He gives no supporting argument for his position. In Kvu IX.6 and 7, all the argument is against the 'no-object' claim.

> When there is adverting, ideation, application . . . with a present object, then cittaṃ with a present object is with an object (sārammaṇaṃ)? Yes.
> Then surely when there is adverting . . . with a past or future object, then cittaṃ with past or future object is without an object?

The Commentary here puts the Sthavira in the role of arguing against the claim, that is arguing that consciousness with past or future object does have an object; a pro-Sarvāsti position.

A final connection between Kvu and Vijñānakāya may be made with respect to Kvu IX.12. Here the matter at issue is whether one can be possesed of, endowed with, the past or something past (atītena samannāgato ti?) or indeed with the future. The standard objections are made: that the past is ceased (niruddham), the future is not yet arisen (ajātam). But the final section argues that there is indeed possession of the past, for

surely there are those who meditate on the eight vimokkhas, acquire at will the four jhānas, acquire the four successive attainments.

The point seems to be that an attainment achieved in the past is still in some way present; in this way, perhaps, the past lives on. The topic is relevant to the analysis of a 'state of mind' at a particular time, which may be the present. How should account be taken of abilities which were acquired through past efforts, may not in fact be manifested or exercised at the present time, but have not been lost, and so surely in some sense still exist now? The Kvu passage raises the issue without proposing a solution.

In the Vijñānakāya this notion, that one can presently possess a non-manifested ability, is incorporated into an argument for the Sarvāstivāda position. The argument has several variants. One of them (Vijñānakāya IV.3) refers to the Buddha's distinction between ordinary people, pṛthagjanas, and more spiritually advanced people; the latter possess in some degree the five indriyas (faith, energy . . .). Suppose a person of some advancement (but not an arhat) has a tainted thought. The indriyas are still in some sense real in him — he does not because of this one unworthy thought become a pṛthagjana; but the indriyas are not simply manifest in his state of consciousness. The Vijñānakāya argument implies that the problem can be solved if we allow that the past is real.

To summarise this final part of my paper: the first chapter of the Vijñānakāya contains three arguments for Sarvāstivāda:

(i) that in mindfulness one sees the past, and also its future consequences;

(ii) the related but more abstract argument (developed at length in the much later debate between Vasubandhu and Saṃgha-

bhadra) that *vijñāna* with past or future as its object must have a really existing object;

(iii) that a person's habits of mind, abilities, state of spiritual advancement, must in some sense be real even at times when they are not manifested in the persons' conscious mental complex.

To each of these arguments there are correspondances, more or less close, in Kvu. As I indicated earlier, the content and form of these debates in Kvu seem to show the existence in the third century BCE of an active and philosophically sophisticated community of debate, involving no doubt people of different doctrinal convictions, but also people willing to try out theories and arguments to see where they would lead.

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ANNOUNCEMENT

The UK ASSOCIATION FOR BUDDHIST STUDIES was inaugurated at a well-attended meeting at SOAS on 8 July. 'The object of the Association shall be to promote the academic study of Buddhism through the national and international collaboration of all scholars whose research has a bearing on the subject'. Open to academics, post-graduates and unaffiliated Buddhist scholars or interested Buddhist practitioners, for further details contact:

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'SOLITARY AS RHINOCEROS HORN'[1]

K. R. Norman

The Khaggavisāṇasutta ('Rhinoceros-horn sutta') occurs in Pāli at Sn[2] 35-75. It also occurs at Ap 2:9-49 (= pp. 8-13). A number of its verses recur in Sanskrit in Mvu I 357-59, where they are called *Khadgaviṣāṇagāthā* ('Rhinoceros-horn verses'). The antiquity of the sutta is shown by the fact that some of its verses are common to both the Theravādin and the Mahāsaṅghika Lokottaravādin traditions, and also by the fact that it is commented upon in Nidd II which, although it is a commentarial text, is nevertheless sufficiently old to be included in the Theravādin canon. Each verse of the sutta, except 45[3], has the refrain *eko care khaggavisāṇakappo* in the fourth pāda. Although there is no indication in Sn, both the Mvu and the Pāli commentarial tradition state that these verses were uttered by Pratyekabuddhas,

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1   An earlier form of this paper was submitted to the editor of a proposed felicitation volume in India, but to my knowledge has never been published.
2   Abbreviations of titles of texts: Ap = Apadāna; CP = Norman, 1990–96; D = Dīghanikāya; Dhp = Dhammapada; Divy = Divyāvadāna (Cowell and Neil, 1886); Ja = Jātaka; M = Majjhimanikāya; Mvu = Mahāvastu (= Senart, 1882); Mil = Milindapañha; Vism = Visuddhimagga; Nidd II = Cullaniddesa; Pj II = Paramatthajotikā II (= aṭṭhakathā on Sn); PTS = Pali Text Society; SBB = Sacred Books of the Buddhists; SBE = Sacred Books of the East; Sn = Suttanipāta; Sv = Sumaṅgalavilāsinī (= aṭṭhakathā on D); Vin = Vinaya; -a = aṭṭhakathā; -pṭ = purāṇa-ṭīkā. References to Pāli texts are to PTS editions, except where otherwise stated.
3   This seems to imply that verses 45 and 46 originally made a pair. The two verses occur together elsewhere in the Pāli Canon at Vin I 350,4*–11* = M III 154,17*–24* = Dhp 328–29 = Ja III 488, 16*–23*, but with *eko care mātaṅg' araññe va nāgo* ('one should wander alone like a *mātaṅga* elephant in the forest') as the refrain instead of *eko care khaggavisāṇakappo.*