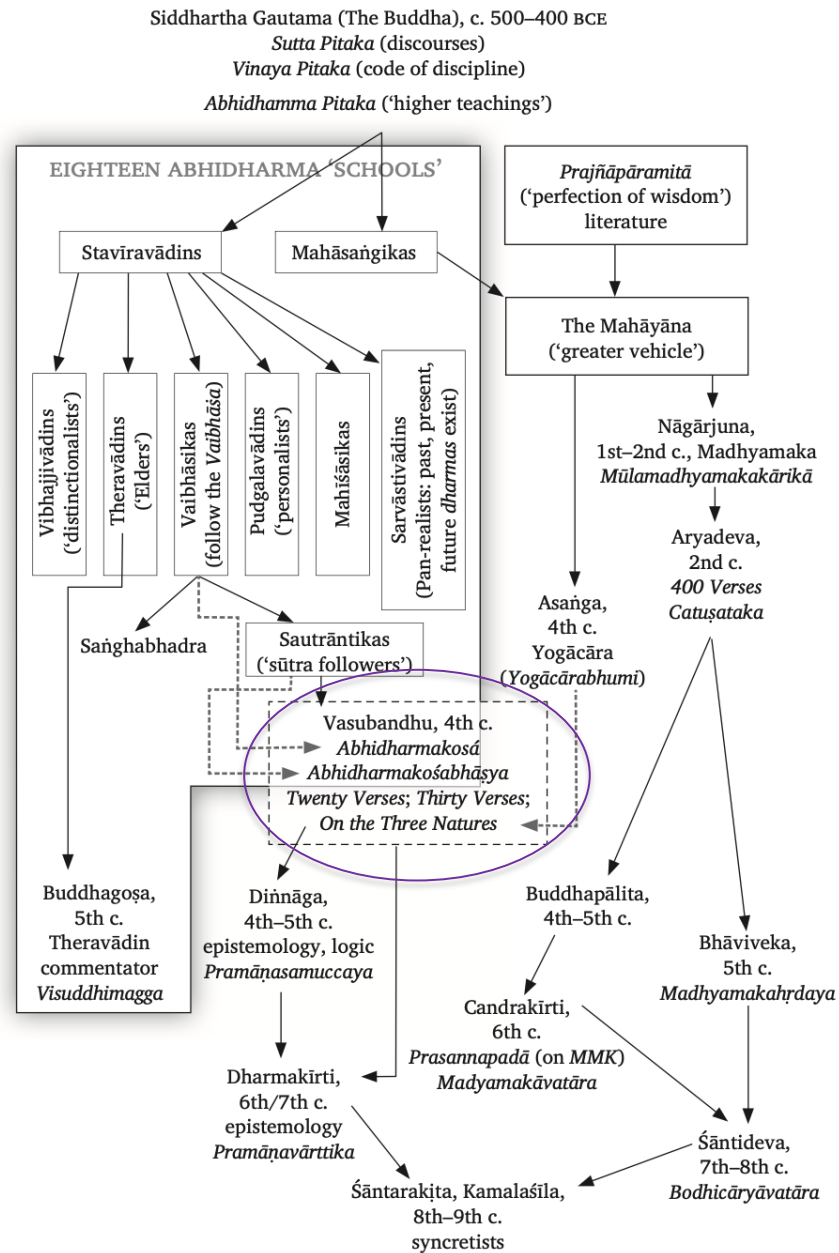


Comparative Conceptions of the Self

Evan Thompson

Lecture 8

Development of Buddhist thought in India



Vasubandhu

- One of the most influential Buddhist philosophers of all time
- c. 4th to 5th centuries CE (Gupta Empire of ancient India)
- Author of *Commentary on the Treasury of the Abhidharma* (*Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*), one of the primary sources for knowledge of (non-Mahāyāna) Abhidharma philosophy
- Author of several very important works of (Mahāyāna) Yogācāra philosophy



Vasubandhu

“The Thirty Verses”
(*Triṃśikā*)

“The Thirty Verses on
Impression Only” (*Triṃśikā
Vijñaptimātratā*)



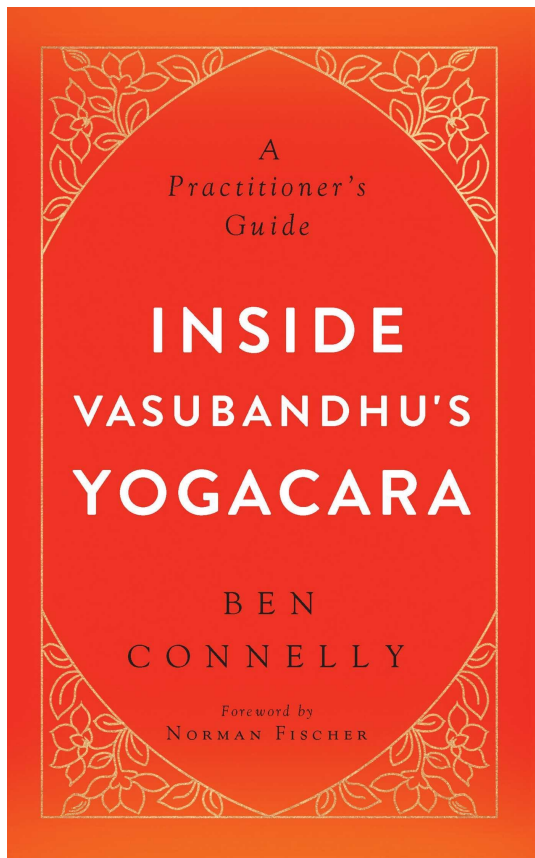
Vasubandhu

“The Thirty Verses”
(*Trimśikā*)

“The Thirty Verses on
Impression Only” (*Trimśikā
Vijñaptimātratā*)

- Translated from Sanskrit into Chinese by Xuanzang in 648.
- A translation from the Chinese is here:
<https://www.lapislazulitexts.com/tripitaka/T1586-LL-trimsika/>
- A Sanskrit text also survives.

Vasubandhu



A recent translation and commentary written for a general audience.

“The Thirty Verses” (*Trimśikā*)

Presents an analysis of consciousness and how it constructs what we mistakenly experience as being real – the outside world as an object of an inside mind: the **grasped-grasper** character of experience.



“The Thirty Verses” (*Trimśikā*)

The grasper-grasped or subject-object structure is an illusory construction of the mind.

Liberation or awakening consists in a direct intuitive realization that sees things in their suchness beyond the subject-object split.



Vasubandhu

One of the principal philosophers who developed the Yogācāra system of Buddhist thought and practice.



Different names, same philosophical movement

- Yogācāra: “the practice of yoga.”
 - Indicates its concerns are close to the practice of meditation and to philosophical reflection on the content of that practice.
- Vijñānavāda: “the doctrine of consciousness.”
 - Indicates its central concern with consciousness (the fifth aggregate) and its addition of two distinct types of consciousness:
 - *Manas*: mental consciousness/thought, typically afflictive (*kliṣṭa-manas*)
 - *Ālayavijñāna*: store consciousness.
- Cittamātra: “mind only.”
 - Indicates its central claim that all objects are “mind only.”
- Vijñaptimātra: “impressions only.”
 - Indicates its central claim that all objects are “impressions only.”

Vasubandhu's Yogācāra model of consciousness

- Yogācāra expands the traditional Buddhist model of consciousness.
- It adds two new, distinct types of consciousness within the category of the fifth aggregate of consciousness (*vijñāna*).

6 External bases	6 Internal bases	6 Consciousnesses
Visible forms	Eye	Visual consciousness
Sounds	Ear	Auditory consciousness
Smells	Nose	Olfactory consciousness
Tastes	Tongue	Gustatory consciousness
Textures	Body	Touch consciousness
Mental objects	Mental faculty	Mental consciousness (manovijñana)

Yogācāra

Conscious attention to one's own states of mind (*mano-vijñāna*).

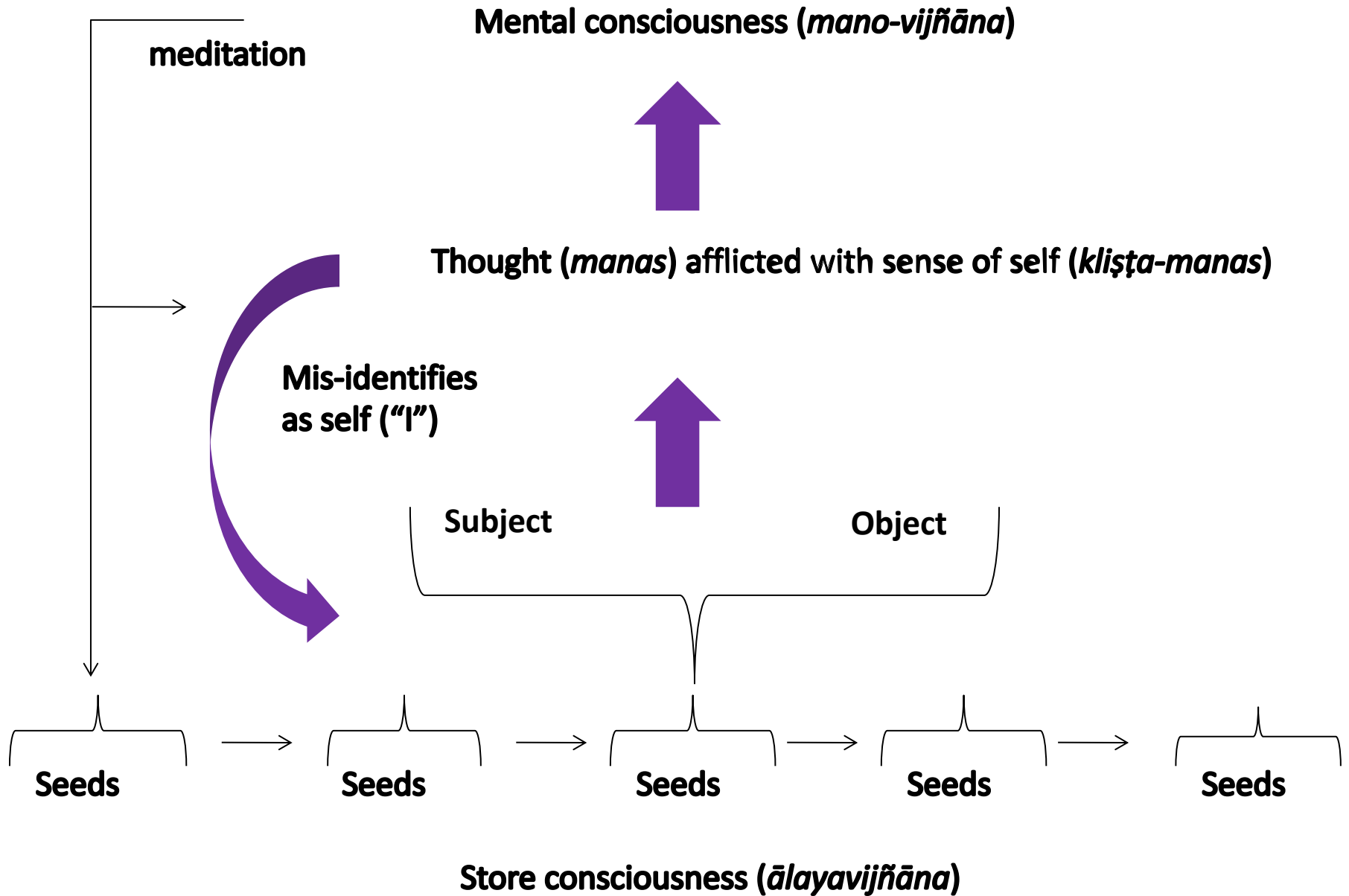


Thought, consciousness of a self, pre-attentive mode of self-awareness (*manas*).



Store (base) consciousness (*ālaya-vijñāna*)

Yogācāra model



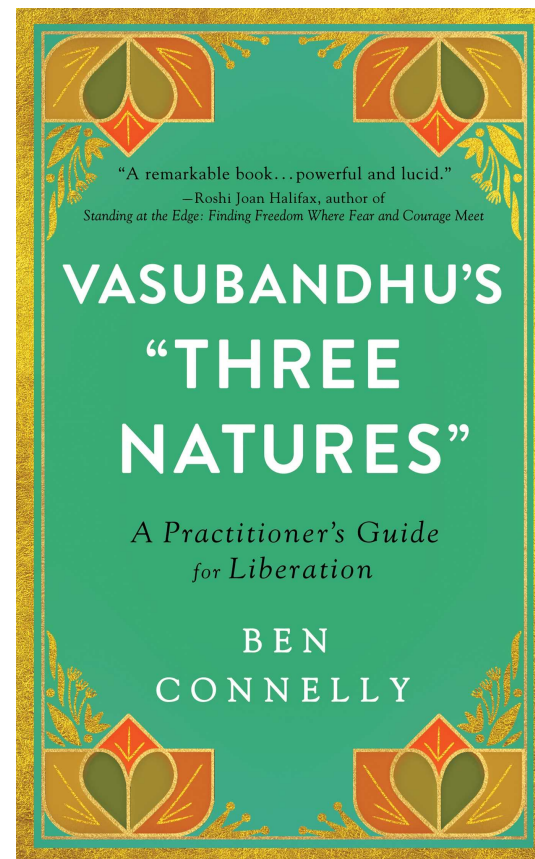
Vasubandhu

“Treatise on the Three
Natures”
(*Trisvabhāvanirdeśa*)



Vasubandhu

A recent translation and commentary written for a general audience.



The Three Natures

Vasubandhu says that there are “three natures,” each with its own corresponding type of “naturelessness.”

The Three Natures and Naturelessnesses

Nature

1. The imagined nature.
 - The imagined, subject/object structure.
2. The dependent nature.
 - The flow of impressions only, dependent on causes and conditions, especially the store-consciousness.
3. The perfected nature.
 - Beyond all conceptualization.

Naturelessness

1. Lack of intrinsic/defining characteristics.
2. Lack of independence.
3. Lack of differentiation, beyond all subject-object characterization and conceptualization.

Three natures

1. The imagined nature:
 - How we take things to be, given our cognitive and affective biases.
2. The dependent nature:
 - The underlying causal structure of the mind.
3. The perfected nature:
 - The nature of the dependent empty of the imagined.

Three natures

1. The imagined nature:

- How we take things to be, given our cognitive and affective biases: as divided into subject and object, inner and outer.

2. The dependent nature:

- The underlying causal structure of things: the moment-to-moment flow of impressions, dependent on causes and conditions.

3. The perfected nature:

- The nature of the dependent empty of the imagined: beyond all conceptualization.

Three natures

- The **imagined nature**: the subject-object structure of experience is an illusion.
- The **dependent nature**: experience is the interaction of cognitive processes and environmental processes, not a separate inner entity arising from this.
- The **perfected nature** is the realization of the dependent nature as **empty** of the imagined nature. This is beyond all conceptualization (because concepts divide things into subject and object).